GANDHIJI'S IDEAS ON EDUCATION: A CRITICAL STUDY

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229

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DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled **"Gandhiji's Ideas on Education: A Critical Study"** by Sujata Mody has not been submitted for the award of any degree in this or any other University. It is her original work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for consideration of the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University.

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C O N T E N T S

INTRODUCTION

The motivation to study Gandhiji's views on education arose when we attempted to formulate an alternative to the existing educational structure. An alternative was felt necessary because the existing system was perceived to have drawbacks both in its structure as well its pedagogy. To name a few - the structure is structurally biased in favour of higher education; has limited access; in a very fundamental sense is a continuum of the colonial education system; is segregated in its structure; perpetuates a dichotomy between manual and intellectual work; and is completely 'decontextualized'. The need for the alternative was felt not simply to put forward a strategy of reform. It was also because we feel that the existing education structure affords enough space where an alternate pedagogy could be tried out so as to aid the process of social transformation. These were broadly the intellectual motivations in searching for an alternative. But we soon realised that no critique of the existing system and a formulation of an alternative could take place without a thorough understanding of Gandhiji's notions on education, because his still remains one of the most radical critiques of the Indian education system.What were the pitfalls it had? What role did Gandhiji envisage for the education system in social transformation? We feel that a critical

analysis of these and related questions would equip us better in defining and locating an alternative.

Gandhiji has been discussed by perhaps every Indian educationist and the sheer volume of the writing on Gandhiji and his views on education in general, and basic education in particular, make writing in this area particularly difficult. Nonetheless, we will attempt to categorise the literature on Gandhiji's ideas in education into four broad groups. First, there are those who accept his analysis of the economy and society, and his educational theory in toto. Second, there are those educators working within the parameters of the existing social system who accept his ideas on Basic Education and treat it as a model for universalizing education in India. Third, are those commentators who reject his social analysis and the educational alternative, while accepting that Gandhiji's emphasis on manual work and on the need to overcome existing education's dichotomy between manual and mental work was correct. Lastly, there are educators who reject Gandhiji's programme of basic education as one which is basically not a feasible and viable model for universalizing education; and one which is essentially too ambitious in its object of providing every child with education that is not decontextualized, and one which is linked to productivity.

The first group is typified in the work of C.J. Varkey

(1939)[1], J.B. Kriplani (1948)[2], M.S. Patel (1956)[3], E.W. Aryanayakam (1954)[4], T.S. Avinashillingam (1954)[5], K.L. Shrimali (1960)[6].

At a different level Majorie Sykes[7] who while keeping within the Gandhian framework of education has experimented with pedagogy. We do not feel the necessity of outlining the argument of any of these educationists/educators here because that would mean explicating Gandhiji's notion of education, and this we do in Chapter 2.

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1. C.J. Varkey: The Wardha Scheme of Education, London, Oxford University Press, 1940.

2. J.B. Kriplani: The Latest Fad: Basic Education, Hindustan Talimi Sangh, Sevagram, 1948 (Second reprint).

3. M.S. Patel: The Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1956.

4. E.W. Aryanayakam : Crisis in Education, Sevagram, Wardha, 1954.

5. T.S. Avinashilingam : Understanding Basic Education, 1954.

6. K.L. Shrimali : The Wardha Scheme, Udaipur, Vidyabhavan Society, 1960.

7. Majorie Sykes : A Picture and Programme of Basic Education, HTS, Sevagram, 1954

J.P. Naik (1964, 1975)[8],[9] who belongs to the second group, believed that Gandhiji's alternative would solve some of India's educational problems. He did not completely accept Gandhiji's social analysis which emphasised the urban-rural bias, and the attendant problems of exploitation of rural areas by the urban centres. But, following Gandhiji he accepted that the system of education was biased structurally in favour of the educated and elite groups. He believed that an equal and universal access to education was important to altering the pattern of unequal social class differences. He believed that Basic Education would answer the problem of education in India. Basic Education was according to him an educational model that could be introduced into the existing school structure; and that it was superior to the traditional pattern of schooling because it did not divorce manual from intellectual work and it was linked to productivity. Naik, by situating Gandhiji's ideas on education within a very different social milieu robs it of much of its radical content. Whatever the other flaws in Gandhiji's notions of education, coupled with his views on economy and society they had a certain systemic coherence. In Naik's hands they becomes marginal reforms within a system that remains exploitative and unequal.

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8. J.P. Naik, Objective, Curriculum and Methods of Teaching, in the Indian Year Book of Education, NCERT, 1964.

9. J.P. Naik, Elementary Education in India: A Promise to keep, New Delhi, 1975.

On the other hand, Marxists like A.R. Desai[10] reject Gandhian education on iedological grounds.

> "The principle of polytechnique education was a progressive one but when that ideas was propounded in Europe, it meant an education based on the union of modern theoretical education and modern industry. Gandhi, on the other hand, in his scheme combined education with an added religious veneering with pre-modern handicrafts. This looked like an unhistorical wedding of modern education (the product and guide of modern socio-economic conditions) and pre-modern crafts of a modern era".

Desai's critique of Gandhiji is misplaced. The polytechnical education to which he compares Gandhiji's programme was the result of a process initiated by industry to provide for technically trained manpower for industry. On the contrary Gandhiji's attempt to link academic training with the teaching of vocations is from a different stand point. Consequently his is far closer to vocational education and therefore it is a gross misunderstanding of what he was trying to explicate.

Marxists would broadly agree with the position that manual work was important to an educational programme, and for breaking the dichotomy between manual and intellectual work, but would naturally find the rest of Gandhiji's analysis unacceptable. Naturally, because Gandhiji's analysis is not informed with a notion of exploitation that arises from a

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10. A.R. Desai, The Social Background of Indian Nationalism.

certain structure of property rights in society. Consequentlythe conclusions which a Marxian analysis and a Gandhian analysis, would reach would be very divergent.

Like Naik, John Kurien (1983)[11] divorced Gandhiji's concept of Basic Education from his broader social analysis and his views on education in general. He treated Basic Education as a model for mass elementary education, and regarded it as 'conceptually unsound'. Kurien argues that Basic Education was too ambitious as a proposal for achieving universal education. Instead, he suggests that the model put forward by R.V. Parulekar[12] be used as a programme for universalizing education in India. Parulekar's proposal was limited to finding a method of increasing the pupil-teacher ratio, which was regarded as the most important constraint to expansion of education. Parulekar did not in any way question the basic inequalities and the stratification of people on the basis of school achievement, since he believed that a freer access to education would substantially alter the structure of inequality. It should be obvious that Kurien does not recognise the expanse of Gandhiji's discourse.

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11. John Kurien: Elementary Education in India, Myth, Reality, Alternative, Vikas, New Delhi, 1983.

12. R.V. Parulekar, The Writings of Shri R.V. Parulekar edited by J.P. Naik, Bombay 1957.

The point the above discussion is trying to drive at is that even though various people (from a variety of iedological standpoints) have discussed Gandhiji's notion of education none of them have looked at it in a holistic fashion. Their analysis has always been partial and incomplete. There has been no attempt to see whether the tools he used were capable of achieving the ends he desired. One of the most significant contributions of Gandhiji is the notion of using education as a vehicle of social change. Oddly enough, this rather novel idea has never been critiqued systematically, with regard to possibility and limits of such a role for the education system. This dissertation attempts to look at Gandhiji's notion of education from these standpoints.

The chapter plan is as follows :

Chapter 1 Alternative Education Structures

Chapter 2 Gandhiji's views on Economy and Education

Chapter 3 Education and its role in social change

Conclusion

Chapter 1 is divided in three sections. Section 1.1 discussed the system of education in capitalist societies. This discussion is found to be necessary because educational system in British India closely resembled these systems, though the colonial educational system was bound by the fact that it would have to serve colonial interests but in a fundamental sense they had generic similarities. The fact that the colonial

education system which Gandhihi critiqued was essentially a derivative of the systems of education found in capitalist societies makes it important to our discussion. Section 1.2 deals with the system of education in colonial India, it is this system that Gandhiji critiqued and the milieu within which he sought an alternative. Section 1.3 discusses the indigenous system of education. This though subsumed by the modern educational system, introduced by the British, is essential to an analysis of Gandhiji because of the close resemblance it bears to Gandhiji's views held on a decentralised system of education.

Chapter 2 is again divided in four sections. In Section 2.1 we outline Gandhiji's critique of the modern capitalist system in general and the colonial Indian economy in particular. It also states an alternative formulation of the economy in which he viewed the village as the fundamental unit of economic activity. Section 2.2 deals with the critique of the education system in colonial India. It gives us a coherent picture of his critique of education and its linkages which the colonial economy in British India. Section 2.3 presents the alternative Gandhiji suggested to the existing educational system. This section attempts to outline how Gandhiji's alternative system was in consonance with his own views on the economy. In Section 2.4 we attempt to critique the elements of his educational programme within his own frame of analysis.

Chapter III is in three sections. Section 3.1 states the positions of Marxist theorists on education and its role in social change, with the view to drawing a framework to analyse Gandhi. Section 3.2 deals with Gandhiji's views on the role of the education system in social transformation and their evolution through the period of India's struggle for independence. Section 3.3 presents a critique of Gandhiji's position on the role of education in social change in view of the framework drawn out in Section 1.

The Conclusion attempts to draw together the various strands of the argument developed in the above chapters and presents a synoptic critique of the Gandhian notion of education and its role in social transformation.

Chapter One

ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION

In a study on Gandhiji's ideas on education the starting point of the analysis has to be the 'colonial' education system. But a proper analysis of this system would require a prior understanding of the nature and functions of the 'capitalist' education system. Despite, the fact that the colonial education system has to perform an important function which the 'capitalist' education system does not perform - namely, the legitimization of colonial rule, there are other functions such as those of social control and provision of skills, which are essentially those of 'capitalist' education systems. Consequently, the structure and organisation of the 'colonial' education system, the curriculum and pedagogy are those borrowed from the 'capitalist' education system. Section 1.1 will therefore provide a brief sketch of the 'capitalist' education system. We then go on to discuss the 'colonial' education system in Section 1.2. And Section 1.3 goes on to discuss the indigenous education system. A study of the indigenous system is germane to the subsequent discussion of Gandhiji's ideas for the following two reasons. First, when discussing an alternate method of organising education, we find that the indigenous system provides a useful reference point. It contains elements which we find are common to Gandhiji's system. The juxtaposition of the two, the first a viable, practical system, which was once in existence (even though at the time when Adam's study was conducted it was in

a state of degeneration) and the other a utopian exercise, helps us arrive at a better understanding of the latter. Second, in many ways the indigenous system was opposed to Gandhiji's program for education. The 'colonial' education system provides a continuity to traditional education. The indigenous system prior to the advent of the British, the 'colonial' education system, and the one we inherited at independence reflect a continuity since all these were biased in favour of an influential minority, which monopolized the acquisition and communication of all education. Gandhiji's ideas reflect an attempt to break out of this narrow tradition.

1.1 The Education System under Capitalism

The analysis given below leans heavily on the work of Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976)[1] and Roger Dale and Geoff Esland (1977)[2]. The mass education systems in capitalist countries bear fundamental similarities though we may perceive differences among them. Bowles and Gintis argue that the education system is broadly determined by the dominant method of production in society. The differences among the education

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1. S. Bowles and H. Gintis: Schooling in Capitalist America, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976.

2. R. Dale and G. Bowles: Mass Schooling, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1977.

systems of various nations arise cut of the impact of varied cultural traditions which influence the form they take. The circumstances and the conditions at the early stages of development were different in different countries - as in the early industrializing countries, in those industrializing later and in those which were colonized. Despite their dissimilarities there is a close resemblance in the nature of education systems.

Education and education systems can be viewed from varying standpoints. The role that any education system plays in society would depend upon the particular ideological standpoint from which we view it. In one view, in the modern society, education treated as synonymous to schooling, is seen as capable of improving the quality of life. In this view education furthers personal development and fulfilment. It promotes equality and integrates the diverse interests of different social groups in society.

The modern school system, subsumes all traditional forms of education, by discrediting and marginalising them. The school system by its own claims embodies in the curriculum the most worthwhile forms of knowledge. Above all, the schools claim to develop and expose innate talents. These are measured by standardised tests. Social roles and status are assigned on the basis of achievement in the school system. The school system is an efficient and effective arbitrator between social classes because it is assumed that competitive schooling minimises the differences amongst children of different social

classes. And therefore it is claimed that everyone is given an equal chance.

By emphasising the power of educational system in mitigating social class differences and assisting in the emancipation of the individual, this view accords a high degree of autonomy to the educational system. In this view, the problems in the system are not inherent to its structure. If the system has not been able to fulfill the stated objectives, then the problem lies in the curriculum and pedagogy, and reforms centred around these would act as correctives. In this sense, the conflicts arising from inequality in incomes and status, differential access to education, are not seen as reflecting structural inequalities. They are not seen as having an organic linkage with the method of production in society. To quote Bowles and Gintis :

> "The basic strategy of progressive liberalism is to treat troublesome social problems originating in the economy as aberrations which may be alleviated by the means of enlightened social programs. Among the correctives: two stand out: education and governmental intervention in economic life ... both it is thought, can serve as powerful compensatory and ameliorative forces, rectifying social problems and limiting the cost of human expansion ... in so far as reform is possible within the present system it can be achieved through enlightened social policy. The only two constraints, it argues, are those dictated by technology and human nature in any materially productive society."[3]

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3. S. Bowles and H. Gintis, op. cit., p. 19-20.

According to the "liberal" position the education system is expected to perform basically these functions. It assists in individual development, in equalising differences among social classes and lastly, by reconciling the different people to a highly stratified society. Today it is an accepted fact, that the education systems contrary to their object of contributing to individual quest for meaning and fulfilment have made the education a process of acquiring certificates and qualifications. These are crucial for acquiring status and income in society. As Ivan Illich points out :

> "Alienation, in the traditional scheme was a direct consequence of workers becoming wage labour which deprived man of the opportunity to create and be recreated. Now young people are pre-alienated by schools that isolate them while they pretend to be both producers and consumers of their own knowledge, which is conceived as a commodity put on the market in school. The school makes alienation preparatory to life, thus depriving education of reality and work of creativity".[4]

The second function, is that of egalitarianism.Whether that is achieved at all is also questionable. The education system based on the principle that it provides equal opportunities to all children, and minimizes the differences that may arise out of differences in aspiration, which arise from differences in social-class background.[5] Accordingly, universalisation of schooling is justified, because schooling is supposed to ensure effective and efficient distribution of roles, status and income, on the basis of abilities and talents developed and exposed within the school system.

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4. Ivan Illich: Deschooling Society, Macmillan, 1971, p.46.

