



M.K. GANDHI AND PHYSICAL VIS-A-VIS MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

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Abstract:- With the birth of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi; the youngest son of Kaba Gandhi and Putali Bai on 2nd October, 1869 at Porbandar of Gujarat, a new era in Indian educational scenario was initiated. Though the flag of his glorious deeds in the field of education flattered throughout the world; yet physically he was not a very strong Robinhood type man. In every picture of Bapu, we see the reflection of his very ordinary patriotic spirit. But his physical health was not as complete as compared to his educational health. If one analyses the life of Gandhi one things gets noticeable that the ideal of non-violence that he established all over the world is some who related to his physical status. According to his Autobiography, he was physically very ordinary, not strong, thin not insular. Yet all of his friends were very healthy. Therefore, due to his physical weakness, he became mentally weak also- He himself has confessed this in his autobiography. He was afraid of ghosts, darkness, and fights. He has even admitted that his wife was braver than him. Infact, it is absolutely true that his physical weakness has turned himself mentally very weak in his early life. As a result, he feared to face adverse situations. In his early life, these habitual behaviors made him mental very feeble. But being an educationist I can't agree with his statement about ownself. He was an actual symbol of strongest mind-psychology because his life-style, dress pattern in respect of climate, food habits, non-violence perception and national movements - all these have the proofs of mental stability and strengthen for us.

Keywords:Psychology, mental stability and educational health.



Preamble:

Physical education class in school and Bapu : When he studied in school, physical education was a compulsory subject to him too, like everyone else and he had to attend those classes after 4 P.M. in Porbandar High school. But he didn't always like these classes. Instead, he liked to serve his father at that particular time. From his intense dislike to those classes, he used to forget the time of the classes. But when he went to school, his other friends were returning from school; actually due to the cloudiness of the weather that day he mistook the time.

Objective: To search out the relation between Gandhiji's life and Physical education vis-à-vis mental health education scenario.

Methodology: The whole discussion is based on Gandhiji's autobiography i.e. it is mainly theoretical review based research.

DISCUSSION:

Alternative way of Physical exercise:

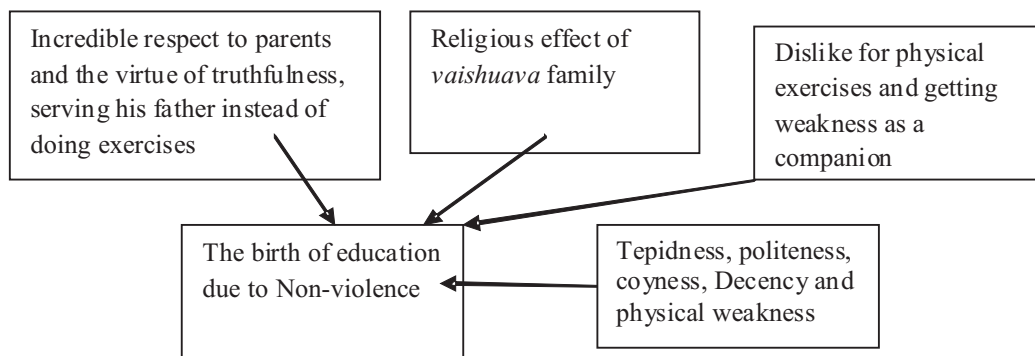
He wrote, yet, I wish to tell everyone that it didn't bring any damage to my physical health even after not doing exercises. I (Gandhiji) came to know the importance of wandering in open air from a book. It attracted me and I get accustomed to wandering after my high school classes. I still have the habit wandering in deed, is a kind of exercise. That is why my body becomes strong and well structured. Actually he felt that wandering is a physical exercise. He had dislike reluctance to exercises. So, he roomed a round different countries of the world. During his stay in England, perhaps he gratified this purpose while walking on foot on the streets of England. But from one of his writings I came to know how intensely he disliked physical exercises. He wrote, "I got relief from doing more exercises after my father had sent a letter to my Headmaster. He requested him to send me home after my regular classes were over."

