
UNIT 2 SOME THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

You have read briefly in Block 7 of DECE-1 about the spread of early childhood education in the country – the early ideas of Indian educators; some efforts by Christian missionaries, the growth of voluntary work in this area, the policies of the Government as reflected in the five year plans. You have also, through that Course, imbibed principles and the ideology of early childhood education (ECE). You have read about the importance of play in early development, the approach to early childhood education, the methodology and the role of the educator. You must, by now, be having a store of play activities for young children developed by you, apart from the ones described in the Block.

The central tenets of ECE, which seem so clear to us today have evolved over a period of time. At different periods, progressive educators rebelled against the unimaginative and restrictive method of imparting education to young children and evolved their own methods, in keeping with the development and the interests of the young child. It is the cumulative effort of these great thinkers that has provided us with the perspectives about ECE that we have today.

In this Unit you will read about the ideology of some educationists who have made significant contribution towards the development of early childhood education.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to :

- state the basic ideas in the educational philosophy of Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori, Tagore, Gandhi, Modak and Wagh
- explain how these educationists have contributed towards the development of ECE

2.2 JOHANN AMOS COMENIUS (1592-1670)

Comenius was born in the Moravia province of Czechoslovakia. He was amongst the first to reflect the new scientific spirit of the 16th and 17th century. He objected to the

method adopted for teaching in the schools of that period, calling the schools "the terror of boys" and "slaughter houses of minds where a hatred of ... books is contracted, where ten or more years are spent in learning what might be acquired in one." He believed that punishment was sometimes necessary, but should not be associated with school work. He was of the view that "If the teacher's skill cannot make any impression, his blows will have no effect".

Comenius started a school in Hungary but left the country when there was a Spanish invasion. In Poland, he was made a bishop and also worked as a school master. It was there that he produced most of his educational writings. Comenius' educational ideas are contained in the textbooks which he wrote for children and his book on teaching methods titled "The Great Didactic". This book discusses the aims of education, curriculum, textbooks and method of teaching.

2.2.1 Basic Ideas in his Educational Philosophy

Comenius proposed a system of school covering the period from birth to maturity. Dividing the period of the child's growth into four distinct grades – infancy, childhood, boyhood and youth – he proposed six years of schooling for each grade. For infancy (the first six years in his classification), Comenius proposed that the mother's lap should serve as the school. In these years, the emphasis should be on stimulating the senses of sight, hearing, smell, sound and touch and developing the child's powers of observation. Learning must take place through the senses. Learning should not be reduced to a mere memorization of facts, he stated, but should be based on the actual perception of things themselves. Only when an idea has been grasped by the senses, does true understanding occur.

Even for learning during later years of the school life, he placed great emphasis on the use of senses. Students should not be burdened with matters that are unsuitable to their age, comprehension and present conditions. Children should be encouraged to play games; play, he felt, was necessary for their all-round development. He emphasized shorter school hours, more play, sounder health, better bodily development and less strain. He called upon the teachers to make school work interesting and to keep the children relaxed. He believed that the desire for learning cannot be forced; rather it has to be kindled.

Comenius believed that the children should be told "spiritual" and "secular" stories.

Comenius wrote several books for children. The first picture book for children 'The World in Picture' is famous for its pictures of birds and animals. He wrote textbooks specially adapted to the needs of children, using pictures to arouse interest.

As mentioned earlier, his book "The Great Didactic" discusses his educational principles. Some aspects that have been discussed in the book are :

- The fundamental nature of children.
- The necessity to learn through the senses.
- The need for adoption of teaching materials in accordance with the needs of children.
- The individual differences among children.
- The understanding of motives that stimulate children.
- The positive discipline.
- The relationship of school work to life.

It speaks of the greatness of Comenius that he spoke in the 17th century of the importance of play, stimulation of the senses and interesting books for children – all of which are an integral part of good preschool education today.

2.3 JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712-1798)

Rousseau was Swiss by birth. He greatly influenced the modernization of educational thought and practice. **He introduced a movement in education which is called**

'Naturalism'. His philosophy of preschool education was based on this. The basic idea of 'naturalism' is that the natural growth of children in a natural environment constitutes adequate education. This idea was in sharp contrast to the oppressive educational philosophy of Rousseau's days that held that the children were born 'wicked' and education must reform and socialise them; and that children were passive, their mind being a 'blank slate', learning only what was taught to them. Children during that period were viewed as 'miniature adults' – they were dressed in adult-like clothes and adult-like behaviour was expected to them. Rousseau believed that all the ills of civilization were due to a departure from nature. 'Return to nature' was his slogan. He wrote two books 'Emile' and 'Social Contract' which describe his educational philosophy.

2.3.1 Basic Concepts in His Educational Philosophy

Rousseau emphasized that the child is an 'active' being who actively participates in her own development by acting upon the environment. The child continuously organises and interprets her experiences and attempts to solve problems. She is not a passive recipient of the tutor's instruction, as was believed at that time. Rather, the child is a discoverer who explores the world and 'learns by doing'. Rousseau's emphasis on 'learning by discovery' and the recognition of childhood traits and the period of childhood as distinct from adulthood brought about a revolutionary change in the thinking of educators.