5. This is the 'meritocratic' principle.

There are two propositions regarding the modern education system that would not be contested: first, the education system is the only institution through which that knowledge can be acquired. Second, the 'meritocratic' criterion which suggests that the system equalizes the chances of people from different social-class backgrounds. These two together with the fact, that despite a long period over which this system has functioned, the same inequalities persist in society, lead us to conclude that people from lower social-class background are less "educable" than those from a superior class position.[6]

In fact there is a "hidden curriculum" in the school system. The school system encourages and rewards individuals who conform. Independent of academic and cognitive achievements the school system rewards individuals who adhere to

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6. Andre Gorz shows that existing inequalities are actually perpetuated by the system. He showed that the notion of cognitive achievement is useful in stratifying and thus controlling the work force. He examines particularly the place of technicians in industry and claims that the justification for their hierarchical superiority stemmed from useless knowledge. The useful knowledge that the technicians possessed was knowledge that could be acquired 'on the job' in five to six years. The technician "had been trained in calculus not to become more efficient than the worker, but to become superior to the worker. And the workers had not learnt calculus not because they were too stupid to learn it, but because they were meant to remain culturally and hierarchically inferior, whatever their skill" quoted in R. Dale and G. Esland, op. cit., p. 44.

the norms of behaviour, with higher grades and those who violate the rules and regulations and behavioural norms are punished with lower grades. Ivan Illich writes that the school curriculum is

> "One that does not link relevant qualities and competences to roles, but rather the processes by which these roles are acquired ... School reserves instruction to those whose every step in learning fits previously approved measures of social control".[7]

Of the three objectives discussed above we have seen that the education system fails to fulfil the objective of 'personal development' and 'egalitarianism'. But the education system, in succeeding to create a demand for school education, does succeed in reconciling social classes to the inequalities in society. Through the operation of the 'meritocratic' principle it justifies and legitimizes social disparities and thereby succeeds in instructing the people in their own inferiority and leaves them subscribing to the view that they can improve their lot only through education. "School leaves them with the expectation (a counterfeit hope) that their grandchildren will make it".[8]

In our view, education performs primarily two functions namely, the function of "social control" and of providing

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7. Ivan Illich, op. cit., p. 14.

8. Ibid., p. 29.

skills. Under capitalism the education system takes over from informal arrangements and guilds the task of training individuals. Education is regarded as an investment in human potential, analogous to investment in machinery, and therefore it is expected to have an economic return. But a more fundamental reason why the education system undertakes this task of training individuals could be a need of capital to control the labour force, not only within its enterprises but within the social system as a whole. Fragmentation of work, in a hierarchically ordered structure of jobs, leads to a situation where there is top-down control by a small group of individuals over the work process. There is a "finely-articulated system" where there are a large number of employees at various levels - clericals, sales, book-keeping and low level supervisory workers. There is a complete separation between those who plan and those who execute the work. Education, with a provision for training individuals, assists in the process of providing skills that are required for smaller and smaller functions within industry ["de-skilling"]. By making a distinction in the curriculum between manual and intellectual work it assists in the process of "de- skilling" the workforce.

The "social control" function of education is reflected in two other aspects of the education system. First, analogous to the hierarchies in production, the school system reflects a hierarchical structure of relations. As in industry, where the hierarchy is not implicit in the level of technology,

hierarchies in the school system arise because of the need to control and supervise the activities of the participants. There is a top-down control on the activities from educators, through administrators at various levels to the school headmaster, teachers, and prefects. The method of control can be blatant or subtle. It is justified by the division of work, where the planning of curriculums and decisions regarding pedagogies to be used are made by one group of individuals, the educators and administrators; and the execution of these tasks by the teachers. Education can be a method of control at another level as well. The relationship between the teacher and the pupil in the classroom reflect a top-down control on the pupil's activities. Though the more obvious manifestations of authoritarianism in the classroom[9] have disappeared the teacher-centred discussion and the withholding of the students participation in setting of priorities reflect the existence of subtler forms of control.

1.2 The Educational System in Colonial India

In a colonized country, the educational system has specific features that distinguish it from the educational system of the metropolitan countries. Whatever the conditions in which this school system is introduced, in cooperation with

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9. This is unlike the personalised forms of control in the nineteenth century schools, where the teacher was the "boss of the classroom".

the indigenous elite (as in India) [10] this system has no organic link with the colonized country. Though it is introduced by the colonizer, and derived from his own education system, it cannot be said that the 'colonial' system of education closely resembles that of the colonizing country. The 'colonial' education system is dependent on the colonizing country for the methods and content of teaching, the organisation and structure of the system, for finances and facilities. And in this sense the educational system is similar to that of the metropolitan country, but has an additional function - the legitimization of colonial rule in the colonized country. The medium of instruction, contents of teaching etc. would be influenced by those prevailing in the colonizers country. But the fact of dependency of this 'colonial' system on the latter, means that there are different sets of relations with the two systems. The elite schools for the colonized country were modelled on the lines of working class education in the metropolitan country, but they were not similar to the latter. As P. Altbach and G. Kelley point out, "despite the fact that schools for the metropole's working class served as models for the colonized elite's training, these models were freely "adapted". Those adaptations ensured a measure of educational inferiority that could be seen both in the structure of the

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10. S. Nurullah and J.P. Naik: A Students History of India (1800-1965), Macmillan, 1964, p. 109-110.

system and the content that was taught."[11] The 'colonial' educational systems are also stratified like the colonizers educational system, and there is a distinct class bias parallel to that in the latter system.[12]

Here we will study the 'colonial' system as it took shape in India. In India, the British introduced an alien system of education with the view to gradually replacing the traditional institutions. Initially the British educational policy in India was confused. The conflict arose around the content of education (the medium of instruction was an important issue) and the related issue of which classes the education ought to be addressed to. There was a conflict between the missionaries and the officials of the East India Company, over the nature of education - the former were in favour of proselytising and Christian education; the latter, for purely pragmatic reasons arising from the fear of offending the local people, were opposed to it.[13] All these controversies were resolved in the 1830's. It was decided that Indian systems knowledge including the classical languages of Sanskrit and

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11. P. Altbach and G. Kelley (ed): Education and Colonialism, Longman, 1978, p. 19-20.

12. P. Altbach and G. Kelley (ed.), op. cit., p. 20.

13. The most violent controversy was around the medium of instruction. The followers of W. Hastings and Lord Minto the "Orientalists" advocated the encouragement of Sanskrit and Arabic studies and suggested that western knowledge and science be spread through the medium of these languages. The second school, the "Vernacularist" consisted of men like Thomas Munro and Montstuart Elphinstone who proposed use of Indian languages to communicate to the mass of the people. The third school was represented by British missionaries and younger officials of the company and later by Thomas Macaulay, who regarded English of paramount importance. And it is obvious that finally the third group, the "Anglicists" had the last word in this debate. S.Nurullah and J.P.Naik, op.cit., pp.32-88

Arabic ought to be replaced by western knowledge and English. The British were convinced of the superiority of their learning and attributed their economic dominance to the superior education of their people. Indians, particularly in Bengal shared the British opinion of western learning. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was convinced of the advantages of western science and literature; he believed that western knowledge would assist India's regeneration.[14] But there were others who wanted to learn English because it ensured them success within the changing circumstances. For the rich families in metropolitan and trading centres English education was useful in trade and commercial activity and added to their social status. Learning of English along with the adoption of the western style of dress, and social intercourse with British officials added to their respectability. All these groups were important votaries of western learning; and demand for it existed before the British formally introduced it in India.[15]

In India the kind of education that the elite received was not influenced by the content and the curriculum of working class education in Britain. The curriculum had an emphasis on the classics of English language. For instance, Shakespere, Milton, Pope's Homer and Dryden's Virgil, history mainly of

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14. Ibid., p. 57.

15. Ibid., p. 56-57

Greece and Rome, England and modern Europe, mathematics and geography" constituted the curriculum of first year class of the Hindu College at Calcutta in 1832.[16] As Nurullah and Naik have noted:

> "The (East India) Company was expected to give good education (which then necessarily meant education through English) to only a few persons (these may or may not be from the upper classes) and leave it to these persons to educate the masses (through the modern Indian language). It was on this view, rather than on the idea of creating a governing class in India or of exclusively educating the upper classes that most of the early official attempts in education were based. To put it briefly, the Company did not accept until 1854, any direct responsibility for the education of the masses which would have necessarily meant, education through the Indian languages; on the contrary, it decided to educate a class of persons in English as a means of ultimately educating the masses through the Indian languages".[17]

In the first place, the working class in Britain was not expected to make it to the university. The schools meant for them were expected to teach them bare essential numeracy and literacy skills. What is more, the pedogogical method used in the 1830's, the 'monitorial system' emphasised restraint, discipline and order rather than learning of skills.[18] It was

16. A. Basu: Policy and Conflict in India: The Reality and Perception of Education in P.Altbach and G.Kelley (ed);op.cit., p.60.

17. S.Nurullah and J.P. Naik; op. cit., p. 86 (author's italics)

18. The 'monitorial' schools were introduced with the view of inculcating in the working class, middle class values and behaviour. What they actually tought gets reflected in a comment of a boy attending one of these schoools:"You might as well learn as much in the streets". See R. Johnson et al (1981). The State and Politics of Education, Open University, Milton Keynes, pp. 20-21.

introduced to enable a small cadre of teachers to handle a large number of students. The number of teachers trained and untrained were too few for any other method to be used in Britain at that time. Each teacher handled as many as a thousand students and sometimes even more. The 'monitorial system' followed the method of appointing monitors or prefects from among the students who assisted teachers in teaching pupils at varying levels of proficiency. The schools were closer to the factories in their organisation rather than to the modern classroom.[19]

The Indians educated in the western tradition formed an elite group. They were vocal in their demand for more finances and facilities for education. Right from the mid nineteenth century there was an expansion of liberal education with its emphasis on English language and literature.[20] Towards the close of the nineteenth century this educated urban middle class vociferously demanded finances and facilities for technical education as well. But the British government refused to meet this demand. The government's educational policy was linked to its employment policy. The most coveted positions were reserved for the Europeans. In the technical services - Engineering, Railway, Irrigation, Ordnance Factories, Posts and Telegraphs - the top positions were occupied by the British. In Industry, except in Bombay, there were no Indians in senior

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19. Raymond Williams; (1961): The Cong Revolution,. Penguins, p. 161.

20. S. Nurullah and J.P. Naik, op. cit., pp. 103-110, and pp. 145-152.

managerial positions. Indians were expected to do clerical work and got job in lower bureaucratic positions. Independent Indian effort in providing technical education was meagre, though not not insignificant. The Victoria Technical Institute was set up in 1887; and effort was made to assist young men to acquire technical education. Leaders of the Swadeshi movement started an engineering college at Jadavpur in Calcutta in 1907.[21]

In India, there was an extremely low level of industrialisation. As an exporter of raw materials and as an importer of finished products, it was a typical colonial economy. The discriminating protection granted to British exports into India discouraged indigenous production. It furthered the interests of British industry and perpetuated Indian dependence on Britain for manufactured goods. As a result there was also very little incentive for private industry to grow. The colonial government's economic policies coupled with the employmwent policy discussed earlier explained the educational policy the colonial government had. A direct consequence of this was the increased dependence of the middle classes on liberal education and related professions.

The British educational policy in India took concrete shape in 1835. The objective was to create a class of Indians who would mediate between them and the people. A section of

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21. A Basu: in P. Altbach and G. Kelley (ed.): op. cit., p. 63.

opinion in Britain was in favour of providing education to every Indian. The East India Company was unwilling to take on this arduous task nor was it prepared for the financial and administrative commitments that such a task required.[22] Company officials expected that once the elite had been educated in English learning and culture, English education would naturally filter down to the masses. This was the basis of what became famous as the "Downward Filteration Theory"[23]

But, it was not until the first decade of the twentieth century that the educated Indians awoke to the need of educating the rest of their countrymen and women. In 1911, Gokhale introduced a bill in the Central Legislature demanding that the government provide free and compulsory education following the method used to 'educate' the working class in Britain. The colonial government did not concede the demand. But, independently Lord Curzon had shifted the emphasis from higher liberal to secondary education. This was because he believed that resurgent nationalist fervour and the increasing antagonism to the colonial government was a consequence of the policies the government had pursued till then.[24] The first two decades of the twentieth

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22. S. Nurullah and J.P. Naik: op. cit., p. 44 and p.86.

23. Ibid., p. 84-88.

24. A Basu: The Growth of Education and Political Development in India (1898-1920), Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 35.

century therefore witnesses a tremendous spurt in secondary education. This expansion was particularly rapid in Bengal, although everywhere else in the country there was a also an increase.[25] Indians made an effort to gain control over these secondary school and determined the content of education. There was a struggle over this, but here Curzon had no choice but to relent. Though books written by Indians were introduced into the school curriculum[26], there was no attempt to question and alter the bias of the curriculum to English education and the academic orientation of the instruction.

The secondary school curriculum was determined by the school leaving examination, which was conducted in English. So the school boys main occupation was to master the language so as to pass the examination. The students did not have sufficient command over the language to comprehend what was to be learnt. This system therefore discouraged thinking and laid emphasis on learning by rote. Passing of the matriculation examination was crucial for acquiring an admission in a university and thereafter to white collar professions.[27] The education was unrelated to the society in which the child was brought up. School education was a means of upward mobility, by opening

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25. Ibid., p. 191-208.

26. A. Basu: ibid., p. 40-41.

27. A. Basu: in P. Altbach and G. Kelley (ed.): op. cit., p. 61.

up avenues of jobs in the "modern" sector. It was divorced from the conditions of the village. Once a boy was schooled he regarded it beneath himself to perform manual work (this will be discussed in detail in the second chapter). Lord Curzon had suggested that agricultural training be introduced into the curriculum, of the school, but the idea did not gain popularity.[28] As early as 1882, the Indian Education Commission had commented on the lop-sided nature of the educational system. The bias towards liberal education had created a vast population of educated unemployed. The Indian Education Commission was of the opinion that there was a need to divert students into vocational training after the secondary stage.[29]

To summarise, the system of education that obtained in colonial India as a derivative of the British educational system had some of the characteristics of that system. But it was fraught with several problems specific to India, which can be attributed to the policies the colonial government pursued. There was a dual system of education in India, not dissimilar to the one in Britain, where there were grammer schools for the elite and the common elementary school for the working class. But in India, the system was lop-sided since there was an insufficiently large base of secondary schools and the collegiate and university education system was disproportionately large.

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28. S. Nurullah and J.P. Naik, op. cit., p. 233.

29. Ibid., p. 174-176.

Moreover, there was much greater importance laid on teaching liberal arts and humanities at the universities, and an inadequate emphasis on vocational, technological and professional education.

