The Vision of Tagore and Gandhi towards Women Education: 
A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Education has always been regarded in India as source of illumination and power which transforms and enables our nation for progressive and harmonious development of our physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual powers and faculties. Equality for women is an important social requirement. Women play an important part in the development and progress of family. Women education is now considered as a sine-qua-non of India’s social and national development. In this paper I want to discuss about Tagore and Gandhi vision towards women education. Tagore was one of the greatest supporters of women education. And Gandhi was also the supporter of women education. The present investigation aims to discuss the importance of women education in India. The vision Tagore and Gandhi towards women education has been confined the contribution of both philosophers regarding women education a comparative study. In today’s context their views on women education are of paramount significance.

Keywords: Education, women, social, national.

Introduction

Education has always been regarded in India as source of illumination and power which transforms and enables our nation for progressive and harmonious development of our physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual powers and faculties. Education is the foundation on which rests edifice of society and democracy. It is the most effective tool to meet the challenges faced by a nation and society. Only education can improve the people with knowledge and the confidence essential for building a dynamic, cohesive nation, capable of providing its people a purposeful life. We find a curiosity and urgent interest among the people in India and abroad that there is something unique about Indian women as they are seen to be participating at the highest level of leadership and decision making with confidence. In recent years, women in India and elsewhere have to identify themselves and press their case for a better place in society. It is challenging for men and women to assess them again. The women’s liberation movement has widened the sphere of such thinking. It has created an interest among all kind of people over the world to know more about women and the rules they are playing.
In ancient times, during Vedic and Buddhism period, the condition of women was satisfactory. They had freedom to get education like men. During Muslim period, the condition of women education deteriorated. British government did some work to promote women education. There was mass illiteracy when India got independence. Therefore, Indian government has undertaken measures to remove illiteracy. Though the Indian constitution and a number of progressive legislations have removed so many hurdles against women in Indian society but problems still exist. Dowry system, Pardha system etc. prove the lower status of women particularly in the traditional Indian society. Therefore, women education is prerequisite for the development of nation as a housewife and as an educated mother; a women can significantly assist in reducing the incidence of illiteracy, poverty, ignorance and ill health of our youngsters. But this role transcends the frontier of her immediate surroundings. The concept of women education, first of all, introduced by Raja Ram Mohan Rai was supported by many Indian philosophers from time to time. The same idea was popularized by Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi because they were worried about the deteriorating condition of women in India. And they considered women education as the only remedial measures to improve women’s status in society.

**Justification of the Problem**

Equality between men and women with liberation from traditional constraints has been the corner stone of Indian policy since independence. The National Education System played a positive role in the education of women. The education of women is very essential for happy and healthy homes, improvement of society, economic prosperity and national solidarity. Educating girl is the cheapest and the most reliable instrument of educating the nation. Education for girls can open new avenues or opportunities for the advancement of society. Equality for women is an important social requirement. Women play an important part in the development and progress of family. A country’s greatness is judged by the way in which it shows respect towards its women folk. There can be no hope of well-being of the country, unless the condition of women is improved. Education of women is an important part of educational reconstruction in India. Tagore and Gandhi felt strongly for the emancipation of women. Both supported women education. A comparative study of this kind would enable the investigator to understand the views and perspectives of two great Indian educational philosophers towards women education.

Women education is now considered as a sine-qua-non of India’s social and national development. It is only through education of women that we can expect happier family life, better hygienic condition, and greater reduction in fertility rate, increased production and economic prosperity. Apart from this, an additional reason for undertaking the study is that earlier investigators were not found to have drawn comparison between these two educational philosophers with special reference to their concept of women education. Thus, investigator was inspired to study Tagore and Gandhi’s views regarding women education. That is why; he was motivated to take it up as a topic of research.
Statement of the Problem

The problem under study is entitled as:

*The Vision of Tagore and Gandhi towards Women Education: A Comparative Study.*

Objectives

The following are the objectives of this study:

1. To examine the importance of women education in India.
2. To study the contribution of Rabindranath Tagore towards women education.
3. To study the contribution of Mahatma Gandhi towards women education.
4. To compare the view of Tagore and Gandhi with reference to women education.