Education of non-violence, physical health and perception:

Then, is there any latent sense of physical inability behind his imparting the education of non-violence to his countrymen? Due to his lack of strength and his dislike to physical exercises, he always was physically weak. He proceeded with his weapon of non-violence. As he belonged to a vaishnava family and as violence is strictly prohibited in this religion, he, from his very childhood learnt the idea is of vaishnava religion. So, any violent behavior on the part of Gandhiji was almost impossible. He had a vegetarian food-habit therefore; violent acts like killing birds and beafs were a strict no-no for him. As a result, it was quit natural for him to cling to non-violence instead of violence.

Respect to parents and vaishnava : source of non-violence vis-à-vis less importance on

Bapu never lied to his parents. So, he never did anything wrong that cannot be told to his mother. His education of non-violence was always a step head than that of violence. He didn't have enough physical strength. For instance, "I (Bapu) handed over the letter to my father trembling."



Influencing by others during early life:

This is known from Bapu's religious philosophy that he was not fixed to any such religious idealist. "As I was born in a vaishnava family I had to Haveli, but I personally didn't have any livelihood for that." Therefore he was very irregular to attend temples and travels. On the other hand, he used to be highly influenced by other people's words. For example- during his stay in England when his friend requested him to eat meat, he became very much willing to taste it, but he couldn't materialize his desire due to his oath taken to his mother. He himself has thought it many times that he would eat meat if had not sworn before his mother. Or to put it more minutely, as on the one hand he had no fixity to religions education, he, on the other hand could not drive the desire away from his mind. As one example of his bravery, he wrote, "I was afraid of ghosts and spirits." He himself would realize his physical frailty, hence, when his elder brother's friend provoked him to eat meat, he would become greedy to have that. It is known from his autobiography that he ate meat four times in a year to build his body well-structured. It is not that Gandhi deliberately excluded meat from his diet-chart; he did it rather unwillingly for he didn't want to hurt the religious beliefs of his parents. He becomes much influenced whenever the idea of eating meant come to his mind.

Physical weakness and lack of muscular physique:

In September 1988; he set out for England on a ship. Then he generally didn't talk to other on the ship's cabin and didn't appear in front of others. In England, when he was busy learning English fashions, someone asked him what was the practical use of all that. The man persuaded him that his efforts to learn English life style were

useless as he was not going to stay in England forever. He had to return to his own country. Gandhiji changed his decision. The lack of his mental stamina is proved here and only this type of people follow the path of non-violence.

Peace, food habit and health:

He bought a book containing tips of vegetarian diet in England and it just to make his vegetarian character survive. The book symbolizes his mental frailty. He became the customer of a weekly margarine on vegetarian fooding and became a member of their society. On another book he read the instruction of avoiding pick food; after a few days he started to follow that instruction also. His weak mind wrote, “The real place of taste is not the tongue, but the mind”. But, does science say so. It says that we feel any sort of taste through the presence of taste buds on our tongue. So, mind plays a vital role in testing same thing. Although, in his early life Gandhiji didn’t pay any attention to physical exercise, he continued thinking about his health from the time of his departure to England on ship to the time of his stay there because he was well aware of the fact that he lacked a strong and muscular body. Even though, initially in this essay we said that Bapu didn’t like physical exercises, he always had a concern for health. He read widely about how for vegetarian food habit would be suitable for his body along with saving money in England. Even after going to England, he studied a lot about health and diet chart in the initial months so, in spite of his exclusion of meat from his diet chart, he would take milk, egg, paneer, fruit and bread regularly, but later he excluded egg and milk from the food-list.

Physical weakness influenced him mentally:

Somewhere in every aspect of life Gandhiji’s physical weakness has influenced him mentally. He suffered from an inferiority complex seeing his brother’s muscular physique. Therefore a sort of fearfulness is manifested in his character from his very childhood. When the vegetarian society of England assembled for any meeting he didn’t deliver any speech or anything else. For the reason behind this, he himself has written that, “Besides, whenever I desired to say something and gathered courage, very often the topic of discussion would be shifted to another one”. Once he wished to say something in a meeting, but he didn’t have that psycho-physical power to say. He wrote, “I didn’t have enough courage to stand up and speak anything”. Even he expressed his opinion by writing it on a paper and gave it to the president, but he himself has admitted, “He didn’t have that courage to read it out.” This shyness and this lack of courage is obviously an outcome of a man’s reluctance of doing physical – it is aptly applicable for Gandhiji as well.