1.3 The Indigenous System

The indigenous system[30] was bifurcated into two subsystems, which had no direct nor indirect linkage between them. Adam demarcates them into the "schools of learning" and the "common schools". Higher education was segregated on religious

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30. When we speak of the indigenous system, we refer to the system described by W. Adam in his reports submitted to the Government of Bengal in 1836 and 1838 (J. DiBona (1983). One Teacher, One School). We, recognise that in a country as vast as India no generalization can be made on the basis of a survey of just six districts in two provinces. We also recognise that Munro, Elphinstone, Thomason and Leitner conducted surveys in other parts of the country, and perhaps presented different scenarios. (S. Nurullah and J.P. Naik: A Students History of India, 1964, p. 3-28). A discussion of the other reports would have enriched the discussion, but in no way would alter our ideas on this theme.

W. Adam serveyed six districts in two provinces - Bengal (4) and Bihar (2), visiting every village in each of these districts. The details were collected by investigators especially employed for the purpose. A questionnaire was employed to gather the information.

and cultural lines - there were Sanskrit schools for the Hindus and Persian-Arabic schools for the Muslims. These were accessible only to the upper class of "native society". The common schools were basically of two types. In the vernacular school Bengali, or Hindi or Oriya was used as the medium of instruction. Then there was the Persian elementary school where only the basics of Persian were taught. Adam also described Persian-Bengali (elementary) schools, English and Bengali schools, English missionary schools, domestic instruction and education for girls. The large variety of institutions established with differing motives reflect the diverse social relations and cultural identities in the region.

The Brahmins retained their traditional control of scholarship and higher learning by restricting access to other religious communities and the inferior Hindu castes. On the other hand, Vernacular and Persian schools which centred around providing education useful to agricultural and commercial groups, mediated between social groups more effectively. Education in these schools was a method of acquiring higher social status. The reverse also held. Unsuccessful students might find a decline in their social position. To quote Adam:

> "To teach reading, writing and accounts is considered the proper duty of the Kayastha or writer caste, and a Brahman, a Vaidya, or a Kshetriya, is supposed to degrade himself by engaging in such an occupation, while on the other hand any of the castes inferior to the Kayastha acquire by the same means increased respect. Parents

> of a good caste do not hesitate to send their children to schools conducted by teachers of an inferior caste...[31]

Schools differentiated into categories described above might have also arisen out of the varying needs of different strata of society. First, this might have been to maintain their social positions and to create opportunities for social mobility, as we have already observed. Second, they might simply have catered to the needs of different social groups who performed economic functions, and who needed to acquire very specific skills and capabilities to perform these tasks. The education system which Adam describes appear to have met both the conditions - acquiring of skills and the maintenance of social positions. These two functions are not separable, but are interlinked. In the subsequent part of this section, we will describe the institutions in greater detail, so as to substantiate what has already been said.

The Sanskrit schools were not connected with the vernacular schools. Literacy in the vernacular and basic knowledge of numbers was acquired at home, prior to joining the Sanskrit school. Sanskrit education was monopolized by the Brahmins. In Bihar, the teachers and students without exception, were Brahmins, in Bengal an exception was made in the case of Vaidya caste, and to a lesser extent Vaishnavas and Daivajna. Even in Bengal almost all teachers were Brahmins with a couple of

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31. W. Adam, op. cit., p. 203.

exceptions made in the case of the Vaidya caste. These institutions took no fees from the students and the teachers were supported by endowments and allowances in cash and kind from wealthy patrons. The teachers could also earn by officiating as priests or by recitation of sacred books. The average period spent in acquiring such education was over 20 years. Student's entered the institution when he was around 11 years old. Besides, a large number of students studied outside their native villages. Learning, therefore, required leisure and the adequate means apart from desire and inclination. The students prepared themselves for professions of teachers, priests, logicians, doctors, and perhaps functionaries in the courts.

The Persian/Arabic schools were relevant from the point of view of their direct link with society and economy. The large numbers of Hindus studying Persian apart from the Muslims is explained by this fact. Students studying Arabic were relatively fewer in numbers than those studying Persian. The Persian course consisted of basic works in Persian and elementary grammer, forms of correspondence, popular poems and occasionally a treatise in rhetoric or medicine or theology. This trained the pupils for careers in the administration, police and justice, or as a retainer of a wealthy person. It was not uncommon for a Hindu landlord and man of means to run a Persian school and to give his children Persian education. In the case of two Hindu landlords, Adam observed that they had "no conceivable motive to teach their children (Persian), except with the view to the

use to which they may hereafter apply it in conducting suits in the company's courts[32] or in holding communications with public officers"[33]. Adam argued that even Muslims educated their children in Persian for reasons similar to the Hindus. The language of conversation between them was Urdu or Hindustani and it had copious literature. Besides, the language was derived from Persian, the language of their ancestors and the rulers to whom they owed loyalty. While loyalty, shared racial and religious identity served as motives to sponsor Arabic education, Adam believed that motives other than these, and closer to those which guided Hindu patrons of Persian education, directed Muslims to continue using Persian.

The vernacular institutions and the Persian elementary schools served the needs of a distinctly different group of people. Adam observed that while accounts were seldom taught in Sanskrit schools they were the ultimate object of vernacular education. Commercial accounts were taught to children of money lenders and retail traders, and agricultural accounts taught to the children of families who depended on income from land. A substantial number of the scholars who expected to work as writers, accountants, etc., learnt both types of account. On completion the student expected to work as a Patwari who

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32. Persian was the language used in the courts of law of the East India Co. when this survey was done.

33. W. Adam, op. cit., p. 65.

collected rents, or an Amin who settled disputes and measured plots, for the zamindar, or as Shumarvis who kept accounts of rent or as the Karnaarnavis who was responsible for reporting crops.[34] The Persian schools like the Bengali and Hindi schools provided practical education. Students spent considerable time on improving writing. Elegant penmanship was regarded as a great accomplishment. By the end of the course of study the students could compose letters, petitions, and other legal documents connected with the administration.[35]

In the Bengali and Hindi schools majority of the teachers and students were Hindus. But in Persian schools a very large proportion of the students (about 40-60 per cent and in some districts even more) were Hindus, though the majority of the teachers were Muslims. The two largest caste groups to be found in these schools were Kayasthas and Brahmins.[36] The use of Persian language by the government explained why a large number of Hindus studied Persian.

From the above description of the curricula of the various schools and the variety of employment possible at the

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34. W. Adam, op. cit., p. 18

35. W. Adam, op. cit. p. 19.

36. In Bihar's South Bihar Province of 1486 scholars, 865 were Hindus and of these 711 were Kayasthas; in Tirhoot of the 598 students, 443 were Hindus of which 349 were Kayasthas. W. Adam, p. 252-254.

end of the course of study, it is clear that the education system was oriented to providing practical and useful education at all levels. Even in institutions of learning, apart from highly academic and eclectic subjects, medicine, law, grammer in the Sanskrit schools, and thorough knowledge of Persian language and literature in the Persian schools reflect an emphasis on utilitarian values.

The schools were widely dispersed. Practically every village had its own school with a school teacher. The teacher in the vernacular schools was paid about Rs.4 on an average. The scholars payed "tuition fees" according to their means. In fact parents as a collective supported a teacher. The average number of children in each of these schools was sixteen. The teachers' salaries were paid in a variety of ways, sometimes by one person; or a fee of one to eight annas was collected from each scholar; otherwise perquisites of various kinds - uncooked food, subsistence money, weekly or annual presents were given; or a combination of all these. Adam also found teachers who provided education completely gratuitously. It was not uncommon for one who earned his livelihood from weaving or by selling meat to teach in the evening. Caste Hindu parents did not hesitate in sending their children to schools conducted by men of inferior castes and even sent their children to schools run by teachers of other religious communities. Another striking feature of this system was the high degree of cooperative effort

which went into building the school and paying the teacher. Adam observed :

> 'The school house is sometimes built at the expense of the teacher, sometimes at the expense of a comparatively wealthy person whose son attends the school, sometimes by general subscription, the teacher contributing a little, the parents a little, the parents aiding by their labour, and some benevolent person granting a donation of land, of money, or of materials. In majority of instances there is no school house, in which case the house of the teacher, a family or village temple, an out-house of one of the parents, the hut assigned for the entertainment of travellers, the corner of a shop, the portico of a mosque, or the shade of a tree is employed for the purpose"[37]

Printed books and manuscripts were rarely used in these schools. Learning was primarily by rote. Children passed through four stages when learning to write. They began by writing on the ground, followed by writing on a palm leaf and finally on a plantain leaf before they were allowed to practice writing on paper. In the elementary school learning was by imitation, the younger ones learnt by imitating older students. There were students of all age groups in the school room. Adam did not consider it significant enough to mention, except in passing, that the 'monitorial' method of instruction was common in the schools of Bengal, as this was the most widely used pedagogical method in schools all over India.[38]

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37. W. Adam, p. 204.

38. W. Adam, p. 56-57

Like the vernacular schools, the 'schools of learning' were rooted in the society. Despite their esoteric learning, they were an important influence on the cultural life of the people. These schools were found widely dispersed in villages, towns and large cities. Adam noted that some large villages had as many as seven schools of learning. An interesting feature about these institutions was that each such school of learning specialized in a separate branch of knowledge - grammer, lexicology, literature, logic, law, mythology, astrology and Tantra. There was a sequential system of acquiring the knowledge of these disciplines. The students moved from school to school to acquire the highest form of knowledge - Tantra. The idea of establishing a 'modern' university bringing the different forms of knowledge under one roof did not exist. The method of financing these institutions were decentralized, and there was perhaps no inherent need for a different form of organisation as yet.

A noteworthy feature of these indigenous schools was that there appeared to be no great discrimination amongst the different religious communities. Undoubtably, education was demarcated along religious lines, but in all types of schools - Bengali schools, Persian elementary and Persian schools of learning - both communities interacted in harmony. There were Bengali schools that had Muslim teachers, and Hindu children of all caste groups attended them. In Persian schools, there were a large number of Hindu students though they were seldom

staffed by Hindu teachers. Even in Muslim (Persian) institutions of learning there was an occasional Hindu scholar studying Arabic. Sanskrit schools were the only institutions which were closed to Muslims, more correctly, they admitted no non-Brahmins.

Adam noted that :

> "the mutual disposition of Hindus and Musalmans towards each other is not an unimportant element of society in this country, and it may be partly estimated by the state of vernacular instruction. The Musalaman teachers have Hindu as well as Musalaman scholars; and the Hindu and Musalaman scholars of different castes of the former assemble in the same school-house, receive the same instructions from the same teachers, and join in the same plays and past-times. The exception to this is found in Tirhoot, where there is not one Musalaman teacher of a Hindu school and only five Musalman scholars in the schools of that class. As far as I could observe or learn, the feeling between those two divisions of the population is less amicable in this district than in any of the others I have visited"[39]

Though not central to our discussion there is an interesting sidelight which we think is worth commenting upon - the fact that while the Sanskrit schools were exclusive, the Persian schools were not so. We think that some of the possible reasons may be as follows. To the best of our knowledge, learning, amongst the followers of Islam is not the preserve of any particular social group. But then, Persian schools could easily have been exclusively for Muslims. One reason, for this not being so might be that the Sanskrit schools were part of a system

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39. W. Adam, op. cit., p. 222.

where the hegemony of the Brahmin in the sphere of learning was complete and socially sanctioned, and, therefore, could afford to be exclusive.[40] Persian on the other hand was an alien language, a part of the baggage of the conquering races. The Persian school was, therefore, not only used as a tool of legitimization but also a via media for establishing a cultural hegemony, which if once established would set the final seal on the legitimacy of the governing classes. If the above argument is accepted, then, it clearly follows that exclusivity would have defeated the purpose.

To conclude, the education system which was prevalent in India prior to the arrival of the British was astonishing in its diversity. Possibly the only common thread through all of them was the method of pedagogy which was essentially learning by rote. But then forms of pedagogy as well as its diversity have much to do with the level of social development. The diversity is all the more interesting because one saw education perform both of its somewhat paradoxical roles - the Sanskrit schools typified the role of education as a preserve of status and privilege, whereas the vernacular schools were essentially the beginnings of a quest by castes/social groups down the hierarchical ladder to better themselves. The other feature which is worth noting about these schools is the fact that they

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40. In fact, exclusivity was necessary if that hegemony was to be maintained.

were firmly rooted in their respective environments. The above is not to idealize the indigenous school system and must not be misunderstood for "pedagogic obscurantism". It is only a realization of the fact that a successful school system is one which has its roots in its immediate socio-economic environment and is outward looking. The indigenous school system had the former but not the latter.

Chapter Two

GANDHIJI'S VIEW ON ECONOMY AND EDUCATION

The aim of this chapter is to look at Gandhiji's alternative proposal for education and to provide a critical study of these ideas. To put his views into perspective we will also present a synoptic picture of his ideas on economy and society, and his critique of the 'colonial' system of education. The chapter is divided into four sections.

2.1 Gandhiji's Views on the Economy

2.2 Gandhiji's Critique of the Education System in Colonial India

2.3 The Gandhian Alternative Education System

2.4 A Critique of the Alternative

2.1 Gandhiji's Views on the Economy

Gandhiji's was a moral indictment of modern civilisation. An indictment which sprang from a deep revulsion for a civilisation whose values put the self above all else and in which the material subsumed everything, including the spiritual. It was because self-interest was the motive force of this civilisation that it resulted in conflicts at all levels - between humans, between nations and above all between man and his environment.

A direct consequence of such self-centredness was the capitalist path of development which modern man had adopted.

Capitalism necessarily meant producing for the market and consequently resulted in a particular division of labour which necessitated industrialization. Industrialization meant urbanisation on the one hand and colonization of agriculture on the other. Both these taken together meant a rural-urban divide and an increasing immiserization of the rural populace. According to Gandhiji the dynamics of industrialization forced nations to look beyond their boundaries in search of markets and sources of cheaper raw material and therefore resulted in the colonization of weaker, less developed nations. Political independence would be hollow without economic independence and India could never hope to be economically independent if she remained tied to the international division of labour which colonization had forced upon her.

Whereas, there is enough textual evidence to corroborate the above view that for Gandhiji most of the ills of modern society stemmed from the fact that it had undertaken a path of development which necessitated industrialization in other contexts he made a far weaker statement, where he takes the stand that he is not against industrialization per se. It would be best to let Gandhiji speak for himself on this question:

> "Small countries like England and Italy may afford to urbanise their systems. A big country like America with sparse population perhaps cannot do otherwise. But one would think a big country, with a teeming population, with an ancient rural tradition which has hitherto answered its purpose, need not, must not copy

> the western model. What is good for one nation situated in one condition is not necessarily good for another differently situated ..... Mechanisation is good when hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished, it is an evil where there are more hands than required for the work as in the case of India".[1]

With the above critique in mind Gandhiji's view about how India's economy should be organised falls into place. For him economic reorganisation therefore meant a shift from large industry to agricultural and artisanal/handicrafts based production. Agriculture was not to be developed with a motive to produce for the market. Since, according to Gandhiji, industrialisation necessarily implied exploitation of agriculture, he sought to seal off any deleterious effects, making agrarian village economies self sufficient in their basic needs. Agricultural production was to be carried out through cooperative effort and all other requirements were to be supplied by artisans and petty manufacturers. His idea of a development which would ensure complete and unshackled freedom for the people of India was based on a society in which the village was the unit of production, consumption and governance. He wrote :

> "My idea of village swaraj is that it is

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1. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (henceforth referred to as CWMG): Vol. XLI; p. 220.

