

Concept of Education in Vinoba Bhave's Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Vinoba Bhave (1895-1982) provided the concept of Basic Education at Sevagram Ashram, Wardha in Maharashtra. Bhave added new dimensions to the concept of Basic Education. He repeatedly said that Basic Education does not stop at imparting 'education through craft' as people generally believed. His plan for education was a plan for discipline and its 'main spring' is not self-indulgence but self-control. Bhave is known for his Bhoodan movement in India. However, his thoughts on education have Indian origin and more close to reality. The present paper highlights the concept of education of Vinoba Bhave.

Keywords: *Salvation, mental faculty, introspection, self-sufficiency, self-restraint, pragmatic, social-justice.*

Introduction

Vinoba Bhave was born in a Brahmin family in 1895 in a small village in Maharashtra. His father was a trained weaver with a rationalist modern outlook, and worked in Baroda. He was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. Vinoba met Gandhi on 7 June 1916 and subsequently abandoned his studies. Vinoba participated with keen interest in the activities at Gandhi's ashram, like teaching, studying, spinning and improving the life of the community. His involvement with Gandhi's constructive programmes related to Khadi, village industries, new education (Nai Talim), sanitation and hygiene also kept on increasing. Vinoba went to Wardha in 1921 to take charge of the Ashram as desired by Mahatma Gandhi. In 1923, he brought out *Maharashtra Dharma*, a Marathi monthly which had his essays on the Upanishads. Vinoba was arrested several times during the 1920s and 1930s and he was served jail sentence in the 1940s for leading non-violent resistance to British rule. The jails for Vinoba had become the places of reading and writing. In the jails, he gave a series of talks on Bhagavad Gita in Marathi, to his fellow prisoners. Bhave participated in the nationwide civil disobedience periodically

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conducted against the British, and was imprisoned. Vinoba Bhave was a scholar, thinker, and writer who produced numerous books. He was a translator who made Sanskrit texts accessible to the common man. Vinoba Bhave was an innovative social reformer.

Thought on Education

Education does not mean mere collection of information. A good number of Eastern and Western thinkers have defined education and its aims. According to Upanishads, education mean salvation. According to Vivekananda, education is the manifestation of divine perfection already existing in man. It is also taken as a technique of transmitting civilization. Education is also defined as one of the principle tools to mould the thought process of man. Education is something which makes one self - reliant and selfless. Ancient Indian concept of education highlights higher knowledge, freedom from ignorance, salvation and self-realization (according to Rigveda). As far as Vinoba's thoughts about education are concerned, we can put them under three heads (1) Vinoba's concept of education (2) Expectations from education (3) Views regarding Basic education.

Regarding the concept of education, Vinoba laid stress on two aspects (a) interior education (b) exterior education. Agreeing with Rousseau's vision of three agencies of education- man, nature and things, Vinoba believes that natural and physical environments provide opportunities for formal education but man informally receives education according to his capacity. The Creator has placed before us wide field for utilizing nature. He says, 'From the world that lies about us we can receive only that kind and amount of education whose seeds are contained within us (Bhave, 1959: 5) .Vinoba believes that a man who wishes to live a worthy life all he needs to do is to cultivate his natural powers, and this inward development should be natural. He takes education as a spiritual power and favours virtues over knowledge. He wishes to underscore the importance of spiritualism to stop science from turning into a monster and for that, direction is the key. Thus he takes modern schooling as an effort in a wrong direction. Vinoba lays emphasis on three assumptions of education, viz. Education should be life-oriented, education should be natural and informal thus involving practical activities and education should be labour oriented.

Life itself is the real moving force for true education, something which is not related with life situation is hypocrisy according to Vinoba. In this regard he cites the example of Bhagavad Gita. "The Lord taught-Arjuna the Bhagvad Gita on the battle field – our teaching must and can be given on the field of real life. Set the children to work in the fields, and when a problem arises there, give them whatever knowledge of cosmology or physics, or any

other science is needed to solve it In one word let them live (Bhave, 1959: 15-16). "Vinoba advocates that education should grow out of every activity of life, activities and education should be integrated. Project method is a widely accepted method in modern education system. Vinoba wanted to infuse life into the problem hence the project method should come out of the mere concept of a problem and its solution. Vinoba in this context writes, "only life is education. Calories cannot be calculated properly on paper but only as their effects are seen in the body. So, true education is that what is experienced, tasted and digested so that it become one with blood. What can be counted and recorded is not education, Education cannot be doled out; it cannot be weighed and measured (Bhave,1959: 25).

Vinoba advocates that education should be natural and informal. When a child plays, it should get mental training and knowledge together with joy, this should not be artificial. Vinoba in this regard insists on education through mother tongue. This insistence was founded on his philosophy and also the psychology of the learner. The child should not be aware that he is doing a particular activity as a part of education. In this respect Vinoba writes, "The fact that as soon as the pupil begins to feel. 'now I am learning something; you should understand that something is going wrong with the educational machinery instead of the artificial idea that education is a duty, we must foster the natural and inspiring idea that education is a joy (Bhave, 1959: 8). According to this physical education should be a matter of joy and not a burden and it should be and unconscious activity and the child should take joy in having performed a task. Illustrating this Vinoba says "Vishvamitra was busy with the sacrifice appropriate to his calling. He asked Dashrath to send Ram and Lakshaman to protect them. Dashrath sent the boys for that purpose..... It was a wonderful education for them, but if anyone had asked what they had done, they would not have said that they had been educated. They would have said that they had defended the sacrifice. Yet they got the education, they needed (Bhave,1959: 16-17).