Example of physical and mental power:

After having academic qualification in low, when he entered in his professional life, there is also a question mark in his professional life, there is also a question mark in his mind regarding his courage and trust on himself. He wrote, “A question about my strength to earn my livelihood as an advocate appeared.” Because he was well aware of the fact that he didn’t possess the mental strength to say something loudly in the court. Perhaps, the kind of mental strength required for performing physical exercises was in a letter quantity within Gandhiji. If it is not so, then why will he is so much influenced by others in his early life?

Feel the need of physical exercise after returning from London:

But after returning from London when he has about to enter into his professional life, an interest for exercises roused within him that means, in the first 21 years of his life he didn’t care for physical exercises, but after returning from England he decided to train his brother’s 4-year old son physical. That is why he has written, I decided to engage these boys to physical exercises, and I will make their body strong”. After coming back from abroad, he started to accompany the children in their games, “I lived the company of children very much and loved very much to play with them and that habit is still within me.”

Wandering in Africa –another way of physical exercise:

Gandhiji has a strong addiction towards wandering. The custom of morning or evening walk that has been much prescribed in modern medical sciences is almost an imitation of Gandhiji’s this habit of wandering. Very often Bapu went out for walking with Mr kothes every evening, when he stayed in Africa. He has written that, “Every morning I used to go out to walk. Almost every day I would wander about in an open ground of President Street. This is a part and parcel of physical exercise. It is thus understood that along with this addiction, he used to think about physical fitness.

Health consciousness and work with health deptt. :

There was no less effort in Gandhiji regarding physical education and keeping the body healthy. When in 1896 he came to Rajkot from South Africa for six month, a fear of spreading an epidemic was in vogue; so he desired to work in the health department. Entering into the state level committee of health, he went out to supervise the cleanliness of the toilets from one neighborhood to another. These were his personal contribution and efforts in regard to health. Gandhiji knew it very well that, wandering serve as a kind of health-exercise of the mind for little time. That is why, when his son Manilal was suffering from high fever, he after doing the basic treatment, went out to feel the open air in choupati for almost half-an-hour to get mental stability. He always had a desire to live healthy in an open environment and had a concern about almost ten physical aspects of human life. Hence, shunning the damp atmosphere of the village, he shifted to a beautiful bungalow at Santa at Mumbai. He wrote, “we came there and felt ourselves safe and secure physically.”

Sportsmen Gandhiji:

Gandhiji always liked sportsmen; therefore on 19th December when he reached Durban with family, he had to spend almost 32 days on the ship due to the ongoing movement of the white people of Africa. He could not step his feet on the land of Durban. Then he arranged many games for the passengers of the skip. “For the enjoyment of the passengers we arranged many games and I also participated on those.”

Nourish the concept of genetic health:

During the birth of his 3rd and 4th child, he wrote, “The health of the baby depends much on the health of the parents during pregnancy. A baby is born according to the nature of mother, good and bad results of her food habit during pregnancy.” It is then clear that he gave much importance on the mental and physical factor.

Walking: a way of keeping the body fit and fine

Walking, for him, was a way of keeping the body fit and fine. It is also an integral part of physical education which brings mental fitness. That is why, in Kolkata, when he was with Gopalkrishna Gokhle for nearly one month, he had a complaint against Gokhle’s hectic working schedule – “But do you never go out to walk? It is no wonder then that you remain ill most of the time.” Not being satisfied by Gokhle’s answer he told by himself, “whatever work you have to do, you have to find leisure to do exercises just as people find time for eating. And, by doing this country is served better, not worse in any way.

About the cleanliness of body, home and society:

Bapu was even concerned about the cleanliness of body, home and society. For instance, when in 1902, he was in kasi (UP), he gave stress upon cleanliness. Apart from this, he felt sorry for the uncleanness of the 3rd class compartment of trains, in his autobiography.