> a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its own cloth ... Then if there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops, thus excluding ganja, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks, ensuring clean water supply. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible, every activity will be conducted on a cooperative basis ... Non-violence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-cooperation will be the sanction of the village community ... The government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications ... this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined ... Here there is perfect democracy based on individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government..."[2]

Given the fact that he recognised the contribution of industry during the struggle for independence he could hardly wish away existing industries. But to get around the inherently exploitative capital-labour relationship, he came up with the rather novel idea of trusteeship, where all wealth in the first instance belonged to the society but for society's general good was held by a few people in

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2. CWMG, Vol. LXXVI; pp. 308-9.

trust, who therefore only managed this wealth as trustees, but did not own it. This notion of industry is somewhat expedient, and this becomes clear from the fact that none of the linkages between industry and agriculture are even implicitly stated. If the agrarian economy is self-sufficient, what happens to industry? After all industry can hardly exist in a vacuum. In what has preceded, we have tried to present a rather synoptic account of Gandhiji's view about how the economy should be organised. To close this section without attempting to locate his views on the economy within his social framework, would not only give a partial picture, but also a misleading one at that. If there is any one concept which can be said to give a holistic notion about Gandhiji's views about society, it must be, Swadeshi. Swadeshi, is not to be interpreted in purely economic terms as is the wont of many commentators. Swadeshi, according to Gandhiji, is a way of life. It is also a goal to be achieved, and the journey to its achievement is what would transform the individual and imbue him with values worthy of his (Gandhiji's) utopic society. As is often the case, we find that it is far better to quote him on this, rather than to try and paraphrase his ideas.

> "Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as far religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition, I must

> restrict myself to my ancestral religion. That is the use of my immediate religious surroundings... In the domain of politics I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics, I should use only things produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting. It is suggested that such Swadeshi if reduced to practice would lead to the millenium. And as we do not abandon the pursuit after the millenium because we do not expect quite to reach it within our time, so may we not abandon Swadeshi even though it may not be fully attained for generations to come".[3]

While one can have little to quarrel about with Gandhiji's basic critique of the capitalist order, the alternative that he comes up with is certainly problematic. What follows is neither a detailed nor holistic critique of Gandhiji's notions about the economy. The attempt will be to provide a flavour of the general critique which could be developed.

To start with agriculture, if only because that is what preoccupied Gandhiji so much, what is missing is dynamics of the agricultural sector. It is a little difficult to accept that the charkha (which for Gandhiji symbolised the utopic notion of a village based society) was the panacea for all ills. Gandhiji at no point discusses the inequality

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3. CWMG, Vol. XIII; p. 219.

in assets and incomes which marked rural India, and which would be a hinderance to any developing society. The fact that many of the problems of Indian agriculture could be directly traced to this inequality was something which he did not recognise.

Turning to industry and trusteeship, the notion went against the grain of Gandhiji's professed desire for a functioning democracy. What justifies the privileges of the class of people who would be trustees? Isn't it accepting existing inequality in a different garb. To say that Gandhiji did not see or recognise inequality would be to do him grave injustice. But Gandhiji certainly thought problems of inequality could be overcome by superior moral force. But that builds on the assumption that the forces which fuel inequality is a society, would remain passive, in this non-violent war of attrition. But such an assumption is ahistorical. It will be useful to keep this preliminary sketch of Gandhiji's notion of economy and society in mind when we discuss his ideas on education. The above in a sense outlines the task to be accomplished and as Gandhiji himself says his tool for ushering in this radical social transformation was the education system.

2.2 Gandhiji's Critique of the Education System in Colonial India

Gandhiji's ideas on education are significant not simply because he critiqued an existing system and propounded an alternative to it, but because both his critique and alternative are

grounded in an alternate social vision. The kind of society he envisaged has been dealt with in the preceding section, but it would be useful to recapitulate, so as to put his critique in perspective. Gandhiji envisaged a society where there would not be a rural-urban divide; where there would be equality of access and opportunity; where each individual would earn his/her living through honest labour and such labour would not be demeaned; where each individual would be able to realize the full potential of his/her development; and where each individual would live in harmony with his/her culture and environment.

Gandhiji's critique of the education system was basically centered around three issues and we will look at each of these issues in turn :

(a) it fostered a set of values which were totally alien to India's culture.

(b) it was the handmaiden of colonialism.

(c) it had nothing to offer the masses of this country.

Gandhiji believed that the modern education system fostered values which resulted in the enslavement of the minds of Indians. Not only did it mean that the set of values which the system instilled was something that an Indian could not relate to, but more importantly, by imposing an alien culture, the British destroyed an Indian's moorings in his own society. An Indian could never hope to 'belong' in

British society, and because of the kind of education he received, was 'outside' his own social and cultural matrix. The above had nothing to do with the intrinsic nature of the British who came to rule India, but was inherent in the process of colonisation. As Paulo Freire, talking about colonialism, so beautifully puts it,

> "In the contradiction of the dominant and the dominated, there is a cultural and class conflict. This conflict is such that the dominant will break the forces of the dominated and do all they can to anesthetize the self-consciousness of the dominated people, denying them the essence of their culture as something which exists in their experience and by which they also exist".[4] (italics ours)

For Gandhiji the starkest expression of this cultural domination, was the use of English as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges. The spirit of Gandhiji's views on language are aptly captured by what Freire has to say about it.

> "Language is one of culture's most immediate, authentic and concrete expressions".[5]

and

> ".... They need to appreciate that language is not only an instrument of communication, but also a structure of thinking for the national being. It is a culture".[6]

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4. Paulo Freire (1985): The Politics of Education, pp. 191-92.

5. Ibid., p. 183.

6. Ibid., p. 184.

According to Gandhiji, the fact that the medium of instruction was English, robbed the education provided by government institutions, of whatever little usefulness they might have had.

> "Most of the time the children were taken up with memorizing English words and phrases, and even then they could not put in their own language what they had learnt, and could not properly follow what the teacher taught them. On the other hand they forgot their own language by sheer neglect".[7]

In maintaining that education using English as the medium of instruction was not only useless, but actually harmful for Indian society, he was taking a stand quite opposed to that of people like Raja Rammohan Roy. As we have already seen in Section II, Chapter I, they had welcomed English and the western model of education with open arms.

It follows from the above that colonial education with English being used as the medium of instruction, estranged the educated Indian from the masses of India. Gandhiji repeatedly emphasised the fact that the language of instruction should be one which did not alienate the educated from the vast uneducated mass of the country. He realised that English could never become a substitute language for all Indians. That if India was to decolonize successfully, both economically and spiritually, Indian languages would have

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7. CWMG, Vol. LXVII, p. 113.

have to be developed, and this chasm between the English educated gentry and the average Indian bridged.[8]

According to Gandhiji,

> ".... our present education system is meant for strengthening and perpetuating the imperialist power in India."[9]

The only function, according to him, which this education performed, was to provide the British with a class of loyal functionaries to mediate between the rulers and the ruled. Even though he did not state it in so many words, it is very clear from his writings that, he viewed this education which was geared to producing glorified and not so glorified clerks who would help smoothen the administrative

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8. It is interesting to see that Freire, writing more than half a century after Gandhiji, had much the same observation to make about the use of the colonizer's language as a medium of instruction.

> "Thus, most children, the sons and daughters of peasants, will be excluded. And tomorrow, the new generation of power will comprise only the children of families in power today.
>
> ... In the final analysis, linguistic politics, a dimension of the politics of culture, will wind up deepening the social class differences..."
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> (Freire,op.cit.,p.184).

9. M.K. Gandhi (1951): Basic Education, Navjeevan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, p. 86.

process for the British, as a sort of vocationalisation.[10]

Besides this somewhat limited role, Gandhiji thought that this system of education had no other constructive role to play. Even the most basic of aims of education, that is the development of the individual, was not fulfilled. He wrote :

> "I have learnt geography, astronomy, algebra, geometry etc... In what way have I benefitted myself or those around me? Why have I learnt these things?.... I must emphatically say that with the sciences I have enumerated above I have never been able to use for controlling my senses. Therefore, whether you take elementary education or higher education, it is not required for the main thing. It does not make men of us. It does not enable us to do our duty... I do not for a moment think that my life would have been wasted, had I not received higher or lower education. ... I do desire to serve and endeavouring to fulfill that desire, I make use of the education I receive. And, if I am making good use of it even then, it is not for the millions, but I can only use it for such as you, and this supports my contention."[11] (Italics ours)

It was in the nature of things therefore, that primary school education which was at the base of the educational

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10. Others have, of course, explicitly called it vocational education.

> "It was vocational education with a venegance...vocational education which threw the weight of the curriculum on such matters as English syntax, Shakespearean prosody and the dates of Kings and Queens who had reigned over England".
>
> (Shelvankar quoted in A.R. Desai: Social Background of Indian Nationalism, p.155).

11. CWMG, Vol. X, p. 54.

structure did little else barring serving as a sifting mechanism for higher education. Primary school education did not provide terminal education in the sense that it did not provide the students with any vocation which could be the basis of livelihood. In that sense it was solely a preparatory school for colleges and universities. Gandhiji thought that even from within the parameters of the state, the money spent on primary education was utterly wasteful.

> "The state gets no return whatsoever for the money it is spending on primary education. That we get a few administrators ... as products of the so called higher education is no justification for the waste on primary education ... Directors of public education have admitted that the present system of primary education is a colossal waste, that a very small percentage of people reach the higher classes, there is nothing like permanency in the literacy imported, and that as it is it touches but a small fraction of the vast rural areas".[12]

In as much as this system of education was accessible only to the urban elite and served the interests of a small group of English educated urban Indians who were completely subservient to colonial interests, it exacerbated already existing rural-urban dichotomies. The objectives and goals of this education were obviously not tailored to suit the needs of the rural people, and consequently had nothing to offer the vast mass of the rural populace. Gandhiji thought that education which was narrowly defined as providing literacy to the masses, had little or no meaning for the average

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12. CWMG, Vol. LXX, pp. 273-4.

rural Indian. We end with a quote which very neatly captures the essence of his views about the worth of such education.

> "A peasant earns his bread honestly. He has ordinary knowledge of the world. He knows fairly well how he should behave towards his parents, his wife, his children and his fellow villagers. He understands and observes the rules of morality, but he cannot write his name. What do you propose to do by giving him a knowledge of letters? Will you add an inch to his happiness? Do you wish to make him discontent with his cottage or his lot? And even if you want to do that, he will not need such an education. Carried away by the flood of western thought we came to the conclusion, without weighing the pros and cons that he should give this kind of education to the people".[13]

2.3 The Gandhian Alternative Education System

Gandhiji's educational alternative was in complete opposition to the system he critiqued. His education was directed to the people who had been excluded by the 'colonial' education system. It was to be a village centred programme, focussing the needs of the rural populace and deriving its impetus and values from Indian culture.[14] Therefore, his

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13. CWMG, Vol. X, p. 54.

14. According to Gandhiji rural India was the repository of India's cultural heritage. Rural culture epitomised the culture that he sought for an independent India.

education was grounded in the social context. It was to be organically linked to rural economic, social and cultural life with the introduction of a productive craft into the curriculum of the school. In our view the most important features of Gandhiji's 'Rural' National Education[15] were (a) Manual work, (b) Self-reliance, (c) Moral Education. All these features were a part of his general social and political programme as early as the 1920's and became a part of the more systematic effort of the social reconstruction of villages after 1934.

The cornerstone of Gandhiji's Basic National Programme was some productive economic activity. In opposition to traditional schooling where the emphasis was on literacy and numeracy alone, Gandhiji's Basic Schools were to centre education around a productive craft. Gandhiji held that:

> "For the all-round development of boys and girls all training should so far as possible be given through a profit yielding vocation. In other words vocation should serve a double purpose - to enable the pupil to pay for his tuition through the products of his labour and at the same time to develop the whole man or woman in him or her through the vocation

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15. Gandhiji wrote: "A more correct though much less attractive description would be Rural National Education through village handicrafts. 'Rural' excludes the so-called higher or English education. 'National'at present connotes truth and non-violence. And 'through village handicrafts' means that framers of the scheme expect teachers to educate village children in their villages so as to draw out all their faculties through some selected village handicraft.. the scheme is a revolution in the education of village children" in M.K.Gandhi Basic Education, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1951, pp. 79-80.

learnt at school".[16]

The productive craft was a pedagogic tool through which all subjects were to be taught. The craft selected, was to be one which could be creatively used as a medium through which subjects like history, geography and the sciences could be taught. The central idea of this pedagogical innovation was not to train craftsmen in a more effective and creative way, but to educate the new generation in new values. Gandhiji believed that education around productive manual work would inculcate in the new generation a sense of responsibility and a cooperative spirit. He was opposed to the idea of introducing a non-remunerative craft into the school curriculum, because he believed that education was also inculcating in children value for human labour. Gandhiji observed:

> "We can teach our children to make clay toys that are to be destroyed afterwards. That too will develop their intellect. But it will neglect a very important principle, viz., that human labour and material should never be used in a wasteful or unproductive way. The emphasis laid on the principle of spending every minute of one's life usefully is the best education for citizenship and incidentally makes basic education self-sufficient".[17]

Gandhiji believed that an educational process should activate all human faculties. He held that learning centred

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16. CWMG, Vol. LXVI, p. 153.

17. M.K. Gandhi, Basic Education, op. cit., p. 84.

around work would make children eager to learn, arouse their curiosity and develop their innate intelligence better than learning centred around books alone. He also held that manual dexterity would later assist in the acquiring of technical knowledge. Experimentation and learning centred around the child's everyday experiences and observations would endow him with a scientific spirit.