Procedure

Research is directed towards the solution of a problem. It may attempt to answer a question or to determine the relation between two or more variables. Problems in the field of education all over the world are numerous. A scientific study and successful solution of these problems is not an easy task. Proper research is required for solving these problems. It is a systematic attempt to obtain answer about phenomenon or events through application of scientific procedure. It is an objective, impartial and logical analysis and recording of controlled observations that may lead to the development of generalizations, principles, resulting to some extent in production and control of events that may be consequences of specific phenomena. Research involves gathering new data and putting it in a systematic way.

After the problem has been selected, the next task is to define and delimit the problem. Researcher must be certain that he knows exactly what his problem is before his beings work on it. Research means a serious effort to put collected data into a systematic way. It is not a speedy task; it requires one to proceed in a definite direction along with well defined lines. Collection of bits of information is not research. Planning and procedures for the study are deemed essential to save it from here and there. It goes without saying that the ultimate success of the research project greatly depends upon the method employed therein.

Every investigator’s task is to gather the best needed information from the most suitable and reliable sources. He or she employs the most available refined techniques for this purpose. But it will not be out of place to state that neither the technique nor the source can be thoroughly perfect. There are so many methods with the help of which a research. The research problem in hand is, ‘the vision of Tagore and Gandhi towards women education: A comparative study’ which is philosophical and historical in nature. So, the researcher has adopted historical method. The methodology followed in the study is more or less descriptive. It is a philosophical study; the analytical approach has been followed. Following the pattern of historical method of research, the investigator has collected the data and analyzed the data collected and then presented the facts. While collecting data, the investigator consulted the two types of sources- Primary and Secondary sources.
In primary sources, the investigator will take the help from the writings of Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, records and reports of legislative bodies and state departments of public instructions, memories, biographies, diaries, personal letters, and books on the philosophy of both the scholars. Investigator in his study has gone through and taken help from secondary sources. In secondary sources, he would consult many books of different writers and authors, different journals, magazines, articles, research abstracts and pamphlets published by different universities from time to time.

The investigator tried to present the fact accurately and objectively in his paper. The researcher has also tried honestly to compare the educational ideas of Tagore and Gandhi towards women. It is library work confined to the works of Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. Library work, through time consuming, is a fruitful phase of a research programme. The analytical approach is followed in the research project. The investigator endeavored to analyze and interpret Tagore and Gandhi’s views regarding women education.

**Delimitations**

The present study is broad and comprehensive in itself. Hence, it will be confined to the evolution of the Tagore and Gandhi contribution towards the women education. Tagore and Gandhi educational philosophy is the outcome of his general philosophy on the following aspects of education:

- Aims of Education
- Curriculum
- Methods of teaching
- Role of teacher

The researcher has to confine its study pertaining to the women education aspect, which served as the backbone for the development of human personality. Although the study seems to be limited, yet its ramification touched every important aspect of women education as visualized by Tagore and Gandhi. The vision Tagore and Gandhi towards women education has been confined the contribution of both philosophers regarding women education a comparative study.

**Tagore’s Views Towards Women Education**

Tagore was one of the greatest supporters of women education. He viewed that man and women are complimentary to each other. He was one of the stronger champions of the cause of women. Therefore, he gave his views regarding different aspects to women education. Through education, he wanted to bring harmony between man and nature and man and God. He recommended harmonious development of women’s personality. That means, there should be physical, mental, moral and spiritual developments of girls through education. Similarly, he wanted that girls should be economically independent. He also wanted to attain the freedom of mind and gave importance to individual and social development of girls.
As an internationalist, Tagore was in favour of developing international understanding and world citizenship among boys and girls. Apart from this, he also suggested education can also bring about cultural and character development of girls.

Tagore’s ideas reveal that women should be equal partner of a man in all fields, neither subordinate nor superior. He expressed definite opinion towards women education. Unlike Rousseau, he was not against education of women. He wanted women of the country to come forward and take the lead in promoting women education. He wanted women to be true to their nature, real companions of men, standing by their side in movements of crises, sharing their anxiety and lending company in their grief. Such was his idea on women’s education. There was perhaps no stronger champion of the cause of women like him. He strongly advocated education for girls and equal status with men. But at the same, he held that women had their own sphere and their works were complementary to men as their competitor.