Thus Vinoba puts forth the examples of educating persons through real situation in a natural way. Thus the child learns through fulfilling his assignment or task. The inherent capacity of an individual should come out naturally. Thus Vinoba favours informal education with no set structure and controlled situation. Left to the nature the child independently gets incentive to find solutions to the problems and hence independent judging abilities are developed. This develops the mental faculty and Vinoba lays emphasis on it.

Education according to Vinoba should be natural and life-oriented but the training of the soul can only be done through manual labour which develops an attitude of respect for work and keeps the body healthy. He says

“the soul can never become healthy unless the defects of mind are removed introspection those of speech by silence and those of body by work (Bhave, 1956: 34). “ Education without manual labour does not give training to control the mind. Time is spent in useless talks and criticism. One, who labours, can understand the value of time. Through labour, mind and body receive education and man is able to lead an independent life. Such education liberates man. Lesson in self-sufficiency and self-restraint can be had through labour. Vinoba opines in this regards. ‘The first and least part of this self-sufficiency is that body must be educated and made skilled in craft. A second and a very important part of it is, the ability to acquire new knowledge for oneself... third is that a man should be able to rule himself to control his senses and his thoughts (Bhave, 1959: 28).’

Vinoba thus takes labour spiritually. Self-restraint is one of his targets. He says “the man who is slave to his senses and cannot keep his impulse under control is neither free nor self-sufficient. Temperance, vows and service therefore, have their place in education for it is by such means that this third aspect of freedom can be learned (Bhave, 1959: 28). “Thus Vinoba is an idealist. To him, virtues are more important than methods. It is the function of education to prepare people of integrity and dignity. Though idealist in aim, Vinoba was pragmatic in function. Through labour loving generation, the country can hope to fulfill various plans of development. Vinoba had great faith in Acharyas, he wanted them to be free and believed if they become free they can generate great power and strength. For him Acharyakul was a spiritual organization. Vinoba said, “ I have walked all over India for 13 years. In the backdrop of enduring perpetuity of my life’s work, I have established 6 ashrams. The Brahma Vidya-Mandir is one of the ashrams that Bhave created. It is a small community for women that was created in order for them to become self-sufficient and non-violent in a community. This group farms to get their own food, but uses Gandhi’s beliefs about food production, which include sustainability and social justice as a guide. This community like Bhave has been influenced greatly by the Bhagavad-Gita and that is also used to determine their practices.

Since its founding in 1959, members of Brahma Vidya Mandir, an intentional community for women in Paunar, Maharashtra, have dealt with struggle of translating Gandhian values such as self-sufficiency, non-violence and public-service into specific practices of food-production and consumption. The existence of Brahma Vidya mandir and the counter-narrative its residents practice demonstrate how one community debate the practicalities and tradeoffs in their application of self-sufficiency, non-violence and radical democracy to their own social and geographic context. One narrative described by Brahma Vidya Mandir and the farmers that work with them is

that large-scale agriculture is inevitable, necessary and the sole possibility of feeding the world. They reject the narrative that success in agriculture comes from expensive technology. Brahma Vidya Mandir is a small community in India therefore it does not hold much power in its beliefs and practices. However, India today proudly proclaims its large and growing middle class, and many see Gandhi as a hero, some reject his views in favour of US-style consumerism and look for an alternate route in agriculture with technological advancements (Bhole, 2017) . The existence of Brahma Vidya Mandir based on the pragmatic aspect of philosophy of Vinoba, provides a counter-narrative on enacting alternate agriculture practices and social practices that were believed by woman back in the 1960 and all this is the part of Vinoba's philosophy on education which is quite relevant in modern context as well.

Conclusion

Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the founder of Bhoodan Movement became a world figure. Nehuru warmly lauded his work in the Parliament. Dr. Rajendra Prasad termed Bhoodan as not merely a gift of land but a vision of the social order that Mahatma Gandhi envisaged.. The Bhoodan movement of Vinoba began and continued for more than thirteen years in different parts of India. During this Padayatra he collected 4.4 million acres of land as free gifts, out of which about 1.3 million acres were distributed among the landless farm workers. The Bhoodan Movement was followed by Gramdan and Jeevandan Movements. Vinoba had also received 1.6 lakhs villages as Gramdan, especially in Bihar and Orissa. All this had been achieved single handedly. The tenets of his philosophy of education have already been widely discussed in. Vinoba has advanced with deep insight in the philosophical aspect. The chief criterion of his philosophy is the interior education. He is an ardent opponent of formal education. He believes that the process of education should be natural and the pupil should not be conscious of being educated. He is an, advocate of self reliance and freedom in education. He talks of social change like a scientist. He has expressed his views on the methods of teaching of practically all subjects.

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