Gandhiji believed that craft-centred education was useful in yet another way as a pedagogical tool. The village craft was a part of the child's environment, and education centred around it would facilitate the child's understanding of his environment. Traditional education with its emphasis on the text book and examination encouraged learning by rote. Education was restricted to consigning irrelevant information to memory. It gave no room to questioning and thinking. The importance of passing the examination dominated the lives of the students and the teachers as well. Interaction between the student and the teacher was restricted to subjects which the textbooks discussed. In his opinion, the textbook dominated the classroom discourse completely; and that it was written and published by vested interests. Gandhiji's views on this subject are of great interest, because in a way, he anticipates the dramatic commoditization of school know-

ledge.[18] He avers on the control of the classroom discourse by outside forces, that do not take cognisance of the diversity and richness of the lives the children lead. To quote him:

> "If textbooks are treated as a vehicle for education, the living word of the teacher has very little value. A teacher who teaches from the text book does not impart originality to his pupils. He himself becomes a slave of the text book and has no opportunity or occasion to be original. It, therefore, seems that the less the text books are there the better it is for the teacher and his pupils".[19]

Craft-centred learning on the contrary was expected to capture the variety and diversity of the child's environment. In fact, Gandhiji took an extreme position: that all teaching and learning should be carried out around the process of making cloth, in particular around spinning. He believed that almost all the subjects - arithmetic, history, geography, and the sciences - could be taught through these crafts. His position appears to be an extreme one, perhaps a reaction to the entirely decontextualized education of the traditional schools.[20] The meaning of the Gandhian notion of contextualised

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18. To quote Gandhiji: "Text books seem to have become an article of commerce. Authors and publishers who have made writing and publishing the means of making money are interested in frequent changes of text books. It is naturally to their interest to have their books sold. The selection board is again naturally composed of such people. And so the vicious circle becomes complete". in CWMG, Vol. LXX, p. 183.

19. CWMG, Vol. LXX, p. 183.

20. Zakir Husain admitted that there was no craft or vocation which had complete educative possibilities. in Basic Education: Seven years of Work, Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Sevagram, 1945, p. 31.

education is clear in the Zakir Husain Committee Report. To quote him :

> "In order to work out an effective and natural coordination of the various subjects and to make the syllabus a means of adjusting the child intelligently and actively to his environments, we have chosen three intrinsically inter-connected, as the foci for the curriculum i.e., the physical environment, the social environment and craft work within is the natural meeting point ... it utilises the recources of the former for the purpose of the latter... It is essential for all teachers and educational workers to note that we have really attempted to draw out an 'activity curriculum' ... our schools must be places of work, experimentation and discovery, not of passive absorption of information imparted at second hand ... (in) the curriculum we have stressed this principle by advocating that all teaching be done through real life situations relating to craft or to social and physical environments, so that whatever the child learns is assimilated into his growing activity".[21]

Perhaps the most interesting contribution Gandhiji made was his attempt to redefine school knowledge. By introducing manual work, particularly those occupations which had a stigma attached to them, for instance, scavenging, he disturbed the traditionally accepted notion of school knowledge. Krishna Kumar observes :

> "The proposal of basic education had a symbolic aspect ... by proposing to introduce local crafts and production related skills and knowledge in the school, Gandhi was proposing allocation of a substantive place in the school

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21. Basic Education: The Zakir Husain Committee Report, Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Sevagram, Wardha, 1938, p. 22.

> curriculum to systems of knowledge developed by and associated with, oppressed groups of the Indian society, namely, artisans, peasants and cleaners. It was no less than a revolution in the sociology of knowledge".[22]

Gandhiji had expected that gradually the distinction between people who do manual labour and people who do mental work would be obliterated, by a successful implementation of his programme. He believed that with the introduction of work into the school curriculum, the stigma associated with it, and with the castes who depended on these occupations for their livelihood would be mitigated. Moreover, he sought to bridge the distance between menial caste groups and caste Hindus. by making education available to the former (and calling upon the latter to do physical work), in an effort to end the monopoly of the higher caste groups of knowledge. To quote Gandhiji :

> "To be fair to the Untouchables, one must send one's own children to such schools for depressed classes and make sure that the educational standard is not allowed to fall low... Let not the education be such as to transform these village workers into Khansamas, dirty hands, petty sub-clerks in unhealthy towns. Let the education enable them to follow the occupations of their fathers, to follow them more scientifically, to follow them with greater skill".[23]

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22. Krishna Kumar "The Problem of the Curriculum", Occasional Papers in History and Society, No. XXII, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 1986.

23. CWMG, Vol. XIII, p. 259.

Gandhiji sought to resolve the financial constraint on elementary education by proposing that the education process should be self-supporting, that students and teachers should perform some productive manual work. He linked the school directly to production, making the provision for teaching skills which ensured employment, and making the school a productive institution. Students, in his opinion should work as much as to pay their tuitions, and teachers ought to work alongside their pupils, participating in their lives as well as setting an example.

J.B. Kriplani elucidated Gandhiji's ideas on the issue in the following way :

> "Situated as we are, considering our political and financial handicaps, and the necessity of universal education Gandhiji's scheme worked in his spirit and not merely in form, is the only one which has a chance of accomplishing the end in view, namely, universal education. There is no other practical way".[24]

Gandhiji himself was not of the opinion that the self supporting ideal should dominate over all other aspects of his scheme. He believed that self-support was an inescapable and inevitable consequence of the programme, and was the acid-test to the success of the scheme. To quote him:

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24. J.B. Kriplani: The Latest Fad (Basic Education), Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Sevagram, Wardha, 1948, p. 60.

> "If such education is given, the direct result will be that it will be self-supporting. But the test of success is not its self-supporting character, but the whole man that has been drawn out through the teaching of the handicraft in a scientific manner. In fact, I would reject a teacher who would promise to make it self supporting under any circumstancs. The self-supporting part will be the logical corollary of the fact that the pupil has learnt the use of everyone of his faculties".[25]

Gandhiji's view of childhood differed considerably from many of his contemporaries; it is pre-modern.[26] In fact, his own ideal of a child reflected his own upbringing at the close of the nineteenth century, when a twelve year old was married, and undertook the responsibilities of a wife and family life. He therefore, regarded twelve year olds as grown up enough to supplement their family income by working. In fact, Gandhiji did not regard children as representing a distinct group in society, though he recognised that this was a special stage in an individual's development. To elucidate this idea

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25. M.K. Gandhi: Basic Education, op. cit., p. 52.

26. "We have grown accustomed to children. We have decided that they should go to school, do as they are told, and have neither income nor families of their own .... childhood as distinct from infancy, adolescence or youth was unknown to most historical periods ... before our century neither the poor nor the rich knew of children's dress, children's games or child's immunity from law. Childhood belonged to the bourgeosies. The worker's child, the peasant's child and the noble man's child all dressed the way their father's dressed, ... were hanged by the neck as were their fathers. After the discovery of "childhood", by the bourgeoisie all this changed". See I. Illich, op. cit., p. 26.

we quote G. Ramanathan, an advocate of Gandhiji's ideas on education :

> "Basic education assumes that children do not constitute a distinct class of citizens. It refutes the suggestion that children are a kind of passive raw materials to be processed into finished products. It rests on the doctrine that children are constituent members of society, participants in the sum total activities called life. Life constitutes rights and duties, both receiving and giving. So the education process is a two-way traffic. Of course, the child receives much more than it gives; but the little that the child gives is significant. It is this contribution of the child, however small it may be, that makes the child participate in the education process".[27]

Moral education was the building block of Gandhiji's proposal for an alternative education. In his view, education that did not accomplish this basic and crucial task of creating a new individual was irrelevant and futile. The new individual was to be an epitome of self-restraint, honesty, fearlessness, abnegation of material comforts and success; a person who was deeply convinced of and motivated by the ideals of Swaraj, Swadeshi and Satyagraha. His new individual was to regard all forms of labour as equal; and respect all people - those of other castes and religions; and was to be tolerant of dissent and of diverse beliefs and faiths. Gandhiji was convinced that the foundation of a new society could be laid only through voluntary work and sacrifice. The individual was to be prepared

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27. G. Ramanathan: Education from Dewey to Gandhi, p. 255.

for this with an unmoving conviction in truth and non-violence.[28] He regarded moral education as an important aspect of the Basic programme. It was in his opinion as important to instil in children a deep commitment for all these values, as was teaching them a craft or giving them basic information. To quote him :

> "I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs ... But unless the development of the mind and body go hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lopsided affair. By spiritual training I mean the education of the heart. A proper and all round development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds pari passu with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole ... it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that they can be developed piecemeal or independently of one another".[29]

Gandhiji believed that these - the education of the heart and character - were fundamental tasks of the teacher. The teacher, in his educational programme was crucial for its success. He was to be a person highly motivated to teach, one who was fond of his students and prepared to participate in and be integrated into their lives. The basic school teacher

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28. These principles are laid down in a speech on 'Ashram Vows' at Y.M.C.A., Madras, in CWMG, Vol. XIII, pp. 225-235.

29. M.K. Gandhi, Basic Education, op. cit., p. 10 (Italics ours).

was expected to be a craft teacher, an intellectual leader and spiritual guide all rolled into one. His commitment to the children and their community did not stop there, it extended outside the four walls of the school. To quote Gandhiji:

> "..... A basic school teacher must consider himself a universal teacher... supposing I come across an old man dirty and ignorant. His village is his universe. It should be my job to teach him cleanliness to remove his ignorance, widen his mental horizon ... I must have an eye on the children right from their birth. I will go even a step forward and say that the work of an educationist begins even before that".[30]

Adult education was as much a part of the proposal of Basic Education as was the education for children. Gandhiji's programme for political and social change recognised the need for the support of different constituencies. The message of swadeshi, non violence and its instrument, satyagraha were to be communicated to the millions of Indians, so as to mobilise their support in the cause of independence.[31] Gandhiji believed

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30. M.K. Gandhi quoted in: Seven years of work: Eighth Annual Report of Nai Talim (1938-46), Hindustani "Talimi Sangh, Sevagram, Wardha, 1946, p. 45. (italics ours).

31. Gandhiji believed that adult education was to be an extension of the basic education programme, and education was to be conducted through the 'basic craft'. in M.K. Gandhi: Basic Education, op. cit., p. 106.

that illiteracy was not a reflection of ignorance, which was deeper than the inability to read and write. The people were impoverished by an inferiority to the white man, ignorant of the cause of their subjugation and of their inherent power to change their lives through collective action. Gandhiji's adult education was a part of his general programme for initiating people into the independence struggle. It was therefore, a political education, not one centred around the alphabet and numbers. In the "Constructive Programme" Gandhiji wrote:

> "The villagers know nothing of foreign rule and its evils. What little knowledge they have picked up fills them with awe the foreigner inspires. The result is the dread and hatred of the foreigner and his rule. They do not know how to get rid of it. They doo not know that the foreigners' presence is due to their own weakness and their ignorance of the power they possess to rid themselves of the foreign rule. My adult education means therefore first, true political education of the adult by the word of mouth...."[32]

While Gandhiji focussed his attention on elementary education he did not altogether ignore the universities in his educational programme. In fact, the university was to be an important agency for directing research and experimentation to support the grass-root level work in the villages.

Gandhiji's university was, therefore, one which served the mass of the rural people. It was to be an organic outgrowth of the economic, social and cultural life of the village.

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32. CWMG, Vol. LXXV, p. 154-155 (italics ours)

Its primary objective was to find methods and devise schemes to improve the condition of the rural sector. Universities situated in the cities could not effectively contribute to the 'resuscitation' of the villages. In Gandhiji's view :

> "You can not instruct the teachers on the needs of the villagers through a training school in the city, nor can you ~~interest~~ entrust them in the condition of the villages. But to interest city dwellers in villages and make them live in them is no easy task".[33]

Gandhiji believed that university education should be supported by private enterprise. Those industries and firms that required skilled and trained people should be willing to provide training at their own expense. The state should monitor and supervise such university education. He wrote:

> "I would revolutionize, college education and relate it to the national needs. There would be degrees for mechanical and other engineers. They would be attached to different industries which would pay for the graduates they need thus the Tatas would be expected to run a college for training engineers under the supervision of the state, the mill associations would run among them a college for training graduates whom they need similar for other industries that may be named. Commerce would have its college... (so would) arts, medicine and agriculture".[34]

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33. CWMG, Vol. LXV, pp. 233-234.

34. CWMG, Vol. LXV, p. 451.

Implicit in Gandhiji writings on education is a critique of the hierarchical structure of organisation of education. In his system primary education was not seen as the base of the structure of schooling, but together with secondary schooling, it was the focus of Gandhiji's attention. Elementary education [an approximately seven to eight year programme] was a complete programme; it provided terminal general education, together with vocational training. The universities were to arise out of the felt needs of the people.

At a societal level this system of education was expected to 'revolutionize' the relations between the urban and rural areas, as well as mitigating the dichotomy between classes. Though Gandhiji believed that his educational programme would inevitably lead to the obliteration of inequalities, those which persisted despite these efforts, were not systemic, but reflective of the innate differences among human beings and the uniqueness of the individual.

In this context we find some interesting similarities between the system of education that existed in India prior to the British and the Gandhian system of education. Both the systems were characterized by complete localization of the educational process. The village was at the centre of the process; every village had one school, and each had one teacher. Gandhiji was aware that such a localized system had existed prior to the advent of the British, but the coming of the British struck the death-knell of the system, because

they undermined the support structures of this (indigenous) system.[35]

The indigenous system drew on local community and individual resources. The material, financial and intellectual resources were those poossessed by the village people themselves. Consequently, the school in both the systems was organically linked to the community in which it existed. Adam's report on the school system reflect a very high order of social responsibility and a collective spirit in producing inexpensive education to the children. In Gandhiji's utopian notion we find a very similar emphasis on social responsibility. Though, he differed in this respect from the indigenous system, because under his system children were to bear a part of the financial

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35. Speaking at Chatham House, London Gandhiji said:

> "....India is more illiterate than it was 150 years ago.. bcause the British administrators when they came to India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out. They scratched the soil and began to look the root, ... and the beautiful tree perished. The village schools were not good enough for the British administrator, so they came out with his programme. Every school must have so much paraphernilia, buildings and so forth ... and the schools established after the European pattern were too expensive for the people ... I defy anybody to fulfill a programme of compulsory primary education of these masses inside of a century. This poor country of mine is ill able to sustain such an expensive system. Our state would revive the old village school master and dot every village with a school for both boys and girls", in CWMG, Vol. XLVIII; pp. 199-200.

requirements by doing productive manual work. In Gandhiji, this idea emerged from his belief that productive manual work was a pedagogic tool. Essentially what is common to both these systems is that they were rooted in their respective social contexts; Gandhiji went beyond to link the curriculum to the social environment in an immediate sense.[36] But where he radically differed from the traditional schools was in upset - ing the traditional hierarchy in school knowledge - in which schools and school knowledge were monopolized by the upper castes.

The other issue common to both these systems and of interest to us is the mode of funding of higher education. Higher education was to be linked directly with the people's needs, and for that reason funded by the people themselves, or by the interested groups who demanded it.

It is certainly true that Gandhiji was aware of the broad structure of the indigenous system - a point which is obvious in the quotation cited in footnote: 22, though it is not clear that he was aware of the details of this system. But we may suggest that Gandhiji drew some of the elements of his system from the indigenous structure.