Tagore recommended same curriculum for girls and boys. He thought that girls should be taught different sciences like natural, social sciences and especially domestic science must be compulsory for girls. To widen mental horizon of pupils, he wanted to include mathematics in curriculum. Tagore wanted to develop aesthetic sense among girls; therefore, he also introduced music, painting, dance and craft in curriculum. To make girls financially independent, Tagore also recommended agriculture and technical education for girls. Regarding medium of instruction he wanted that mother tongue should be adopted but he also did not deny the importance of foreign language. He also favoured that religious education should be given to girls for their spiritual development.

In order to meet the aims of education for girls, Tagore had given different methods of teaching. He adopted realistic approach, activity principle and teaching while walking. He also suggested some teaching methods to teach girls, for example, he laid stress on discussion and questioning methods. Therefore, his methods of teaching were activity centered. Inspite of all these aspects, Tagore also wanted that girls should be aware of their rights. He wanted to educate girls to that they could get knowledge about there rights which are equal to men.

**Gandhi’s Views Towards Women Education**

Gandhi was also a great emancipator of women education. He wished to improve the status of women in the country. He was of the view that needs and aptitude of women should be basis of their education. Like Tagore, he had also brought into light the different aspects of women education. He said that harmonious development of women’s personalities is possible only through education, hence, he emphasized on physical, mental, moral and spiritual development of women. Education should develop self-supporting capabilities in women. He wanted to provide that kind of education to girls which leads to salvation i.e. freedom of mind. He was also conscious of both the individual and social development of girl pupils. Gandhi laid stress upon character building and he was of the opinion that character is the expression of the whole personality. He gives equal importance to cultural development of girls.
Regarding curriculum, Gandhi suggested same curriculum for boys and girls up to fifth class. There should be natural sciences, social sciences and Mathematics in curriculum. After fifth class, domestic science should be introduced in schools especially for girls to teach them how to handle domestic problems. Gandhi also gives importance to music and drawing. He wanted to provide education through crafts to make girls economically independent. Gandhi was great advocate of native language and he also wanted to include religious education for girls in curriculum.

Gandhi has been of the view that women have to perform their separate responsibilities which are as important as that of men. In fact, both women and men are complimentary to each other none is superior to any other. So women also should be given education according to their particular roles in life. They have not to compete with men, but there should be no bar for them to any avenue which is generally considered as more suitable for men. The Wardha Scheme has been so planned as to be consistent with Gandhi’s basic ideas regarding women education. Gandhi was very much worried about the deplorable condition of women in the country. He wanted to raise their social status. He desired that women should be given education according to their needs and aptitudes. He was of the view that as far as possible women teachers should be appointed for girls. He thought that married women should be appointed for girls. He thought that married women would be better teacher than unmarried ones.

To make teaching effective, Gandhi suggested different principles for women education. He wanted to correlate all subjects with craft. He also believed in learning by doing and learning by self-experience. He suggested craft as a medium of imparting education for both girls and boys. He also advocated lecture, questioning and project methods to teach boys and girls. Gandhi wanted that girls should realize their rights. There are as capable as men. He wanted to provide the sort of education which is helpful for them.

Main Findings of the Study

In the investigator judgment the following have been the principle findings of this work:

The Similarities:-

1. Tagore and Gandhi both advocate for harmonious development of women’s personality of through education.
2. Both stressed upon self-sufficiency among women which can be achieved through education.
3. Both recommend individual and social progress of girls through education.
4. Tagore and Gandhi agreed that domestic sciences should be included in the curriculum of girls’ education.
5. Both Tagore and Gandhi are in favoured of activity method for imparting instructions in educational institutions.
6. Tagore and Gandhi assign an important place to hand work or craft in the scheme of women education.
7. Both stresses that mother tongue should be the medium of instruction in schools.
8. Both are conscious about deplorable condition of women in country therefore, they were conscious about benefits of educating the women.

The Dissimilarities

1. Tagore and Gandhi recommend education of national culture to women but its scope differs. Gandhi devises the scheme of education strictly for Indian children but Tagore wants to bring about a harmony between the east and the west.
2. Tagore recommends similar education to boys and girls but Gandhi laid stress that on that women should be given education according to her needs.
3. Gandhi gives more importance to character and cultural development of girls as compared to Tagore
5. Tagore gives stress upon education to a woman who leads to world citizenship but Gandhi importance to women education for national citizenship.
6. Tagore laid stress upon imparting technical education to women whereas Gandhi favoured mainly craft-based education.

References