Satyagraha and free from physical passions and infatuation:

He was very well aware of thoughts about physical and mental health. So, before the Satyagraha movement in 1906 he took celibacy and tried to make himself free from physical passions and infatuation, and from the desire to eat meat. He proved that keeping one’s body fit only by eating egg, milk, and meat is not the only definition of physical education. One’s mental health is also to be nourished in a similar fashion. So, after practicing the principle of celibacy he would often fast and he left eating milk and meat. Because, he wanted to make his mind and taste senses completely tamed. The only purpose of his ‘Satyagraha’ is to prepare his mind at the service of his country. The ones who are wrestles would make their body muscular but for those who are devoted to the cause of their motherland’s liberty, the stability and perfection of mind is far more essential than only making their body strong and muscular. He established the truth that physical education does not only mean physical exercises. There are lot more of other principles that educate our body and mind. For example, during the birth of his 4th and 5th children he learnt nursing. He learnt the washer man’s education to wash his skirt by himself, the barber’s education of cutting hair and beard by himself. In the time of war, he volunteered in the treatment of the wounded soldiers, following the significance of the Red crossing.

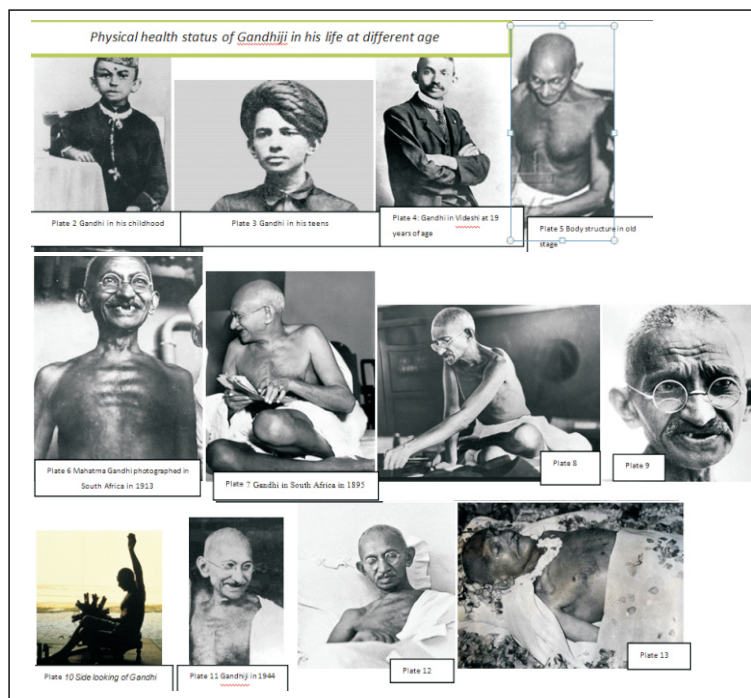
Purpose of physical education according to Gandhi:

The purpose of physical education is to keep the body fit and healthy. But he did not only think about the

health of adult people but also was concerned about the health of new born babies. He has written in his autobiography that it is very essential for a baby to have its mother's breast. It does not need any other milk then. He emphasized upon diet chart-“Human body and fruits like grapes.” A man's development depends much upon his foods.”

Ending with ‘Ashram’ at ‘Tolstoy Farm’ and physical education through work education:

He established an ‘Ashram’ at ‘Tolstoy Farm’, 21 miles away from Johannesburg and stressed on the necessity of physical development of the boys and girls of that place. “I felt the necessity of the proper construction of body.” He gave importance to physical education through work education. He felt how body, mind and food one interrelated. Although he said his diet chart was a weapon for controlling his psychological factors. That is why he used to fast for almost half of the day. “They got the education through work. There was no servant in the Ashram had to perform their own duties themselves- from cleaning the toilet or cooking to gardening. There were lots of scopes for physical exercise when they had to dig ditches, cut trees and bear burdens. They enjoyed all these works and they did not other exercises. Their bodies were built up properly” He considered the earning of livelihood as a part of physical education. In ‘Tolstoy Farm’ he taught others the work of carpenters, cobblers and cooks. He wrote, “Construction of body is an outcome of physical exercises.” He stayed 18 days on a steamer when he sailed away for abroad. A few days before that he had finished his fast; that is why he used to walk about on the ship's deck to keep his digestive system right.” Every day I used to walk about on the deck. When he was suffering from plurosis in the foreign land, he prepared a daily routine for his recovery –“keeping the window open for 24hours, bathing in slightly hot water, walking in open air for half an hour.” He recovered to a great extent after doing all these.



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