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36. Gandhiji's notion of the context is a far more comprehensive category. By context, he also meant the of the curriculum with the child's social environment, i.e., to say the nature of the productive work the child was to do was supposed to be directly linked to his cultural and social environment.

2.4 A Critique of Gandhiji's Ideas on Education

In our view Gandhiji's educational programme can be analysed at fundamentally two levels. First, we intend to discuss the elements of his proposal for an alternative education. Second, we will discuss the organisation and structure of his scheme, which is dialectically linked to the various parts of his educational programme.

Manual work[37] was the starting point of his education. According to Gandhiji, work and productive economic activity was an instrument through which the school could itself be made the centre of an active community life. And the curriculum which centred around this vocation was regarded, much the same as Dewey, as containing the sum-total of the child's

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37. The idea of introducing manual work into the school curriculum as not entirely an original one. Work was regarded as one of the most important media of transmitting skills by the Owenists. Robert Owen's school (Robert Owen: A New View of Society. Third Essay (1814), p. 61-90 in Brian Simon (ed.): The Radical Tradition in Education in Britain, Lawrence and Wishart, 1972) was founded in proximity to the factory. William Morris (A Factory as it may be (1884), p. 287-299 in B. Simon (ed.), op. cit.), a radical educationist, believed that the factory, built on the principles of human fulfilment and satisfaction of the workers needs and not for profit motives should be the centre of productive and creative education. Gandhiji's own idea of making the school a productive institution was in conformance with the education suggested by Owenists and Charterists. John Dewey (The Child and the Curriculum, the School and Society, Chicago Univ. Press, 1957) also accepted the value of work and activity centred education. A precursor to Gandhiji he believed that manual work by its very nature promoted concerted action. The teacher and student participating in a common enterprise, promoted a collective spirit and concerted action.

social experience. In the traditional system, the separation of learning into subjects, fragmented and pre-arranged for the child a way of seeing the world. The inter-relatedness of the disciplines and the continuity of these in the minds of the child was therefore ignored in conventional education. The significance of the Gandhian experiment lay in its questioning of the traditionally accepted and evolved meanings of school knowledge. He redefined the notion of learning, diverging from the criterion used, and evolved an entirely new definition of socially useful knowledge. And in this sense, Gandhiji was indeed questioning what was traditionally regarded as appropriate knowledge. But two questions need to be asked. Was Gandhiji's scheme capable of seriously disturbing the prevailing hierarchy of the different monopolies of knowledge in our caste society? Was the introduction of the new concept of socially useful knowledge in the form of occupation into the curriculum capable of an education centred around the child and his environment?

In India, where the idea of the caste is deep rooted in the psyche of the people, and is most crucial in hierarchically stratifying the Hindus, Gandhiji instead of rejecting the institution, reinterpreted it and redefined it. In his scheme, people performed different occupations, depending on the caste they were born into, but, there was to be no differential value attached to different economic activities. Gandhiji

wrote on the varna system :

> "Varna is intimately, if not indissolubly connected with birth, the observance of the law of Varna means the following on the part of each of us heriditary and traditional calling of our forefather's in the spirit of duty... This performance of one's heriditary function is a matter of duty, though it naturally carries with it the earning of one's livelihood. Thus the function of the Brahmana is to study and teach the science of the Brahman (or spiritual truth) ... A Kshatriya will perform the function of protecting the people ... A Vaishya will pursue wealth-producing occupation ... A Shudra will perform physical labour ... Varna is determined by birth but can be retained only by observing its obligations ... All varnas are equal, for the community depends no less than on one than the other. Today varna means gradation between high and low. It is a hideous travesty of the original".38

Gandhiji's concept of the varna - or the caste system, therefore evolved by the superimposition of the modern humanist idea of equality of labour, as represented in Ruskin, on the traditional concept of varna. In the usual interpretation of the caste system, the varna system not only divided people into groups on the basis of inherited economic roles they were expected to fit, but there were unequal values attached to different economic functions. Therefore, it stratified society, hierarchically on the basis of inherited occupations. Gandhiji by introducing the notion of equality amongst all forms of

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38. Selected works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. VI, edited by Shriman Narayan, Navjivan Publishing House, 1968, p. 476.

labour and means of livelihood was attempting to reform the inequalities inherent in the varna system. While birth and inheritance were the most important criteria for determining economic roles, all castes were to have an equal access to education. The Shudra was free to study (but to earn his livelihood he must do physical work), as was the Brahmin. There were to be no special privileges for any caste group, but individuals should be motivated by a sense of duty to train in and follow the professions of their fathers.

Once having accepted that economic roles were to be defined by an individual's birth, the only way equality can be achieved is by abnegation of privileges that are concommitant with different economic roles. But equality is simply not a moral question, or a question of how one views labour (as in, work done), but also a question of the structure of perceptions in society. In fact, it is the structure of society which determines the way work is viewed; which is why it becomes important for equality amongst individuals, to have a society where an individual is free to choose her profession according to her inclinations and aptitudes. And aptitudes are certainly not determined by birth.

In our view, the introduction of manual work into the school curriculum would not alter the societal perspectives and values attached to it in the absence of a process where people are actively rethinking and questioning the received

ideas and cultural practices. Otherwise, the introduction of work into the school curriculum would even lead to reinforcing the dominant view of work and school knowledge, or else, these schools would be marginalised. In so far as, Gandhiji's work-centred education was a part of the child's milieu[39] it reproduced traditional values attached to labour, and did not alter the child's way of seeing. In this sense, his work-centred education was thoroughly "contextualised"

In Gandhiji's view, education that alienated the child from its social environment promoted decontextualised learning. This was his opinion of traditional schooling which did not instil in children a respect for their heriditary vocation and made them anomies in their society. Inherent and implicit in traditional schooling were values which perpetuated the dichotomy between work and scholarship. Gandhian education attempted to substitute these by a different structure of values altogether. This was the crux of Gandhiji's alternative proposal for moral education. There was an added religious veneering, and work was to be a religious duty.

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39. By milieu we do not mean the physical environment, the social, economic and political processes alone we also include the child's subjective understanding of these. In this context, the subjective view may not simply be that which is held by a single individual and may in fact coincide with the perspective of a whole group or a caste. We are therefore attempting to take into account the processes which can not always be observed in the world. But mind processes individual or those of an entire community are equally important in any attempt to alter perspectives.

His schools, as we will discuss later in this section, provided education to those who had no access to it, those who had traditioonally been regarded as incapable of scholastic achievement. The moralising about work in such an environment was unnecessary. Moreover, this education was in divergence with the perceptions of the children and then parents; people's perceptions were naturally influenced by the dominant values in society and the social structure. In our opinion it was 'natural' that the lower castes, the adivasis and other oppressed groups aspired to jobs in the 'modern' sector, and that they preferred to be "khansamas, duty hands, petty sub-clerks in unhealthy towns" rather than be at the bottom of the village hierarchy. By 'natural' we mean that the working people had internalized the oppressors opinions of themselves and their work. Gandhian education's inability to take cognisance of the perceptions of the people made it impossible for it to alter the hierarchies prevailing in school knowledge and in the school system.

The inability of Gandhian education to take into account the continuity between the child's family/caste/community experience and her school experience, is the crucial problem with its underlying theory. In terms of the physical environment, the educational programme certainly provided contextual

education[40]. But Gandhian education does not consider the mind processes that are influenced by the existing perceptions, attitudes and values. The way in which the child processes the information, skills and values and how these are accommodated within the child's mind depend on the child's personal and caste/community history. It is certainly not possible to try and understand the working of each individual mind. But a recognition of the dominant and prevalent group/caste/community/class perspectives and histories would enable a better understanding of how what is taught in the schools is received by (whether accepted or not accepted) the children and also their parents.

The conventional school prepared the children for examinations, trained them in the values and ethics necessary for industrial jobs. People attached greater importance to jobs in urban areas or in industry because they ensured greater

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40. In most Gandhian Basic Schools, spinning and the other processes of making cloth were the vocations taught. In fact, basic education came to be identified with spinning. Very often, spinning was not the natural and traditional craft of the region. The making of cloth was, therefore, not the best medium around which teaching and learning could take place. And hence, education was not contextual even in the Gandhian usage of the term. Another problem could arise if the craft became a fetish in the way text books were. Then education would be centred around another object or a process, which was equally unnatural.

permanency and security of employment and income. Gandhian schools, on the contrary, attempted to ingrain in children the values which were in any case part of the child's upbringing in conservative peasant household. People did not think it necessary to send their children to school, where they would not learn any more than that which could be acquired at home. In any case, it is possible that people did not attach any importance to learning skills, such as artisanal and agricultural skills, at the end of which their children could not find satisfactory employment. The Basic Schools were on the one hand redundant, and on the other, did not recognise the existence of the industrial sector which even at a nacent stage was a powerful pull factor. The educational programme was therefore, situated in a vacuum.

Another aspect of the educational programme, which distinguishes it from the traditional system of education was moral education.[41] Gandhiji sought to inculcate values which were basically opposed to the industrial ethic and purported to be in accordance with the values of the village community and family. Gandhiji's moral education aimed at

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41. This is a recurrent theme in all writings of Gandhian educationists. This is epitomised in a book by Shanta Narulkar on the education of pre-primary school children. We quote her to give an idea of the language used:

"We can gradually develop a habit of self-control in the child through minor things, waiting for a meal till prayer is over, waiting for his turn till water is served. The good habits formed in childhood help him to grow into a well balanced responsible citizen...we cannot force obedience...obedience must come naturally". In (Shanta Narulkar: Plan and Practice, Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1950, p. 21.)

creating a generation of young men and women who could be better adapted to their circumstances. So, values such as non-stealing, truth, acceptance of personal authority, hard work, thrift etc. which as we stated earlier, were in any case a part of the upbringing of a peasant child formed a major part of the curriculum. The introduction of such values as part of curricular training was not only to attempt to shape individual and hence class behaviour but to take away from the family this function altogether. But, this is in contradiction with Gandhiji's own view that parents should ideally provide for their childrens' education. [42] But, his belief that children of impoverished peasant families needed to be taught how to dress, walk, to behave and to be taught the virtues of honesty, simplicity, cleanliness, etc. apart from hard work, cooperative spirit etc. reflected a lack of trust in the ability of these people to give their children the right values necessary for living correctly. Gandhiji is depracatory about the values and cultures of the modern educational system, for reasons that they have an over-powering influence on the minds of the young, and that they tutor the children into accepting unquestioningly the superiority of an alien culture. But his system presents substitutional values, that are to be accepted in precisely the same way,

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42. He regarded himself as the best person to educate his children. (M.K. Gandhi: An Autobiography, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1988, p.387). He also wrote to his son and daughter-in-law to undertake the education of their child on their own. He regarded schools as inefficient and incapable of providing right education.

that is, without questioning. In that sense, Gandhiji's educational programme does not offer an alternative for pedagogy. Manual work is to be the focus of the learning process not because the children could learn too question and therefore learn to interpret their own environment, but because it is morally correct to work with one's hands.

The concept of self-reliance dominated Gandhiji's discourse. At a national level he suggested swadeshi. In the specific context of education he suggested that the student pay his own tuitions, by performing a minimum manual labour. Gandhiji's argument is that the poor peasant family could not afford to educate its children. In a country, as poor as India, even children were required to earn to supplement the family income. He was of the opinion that education in a colonized country ought to remain outside the domain of the government. As we saw in Section 2.2, he was aware of the colonizer using the education system for his own ends. An independent, substitutional system of education was therefore seen as an immediate necessity. J.B. Kriplani, an advocate of Gandhian education justified self-supporting education thus :

> "Situated as we are, and considering our political and financial handicaps and the necessity of universal education Gandhiji's scheme worked in his spirit and not merely in form, is the only one which has a chance of accomplishing the end in view, namely, universal education.

There is no other practical way".[43]

The problem that the peasant family required the adolescent's income to maintain a subsistence level did not detract Gandhiji and others from advocating the self support ideal. Gandhiji also rebuffed charges that his education was legitimizing child labour, by emphasising its value as a pedogogical instrument.

Returning to the question of the method Gandhiji used to resolve the problem of universal compulsory education in India we find that he was attempting to combine elements of two distinct traditions into his model for education. First, the idea of education being the responsibility of an agency outside the community in which the children are born is a modern concept. State responsibility for children's education emerged in the post-industrial revolution period in Europe. By the late nineteenth century education came to be regarded as a function of the state when it became necessary to develop more centralized systems of policy making in the face of economic competition amongst the capitalist nations. Education came to be regarded as an investment in human potential, which like investment in machinery would bring economic returns. But, more importantly it came to be regarded as an "investment in social control through which the values of responsibility,

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43. J.B. Kriplani, op. cit., p. 60.

respect for the political order and 'desirable' moral codes could be inculcated".[44]

On the other hand, Gandhiji sought complete autonomy for his educational institutions. Here he draws from the indigenous tradition in education (discussed in Section 1.3) where education lay outside the purview of the state, and was entirely the responsibility of the community or of the parents. In the old system the family was the primary agency of transmitting social mores and customs as well as heriditary skills. By making education the individuals own responsibility because the family was in no position to undertake it, Gandhiji was, in fact, returning to the pre-British Indian tradition.

The conflict arose because the objectives of the two traditions he tired to combine are opposed to each other. Gandhiji sought financial autonomy because it accorded the community, the students and teachers a degree of control over the educational process. But Gandhiji granted an outside agency, be it the Congress 'constructive workers' prior to independence, or the government in the post-independence period, the right to direct, guide and supervise the education of the children. The objective of self-support, which was peoples control over the education of their children, was not achieved. Gandhiji was attempting to reconcile two distinct, opposed and irreconciliable concepts.

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44. R. Dale and G. Esland, op. cit., p. 20.

In the foregoing discussion we have analysed specific elements of Gandhiji's education programme. The structure and organisation of his schools is equally important to an understanding of his alternate proposal. The education system Gandhiji proposed as an alternate, in conformance with his views on the economy, regarded the needs of the rural people as a priority. It was his opinion that the educational requirements of the urban people would not be a problem once there was a provision for the education of the rural people. Gandhiji's education does not pose any fundamental problem when viewed from within his paradigm. He believed that the education of those who were 'ignorant', uninformed about the problem in society, and unconscious of the power of collective work should be educated. His schools by catering to the rural poor to the exclusion of richer sections of rural society and the urban educated effectively created a segregated system of schooling. Self-financing of education effectively meant that those with inadequate resources sent their children to the Gandhian schools and those who were in a higher income group could afford to send their children to expensive schools, where English was taught. Children of peasants and artisans would at best become skilled workers, while middle-class children would enter into professions as lawyers, engineers, doctors and other white collar jobs. Gandhiji's educational proposal which attempted to make a complete departure from the existing education system, was in this respect a part of a segregated school system. And, therefore, it was a continuum of indigenous education and the 'colonial' education system.

The object of setting up a substitutional programme, with alternate institutions, alternate pedagogy, an alternate content of education and an alternate medium of instruction, was to promote an entirely opposite value system, one which was in consonance to the needs of Indian people, particularly the rural people. But, this purpose was defeated since the substitutional programme was directed towards a limited constituency even among the rural people, and could therefore, not claim to be a substitutional programme for all the people.

Chapter 3

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN SOCIAL CHANGE

1. Alternative Theories of Education and Social Change

The role of the education system in radical social change is of special relevance to an analysis of Gandhiji's ideas on education. Gandhiji laid emphasis on education as a means of bringing about social transformation since he believed that education could alter peoples' perceptions of themselves and their role in creating a more just and egalitarian social order.

Social change theorists have analysed education systems in various societies with the view to studying the role of these education systems in the social process and their contribution to social transformation. We intend to review the work of Louis Althusser, Bowles and Gintis, and Paulio Freire.[1] At the surface it may not be obvious how the following review is germane to Gandhiji's notion of education and social change.

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1. Louis Althusser: "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays, NLB, 1971, pp. 121-173; S. Bowles and H. Gintis, op. cit., P. Freire (1) Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Penguin, P. Freire (2) Politics of Education, op. cit.

The colonial education system which subsumed all earlier educational arrangements has, as we have already seen in Chapter 1, the fundamental characteristics of the education systems in capitalist countries, the specificities of which were different given the different cultures and traditions in India, and the vastly different circumstances in which they came to be established. The relationship between the education system, the state and the economy as discussed by these authors raise questions which are germane to our discussion on Gandhiji. Apart from providing an insight into the working of the education system, they are concerned with its role in social change.

Althusser and Bowles and Gintis following the functionalist approach analyse the education system in terms of the functions and self defined objectives of the system. The education system as an ideological state's apparatus reproduces the unequal power relations in capitalist societies. Education systems are viewed as reproducing capitalist social relations, as a method of hegemony and control and a mechanism of selective transmission of cultural capital. Althusser's work is at a high level of generalisation. He therefore views all existing institutions comprising the education system as a constituent part of the ideological apparatus of the state to perpetuate the social control over all other institutions in the society.

Bowles and Gintis provide an incisive study into the functioning of the education system in the capitalist economy.

We have already discussed their work in Chapter 1. Here we will only discuss that aspect of their analysis which has some bearing on social change. Bowles and Gintis in this respect arrive at conclusions similar to those of Althusser. They argue that inequality has its origins in the capitalist structure and that the education system can be a powerful force for change only to the extent that it alters those aspects of the economic system which provide institutional basis of this inequality. However, according to them this does not occur because education system are more 'determined' than 'determining'. The education system they say, does not operate through the conscious activities of teachers and administrators but is governed by its own hierarchical social relationships which reflect a close correspondence with the social relations in the work place. Relationships of authority and control at all levels between administrators and teachers, teachers and students replicate the hierarchical division of labour which dominate the work place. Educational system is organised in the same way as the industry and students have as much control over their curriculum as the worker over the content of his job.

They argue that the educational values, the concept of equality and justice are determined by experiences at work and the nature of the class structure. The experiences of daily life which reflect fragmented conditions of living

and which socialise people into accepting inferior social and economic positions define individual consciousness. Consciousness develops through the individual's direct perceptions of and participation in social life. Indeed every day experience itself acts as an inertial stabilising force. For instance, when the working population is effectively stratified, individual needs and self concepts develop in a correspondingly fragmented manner, youth of different racial, sexual, ethnic or economic characteristics directly perceive the economic positions and prerogatives of "their kind of people". By adjusting their aspiration accordingly they not only reproduce stratification on the level of personal consciousness, but bringing needs into harmony with the fragmented conditions of economic life. Similarly, individuals tend to channel the development of their personal powers in directions where they will have opportunity to exercise them. Thus alienated character of work, for example, leads people to find their creative potential areas outside of economic activity, consumption, travel, sexuality, family life. So needs and need satisfaction again tend to fall into congruence and alienated labour is reproduced on the level of personal consciousness.[2]

Paulo Freire goes beyond Bowles and Gintis when he argues that peoples' consciousness is not only determined

2. Bowles and Gintis, op. cit., p. 128

by the social structure but awakened consciousness - "critical consciousness" - will result in processes leading to a change in the social structure. The educational system is a part of the social structure that influences peoples' consciousness. People unthinkingly accept the exploiters opinion of themselves. They perceive themselves to be inferior to the exploiter and submit to his domination. It is the acceptance of an unequal, dependency relationship influenced by the exploiter (the colonizer or the elite in the independent nation) that silences the majority of the people. The culture that is embodied in the silence is what Freire refers to as "culture of silence". Paulo Freire regards the breaking of the "culture of silence" as crucial to a process of social transformation. It presupposes dependent relationships between nations or between people. In dependent societies, the mode of consciousness is one which is lacking in objectivity. Freire regards this lack of structural perception of reality as the cause for and the result of the "culture of silence". People attribute life situations to 'super reality' or to something within themselves. And nothing can be done to alter it unless the people themselves consciously participate to change the unequal social relations which define this culture.

These relationships imply the internalization of domination by cultural myths of the dominator. Similarly, the

dependent society internalizes the values and the lifestyles of the colonizing country, since the structure of the latter shapes the former. Once freed from the colonizing country, the new regime would break the "culture of silence" internally and externally. But, finding the people taking advantage of freedom, and acquiring a voice of their own, Freire observes that the regime (ruling groups/classes) in the recently nation would reimpose the "culture of silence".

Freire finds that a dependency relationship between the metropolitan power and the dependent nation is analogous to the relationship between the elite and the masses. But, he also finds that even as independent nations in their relationship with the metropolitan countries these countries remain "silent totalities", whilst on the other hand, the elite find new forms to suppress internal dissent. In his opinion social transformation can occur only through a process which would break the established pattern of silence of the people.

Education plays a crucial role in the process of liberation. According to Freire, education, which he defines as critical consciousness, will inevitably and eventually lead to liberation. Critical consciousness is a process of realizing oneself, gaining an identity within the objective reality. He says that the colonized mind on the one hand

hates the oppressor for his crime, but on the other passionately admires and is attracted to the colonizer. The obverse of this is self-deprecation. And this, according to Freire is because the oppressed person, group or nation internalises the opinion the oppressor holds.

Education is a process of reaffirming and regaining confidence in oneself, one's culture and values. People from the middle-classes who participate along with exploited people to fight the oppressor may join the ranks of the exploited. But they may lack confidence in the people's ability to think, to know and to act correctly. They talk about people but do not trust them; and trusting people is an indispensable pre-condition for revolutionary change. A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favour without that trust.[3]

According to Freire, generosity and active assistance will not prove to be truly educative. In fact, it could be counter-productive, since generosity implies the need for it, and maintenance of an unjust order justifies this generosity. It will reinforce the incorrect opinions which people hold of themselves.

Only through a process of struggle and learning in this process of struggle would the individual become critically aware

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3. P. Freire (1) op. cit., p. 34.

of his own position, its only then that he would act with confidence and faith in himself. Critical awareness would mean faith in one's ability to overcome oppression through collective action. Here again it does not mean that the people would unquestioningly accept the dictates of their leaders. On the contrary they would participate in the struggle completely, prepared to work and think. Freire says, it is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organised struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves. This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action. It cannot be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection, only then, will it be praxis.[4]

Therefore, according to Freire, education and politics cannot be separated. Education has a crucial role in initiating political awareness. But without active participation, there can be no real education either. "An educational act has a political nature and a political act has an educational nature ... in metaphysical terms politics is the soul of education..."[5]

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4. P. Freire (1) op. cit., p. 40.

5. P. Freire (2) op. cit., p. 285.

Analogous to these ideas, Freire argues that school pedagogies have to be methods of awakening critical consciousness. Traditional pedagogies assume pupils to be merely recepients of 'knowledge'.[6] The teacher is the one who knows and passes on 'knowledge' to the students who are ignorant. Such a view of education results in students accepting a

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6. What is called knowledge is that which conforms to definitions acceptable to specific social classes. School knowledge is rarely determined by individuals who are directly involved in the process of imparting it and those involved in learning it. School programmes come in neat 'packages' - "a bundle of goods made according to the same process and having the same structure as other merchandise" (I. Illich, op. cit., p. 42). The school curriculum alters rapidly so that the people have little time to keep pace with the changes that are taking place. (Illich euphemistically calls the widening frustration gap a "revolutionary rising expectations"). This and the existence of discrete disciplines and subjects within the school curriculum gives the pupil as also the teacher little time to cogitate over issues and get involved in problems that may be of interest to them. As a consequence, peoples own perception of the world would be completely fragmented. What is more, they would perceive themselves as being unable to acquire this vast knowledge, much less make a contribution to it. Knowledge is predecided by people who are supposed to have a superior judgement in such issues, and people for whom it is intended completely ignored in the process of decision making; this knowledge therefore tends to be abstract and decontextualized. Often it is biased against the under-privileged, intended to reinforce their inferiority. At the same time it may also inculcate in them middle-class values and ways of thinking. (See K. Kumar, op. cit.; P. Freire, op. cit.)

passive role in the process of education.[7] This method of education does not stimulate their interests, their imagination and therefore, they tend simply to adapt to the world they live in, instead of actively questioning it. An educational process which stimulates one's critical faculties would make individuals less easily adaptable and therefore more difficult to be dominated by others. People who question would be more capable of connecting varied phenomena and would have a less fragmented view of the world they live in. Instead of being oppressed by ignorance they would be able to understand their circumstances. Cognition of their circumstances and reflection would stimulate action, and would be a step to transforming the world they live in.

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7. Extending Freire's argument a little we can see that the 'banking concept' of education can overwhelm the students by what may be perceived to be the insurmountably large quantum of knowledge. Students instead of attempting to develop cognitive abilities would instead spend time acquiring a lot of useless 'knowledge' which may prove to be a handicap in participating in life in a creative and imaginative way.

   The 'banking concept' is a term Freire uses to define education which implicitly takes knowledge to be one which exists outside of peoples' own lives. It is therefore a pedagogy which is based on instructing people in ideas and information they ought to have and to which they had no other access. There is no dialogue possible between the person who transmits this knowledge and the one who receives it. The person who transmits it is knowledgeable, the recipient ignorant and hence, a passive participant in the transaction. Therefore, the term 'banking', in the sense that information is being deposited in a passive receptacle.

2. Gandhiji's Views on Education and its Relation to Social Change

All through his life as a political leader, we see two fundamental threads in his ideas in education. The first was regarding his views on the educational system and its relationship to the political process. The second was an utopian concept of education which he attempted all through his life to perfect through experimentation. Both these threads run parallel to each other, but at different times they got differently reflected in his political practice. We will briefly discuss this so as to enable us to critically analyse his ideas on education, in the contexts of the preceding discussion.

(1908-1914)

In South Africa, where he became the leader of the Indian community we see both the threads at different times. At the Pheonix settlement and Tolstoy Farm he experimented with the idea of work, attempting to change the traditional dichotomy between manual and intellectual work. Every one on the farm, including the children participated in all the activities.[8]

8. The experiments are discussed by him in his Autobiography. He alludes to these experiments at various points in his life when exhorting the value of manual work. M.S.Patel, op.cit. has also discussed these experiments of Gandhiji at length. So we do not think it essential to go into a detailed discussion here. The Tolstoy Farm was closed down at the end of his political involvement in South Africa. Many of the residents came to India and the experiment was continued at the Sabarmati Ashram. Many changes were made, though the fundamental tenets of brahmacharya, manual labour and self-sufficiency remained unaltered.

Education of the children was sought to be dovetailed into this idea of work. Concommitant with this experiment in education, Gandhiji, as a political leader was faced with the demands of the education of the children of Indians in South Africa. One of them was the problem of teaching Indian languages in government run institutions. To begin with he made appeals to the government to introduce Indian languages into the curriculum. But the government's intransigience led him to change his method. He was convinced that efforts to pressurise the government into introducing Indian languages into the school curriculum would be futile because of the inherent conflict of the interests of the Indian community and the government. So he urged the Indians to set up substitutional arrangements for teaching their children the mother-tongue, but to continue their struggle against the government on other fronts.

(1915-1922)

In this period as well as see the simultaneous existence of both these trends. Gandhiji attempted to work outside the educational system. He gave a call for the boycott of the government run and aided institutions in 1920. Several thousand school and college students, and teachers quit these institutions in an effort to 'non-cooperate' with the government.

Parallel institutions were established in conformity with nationalist values. The Jamia Millia Islamia, in Aligarh, later shifted to Delhi, the Kasi Vidyapith at Banaras and the Gujarat Vidyapith, were founded with these intentions. In Bihar and Orissa, 442 institutions were started, 190 in Bengal, 189 in Bombay and 137 in U.P. But as the non-cooperation movement waned. As independence failed to come within a year these institutions had to close down, teachers and students returned to the government run institutions.[9] The pull of the official degrees was too great. Gandhiji's response was:

> "the call has not been repeated for there is not the atmosphere for it. But experience has shown that the lure of current education, though it is false and unnatural, is too much for the youth of the country. College education provides a career. It is a passport for entrance to a charmed circle. Pardonable hunger for knowledge cannot be satisfied otherwise than by going through the usual rut.[10]

But in the same article he goes on to say :

> "They do not mind the waste of precious years in acquiring knowledge of an utterly foreign language which takes the place of the mother tongue. The sin of it is never felt. They and their teachers have made up their minds that

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9. Sumit Sarkar: Modern India, MacMillan

10. Selected works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. VI, op. cit., p. 365.

the indigenous languages are useless for gaining access to modern thought and the modern sciences".[11]

After the non-cooperation movement there was a setback in official educational expansion. But there were many major victories which compensated for the non-expansion of education. Private as well as official schools were beginning to take cognisanze of the nationalist sentiment. Indian languages were not being successfully introduced as the media of instruction. Practices such as the singing of "God save the King" gave way for singing of Vande Mataram and other national songs. It became a common thing in most school assemblies. Photographs of the King-Emperor disappeared to be replaced by those of national leaders. There was no change in the number of government institutions, and the demand for official education, but students in these institutions were influenced by nationalist sentiment.[12]

Prior to Gandhi, the struggle for and around education had been restricted to demanding financial and infrastructural facilities for education. Right through from 1850's Indians

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11. Ibid., pp. 365.

12. Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 309.

had demanded government support to establish and fund institutions of higher learning and for technical education. There had been no history of direct participation in the political process as had been during the non-cooperation movement, with the exception of direct involvement of students and teachers in the movement against the partition of Bengal in 1905-06.[13]

But, never again did Gandhiji give a call to the students to participate directly as a social group in the political movement. He instead asked them to participate in social activity - in village service, harijan upliftment, promotion of communal, provincial and caste harmony. Never again did he call for a direct boycott of government educational institutions nor a complete rejection of the education provided by them. Instead, he appealed to the students to actively use knowledge acquired in official institutions in the national interest. The period in Indian history when the struggle over education and in the educational system was directly linked to the political process and mass participation was short lived. Later, even though students and teachers participated directly in politics, Gandhi did not involve them in the national movement as a social group.

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13. Even during the non-cooperation movement (1920-22) the educational boycott in Bengal was more successful than elsewhere. The spread of English education in Bengal was much greater than in other provinces. This might imply that the earlier phase of nationalist demands for expansion of education was not unconnected with subsequent participation in education.

(1937-39)

It was in 1934 that Gandhiji finally concretized his notion of the dynamics of social change. It was in this context that he tried to link social work and the political process and thus developed his Constructive Programme. His Nai Talim or Basic Education was a part of this Constructive Programme. The cornerstone of this non-violent social transformation was to be education. The way Gandhiji formulated Basic Education had much to do with his perception (certainly justified) that the existing education system besides being an organ of colonial domination, and alienating, was also beyond the reach of the vast majority of the rural Indians. It was to this deprived section that Basic Education was supposed to cater. It is hardly surprising that Basic Education with its distinctive characteristic of assigning certrality to manual work was rejected by the urban middle classes.

Gandhiji viewed the process of social transformation as a completely non-violent process. As one, which could not be brought through by a sudden change in governments in power. Underlying this was Gandhiji's belief that the individual was of central importance to defining a concept of equality. And sudden changes in power relations would not fundamentally alter the relations between individuals in society, it would only bring a new regime, a class or group into power. Relations between individuals reflected several dichotomies - such as

between the metropolitan and colonized people, between the urban and rural, between the rich and the poor. And in his view a rural society in which people performed both manual and intellectual work, where people necessarily produced their own minimum subsistence requirements through 'bread labour' and where no form of labour was more highly valued than the other basically formed his notion of utopia. Such a society was not achievable in a generation or even in many generations, without radically transforming individual perceptions. Since Gandhiji advocated a completely non-violent method, the only avenue open to him to influence change was through the conci-entization of the people. Therefore, in his framework education played a crucial role. People were first to be inculcated with the values of truth and non-violence. Equipped with these, they were individually and collectively expected to overcome the oppressor. It would be best to quote Gandhiji:

> "Primary education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carding etc. is thus conceived as the spearhead of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences. It will provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village and thus go a long way towards eradicating some of the worst evils of the present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes. It will check the progressive decay of our villages and lay the foundation of a just social order in which there is no unnatural division between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and everybody is assured of a living wage and the right to freedom. And all this would be accomplished without the horrors of a bloody class war or a colossal capital expenditure such

> as would be involved in the mechanization of a vast continent like India. Nor would it entail a helpless dependence on foreign imported machinery or technical skill. Lastly, by obviating the necessity for highly specialized talent, it would place the destiny of the masses, as it were, in their own hands".[14]

3. The Critique

For analytical purposes it is necessary to demarcate the abstract and concrete levels at which Gandhiji pitched his ideas on education. At one level the subject is dealt with at a high level of generality and abstraction, and at another it deals with the specificities of concrete reality. These two levels of discourse are not always in harmony with each other. Therefore, there is a need to separate the two not simply to clarify the levels at which the analysis is presented but also to present the problems within each of these. Gandhiji's ideas on the interaction of the educational system with society and its role in initiating the process of change can be studied at a fairly abstract level. When this educational system is studied in its details, problems arise because the elements of the educational system do not complement his theory of social change.

We have already delineated the various aspects of Gandhiji's educational system, and also the problems within it. Here,

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14. CWMG, Vol. LXVI, pp. 169-170.

we will attempt to analyse it in its specific role in social transformation. The features of Basic Education which would assist in social transformation has been discussed. To repeat, it was characterised by learning of skills which could make the individual financially self-reliant,and provision for communicating information, that would be synthesized to have a better and objective understanding of his own social condition. The two would give the individual confidence to participate in the political process and through non-violent means assert his moral superiority over the oppressor. Basic education was to imbue people with the superior morality of the rural tradition over the urban-metropolitan morality and culture. The oppressor would then have to be gradually overcome by the goodness of the soul and the attrition of his power be achieved by moral strength. Gandhiji thought that the rural people would successfully become a moral power and become self-reliant by putting into practice his (Gandhiji's) ideology.

The conflict of interest, be it between a foreign power and the colonized, between the urban and the rural, the rich and the poor had to be resolved without violence. What was more he believed that a violent transformation that brought the overthrow of the oppressor by a section of the powerless would not lead to a social and political emancipation of the people. He believed that education of the people over generations would bring a gradual change in their consciousness and

would ultimately lead to a truly democratic society. Education was therefore of great importance to his theory of social transformation.

Keeping the above discussion in mind, we will now study the role of education in the process of social transformation. In Gandhiji's framework the educational system can 'spearhead' social change. The social system is too deeply rooted to be changed by means of a violent overthrow of existing regimes or by a sudden change of governments. Social consciousness can be altered only through an education programme on an education system designed for this purpose; it cannot be altered with sudden and abrupt changes of power at the top. Social consciousness is viewed as the totality of individual consciousness. And it is only a changed social consciousness that can contribute to the general emancipation of the people. The casualty in Gandhiji runs from the educational system to change in the social organisation. This casuality leads to a deterministic view to social change. Alternative educational programmes and substitutional educational system in Gandhiji's opinion can subvert the kind of consciousness generated within the existing structures. Gandhiji's social analysis undermines the influence of the existing economic and social structures on the education system and directly and indirectly on social consciousness. Bowles and Gintis take the opposite view that educational systems are more determining than determined, that alternative programmes for education within the

education system do not have the space to alter and redefine peoples' consciousness. Both Gandhiji and Bowles and Gintis assumed a deterministic casualty, only the casual relationships are reversed for Bowles and Gintis.

We agree with Bowles and Gintis that in its general characteristics the education system is completely determined by the existing production relations we consequently do not think that the kind of casualities that Gandhiji would attribute to the actualization of social transformation can hold. It would be useful to explicate this point. One of the basic problems of modern capitalist societies is inequality in every sphere of existence. But inequality is inherent in the nature of capital that is monopolistically owned. As Bowles and Gintis point out, an education system which sets out to radically alter society, can be successful only in as much as it is able to alter the institutional basis of this inequality - that is the nature of ownership of means of production. And the fact that the educational system is, in the last instance, determined by the relations of production, militates against it performing this role. It could easily be argued that Gandhiji realised that he could not work within the existing system and therefore, went in for a substitutional approach. But even this avenue is closed for Gandhiji. A capitalist society would also generate social values which allow the sustenance of this system, and from within the parameters of

those values a system of education which does not conform would simply be marginalized. A point amply proved by the fact that in the final analysis Gandhiji's system was rejected by the very people it was meant for.

After having stated that we are in agreement with the general point Bowles and Gintis make, we would nonetheless like to distance ourselves from their position at one level. We concur with Paulo Freire that there exists a space within an education system which should be used in the process of change. It therefore qualifies the determinism of the sort of argument that Bowles and Gintis would put forward. Unlike Gandhiji, who circumvented the existing structures, using this space would allow one to take the existing structures head on. Whatever else the consequences be, marginalization cannot be one.

As Freire has argued, the space within existing structures can be used to introduce an alternative pedagogy, a different idiom of education. A pedagogy where acquiescence does prevent reflection and creativity, but where the language of questioning, thinking and acting in collectively prevails.

It is only with this alternative pedagogy that the liberating influence of knowledge be fully realised. But, Freire also points out that just by itself an attempt to exploit this space would be futile and meaningless. This is because the wedge which this space allows one to drive into

the existing structure is far too narrow to make any dent. The dominant structure would very soon either through cooption or rejection, diffuse the challenge. It is only when the use of this space is linked to a political process of mobilization, of increasing awareness, that the education system can make some contribution to the process of mass mobilization and transformation. Freire would, of course, call this entire process of mass mobilization and alternative pedagogy, education. But this definition of education is very different from the narrow view of education which most theorists have.

For Freire, not only was it necessary for the alternative pedagogy to be linked with the political process outside the four walls of the school, but the political process itself should be organically linked with the people. A political process which gives the participants a world view emerges from a critique of the existing social structures.

More importantly, arriving at the critique should be a culmination of a process of individual questioning; of breaking out of the mould where society and all that it stands for is unquestioningly accepted. Not only should the movement lead to the conscientization of the participant, but, the leadership which this movement throws up should be organically linked with the people.

There are two important points to be noted about Freire's

argument. First, Freire is talking about a change in the nature of the pedagogy for he believes that only with a pedagogy which emphasises questioning and reflection will be possible to understand the liberating influence of knowledge. The pedagogy should of course not be defined in terms of school but in terms of society, that is to say generating a different process of social cognition. Second, the foundation of the political mobilization programme is to be this changed pedagogy.

It is important to underline the role pedagogy plays in Freire, simply because it is in this area of the pedagogy that we locate one of the major flaws of Gandhiji's notion of education. And what Freire establishes in his seminal work Pedagogy of the Oppressed is the role that pedagogy plays in social transformation. In some ways the structure of Freire's and Gandhiji's notions of education are similar. After all it could be said that Gandhiji's Constructive Programme is a programme of political mobilization and would therefore sustain the space which Gandhiji wanted to create with Basic Education. But as we have said the problem does not lie there. The problem lies in the fact that Gandhiji's pedagogy reinforces the same hierarchies which the system he is trying to replace did. Knowledge as a tool to unshackle the bonds of servitude in which our minds are tied can hardly come about where the knowledge is received unquestioningly. Both in the system Gandhiji was trying to replace, as well as, his own this was so.

Therefore, in conclusion, we believe that since the education system is more determined than determining, it cannot be used to 'spearhead' social change. Although there is a space in the system which can be used to aid the process of social transformation, but in Gandhiji's framework even that is not possible because of the nature of the pedagogy he used.

CONCLUSION

Will it be possible to achieve Utopia? Please change this word with a better alternative Ideal type

Gandhiji's alternate education system is not important in itself, but also for the following two reasons. First, he situated this system within an alternate social vision. Second, in Gandhiji's scheme, the education system was supposed to 'spearhead' the social transformation which would be necessary to achieve Gandhiji's ~~notion of~~ Utopia. It is this notion of the education system as an initiator of change which sets Gandhiji apart from other people who write on education.

The starting premise of Gandhiji's alternate vision was a critique of industrialization as a strategy of development. It would be useful to remember that for him development was not defined in terms of material well being. Development for him meant both material and spiritual development of an individual. It was in this context that he felt that industrialization neglected the spiritual aspect of an individual's existence and fostered self-centredness. Given the inherent problems with industrialization and the fact that India was an agrarian society, Gandhiji felt that India's economy should also be essentially agrarian. Therefore, in his scheme of things, the village that was to be a self-governing entity, was to be the unit of production, distribution and consumption. Aside of food, the other material wants of the village would be met by handicraft and artisanal producers situated within it. Everyone was to earn his/her living through honest

'bread labour' and no form of labour was to be demeaned and shunned. Even though 'varna' and therefore birth would determine an individual's occupation, no special privileges would accrue to anybody because of the nature of work he performed. There would be equality of access and opportunity and every individual would find it possible to achieve the full potentialities of his/her development. Individuals would live in harmony with each other and with nature.

As is obvious from the above, Gandhiji's individual was to be a conscious one, and social transformation would hinge upon the thoroughness of this process of conscientization. Gandhiji ruled out a violent overthrow of the existing regime, on the ground that such an overthrow could not change the consciousness of the individual and would merely replace one regime with another. Therefore, he advocated a non-violent transformation where the onus of conscientization would lie in the education system.

It was with this purpose in mind that Gandhiji designed his education system. Even though Gandhiji touched upon all aspects of the education system - adult literacy, college and university education and schools - the core of his ideas are contained in his programme of Basic Education. Basic Education had three fundamental elements - manual labour, self reliance and moral education. Introduction of manual labour into the school curriculum served two purposes. First,

it did away with the dichotomy between manual and intellectual labour which characterized the existing system. Second, it was a pedagogic tool which helped 'contexualize' a child's education. A part of the manual labour programme was the introduction of a craft into the school curriculum. In fact, to be more specific it was this craft which was to be the pedagogic tool through which all education was to be imparted. He hoped that the craft would make the school self sufficient. The introduction of the craft would also vocationalize the education so that primary education would be complete in itself and would equip the student to be able to attain a livelihood for herself. Moral education was necessary so that the spiritual development of the individual occurred concurrently with her academic learning.

Gandhiji's insistence that the charkha was by far the best craft through which to educate a child created problems. For the charkha could be alien to the student in many environments and therefore, one would be replacing the fetishism of books with that of a craft. Moral education could easily degenerate into indoctrination. The pedagogic tools used did not emphasise questioning and reflection and consequently, the craft only served to reinforce people's inability to change their own condition. The system only resulted in a duality where one section of the rural masses (mostly the underprivileged) went to Gandhiji's Basic Schools and the elite, both rural and urban went to the schools of the traditional system.

Ultimately the harshest criticism of Gandhiji's ideas came from the people for whom it was meant. The villager rejected his school and preferred sending his children to government run institutions.

From a systemic point of view, the problem with Gandhiji's education system arises because he did not take into account the influence of the society within which it is situated. He thought that the education could positively affect the society at large but would not get affected by it. In a scheme of things where an entirely new consciousness was being fostered, Gandhiji implicitly assumed that the forces of the old consciousness would be passive.

We agree with Bowles and Gintis that the education system is more determined than determining, and consequently, it becomes well nigh impossible for it to "spearhead" social transformation. The existing social forces would either reject the new system or effectively marginalize it, which was what happened with Basic Education. But, while agreeing in general with the Bowles and Gintis' position, we also feel that there is a space within any education system which would be used to aid the process of so cial transformation rather than 'spearhead' it.

Following Paulo Freire we think that an educational programme that encourages questioning rather than acquiescence in the social order may contribute to raising the

consciousness of people. Reflection and questioning lead to a deeper understanding of reality, an understanding of the life processes in an unfragmented and holistic way. A more complete understanding of oneself, and the world one lives in could encourage people to "collective action" in an effort to change their life condition.

The space can be used to introduce a different idiom of education - that is to encourage questioning rather than acquiescence. For without a change in the idiom, the liberating influence of knowledge can hardly be felt. Among other things, this is something Gandhiji does not seem to recognize and consequently, there is little change in the pedagogy between his and the existing system. Freire, who has also talked about using the space within a system, does not stop there. He realises that by itself the space cannot be used, for the weight of the dominant system would simply swamp it. He therefore organically links the use of this space to the political process outside, in the society at large. A political process where the people are closely involved in trying to restructure society in their own terms. It is important to realise that a sustained alternate use of space within an education system is not possible without the linkage that Freire points out.

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