Rousseau believed that nature must be allowed to take its own course in the development of children because nature has endowed them with an order of development that ensures their healthy growth. He felt that intervention of parents and teachers distorts the natural succession of the changes of childhood. He said: "The child that man raises is almost certain to be inferior to the child that nature raises".

Rousseau stressed the necessity of play for learning. He said : "Make games an education and education a game; teach less from the book and more from life". He emphasized the use of objects, pictures and illustrations in educating the child and advocated less reliance on lectures for teaching. He propogated learning from the environment and emphasised that the child should be free to explore.

He advocated that the child should be free to act; harsh discipline and repression hamper development. It is important to stimulate the mind of the child with things she can understand. Learning, and not teaching, should be the goal. Adult tastes and ways should not be forced upon children. "Let children be children", he said.

Rousseau's conception of freedom in education, growth and development, the value of motivation in learning and the child's own active participation in learning are noteworthy in educational theory and practice.

2.4 JOHN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI (1746-1827)

Pestalozzi was born in Zurich, Switzerland. He started an orphanage at Burgdorf and Munchenbuch and was founder of a popular school at Yverdon. It was at these institutions that he tried out his ideas. He wrote a manual for mothers titled: 'How Gertrude Teaches her Children'.

2.4.1 Main Aspects of his Educational Philosophy

The aim of education, Pestalozzi stated, was the harmonious development of all the powers – moral, intellectual and physical.

He stated that education should be child-centered – education should be seen from the developing mind of the child and not from the already developed mind of the adult. The child, and not the subject matter, should be the centre of the educational system. He believed that learning was more important than achievement – therefore, reaching an incorrect conclusion by one's own effort was preferable to memorizing the right answer from a book. He advocated that the child should be studied thoroughly and, thereafter, appropriate methods of education should be adopted.

He emphasized the role of the mother in preschool education, stating that the task of educating the child inevitably began with the mother, who could use the early years to promote the all round development of the child.

Pestalozzi attached great importance to games in development and education. The spontaneous activity of the child, he said, leads to learning. He believed in the active involvement of the child in learning.

He made great use of objects during his teaching – he would put an object before the children and then ask them what they saw, encouraging the children to observe and express their observations in correct language. He encouraged the children to prepare albums containing drawings, maps, mathematical problems and natural objects.

Pestalozzi developed various educational materials and set forth a number of exercises for preschoolers in his book "How Gertrude Teaches Her Children". Some of these are, however, too hard for preschoolers.

Pestalozzi believed that discipline should come from within oneself and should not be forced upon the children from without; the children were guided to control themselves.

Pestalozzi was the forerunner of modern progressive education. His schools, where teaching was based upon the child's nature and the child's spontaneous activity, have had an influence on the present day preschool education which emphasizes play, the manipulation of objects and games.

2.5 FRIEDRICH WILHELM AUGUST FROEBEL (1782-1852)

Froebel, the founder of the 'kindergarten' system, was born in Prussia. Froebel came under the influence of German philosophers and, later, observed the methods of teaching at Pestalozzi's school at Yverdon, which created his interest in children. He imbibed ideas about preschool education through the study of Pestalozzi's book 'How Gertrude Teaches Her Children'. He became the personal tutor of three children and it was at this time that he generated the idea of kindergarten. After eleven years of teaching at a model school, he founded his own school at Keilhan known as the "Universal German Institute". However, he left this after some time and went back to Pestalozzi's orphanage where, for the first time, he came into contact with preschool children. It was now that he realized that children needed to be presented with an orderly series of phenomena that would stimulate their minds and produce an inner organization and integration. **From this awareness emerged the idea of his Play-Gifts and Play-Songs. He then founded his first Kindergarten at Blakenburg.** Subsequently, he developed play gifts, which were packed in boxes with printed directions for use, and his play songs were written, illustrated and printed.

In 1826, Froebel published his book: "The Education of Man". He wrote: 'The true method consists in considering the mind of the child as a living whole in which all the parts work together to produce harmonious unity.'

Froebel's other publications include :

- Education of Man
- Pedagogies of Kindergarten
- Education by Development
- Mother Play and Nursery Songs

2.5.1 Basic Concepts in His Educational Philosophy

Froebel considered childhood as not merely a preparation for adulthood; rather, it has a value in itself and it possesses its own creativeness. Childhood participates in the divine whole just as adulthood and, therefore, it can claim the same respect on the part of the educator. The adult has no right to feel superior and to interfere with the natural conditions of childhood; rather when dealing with children, the adult must combine guidance with the capacity of waiting and understanding.

Froebel emphasized the totality of educational endeavour. In order to realize the divine character of the universe and one's part in it, man needs his senses and

emotions as well as reason. They all are windows of the soul. Education must be aimed at developing all these capacities.

Froebel believed that the growth of the child is directed by an inner force. Education, said Froebel, should provide for "free self-activity and self-determination on the part of man – the being created for freedom, in the image of God". He regarded self-activity as the process by which the individual realizes his own nature and builds up his own world and then unites and harmonises the two. "Self-activity of the mind is the first law of this institution (i.e., kindergarten)". The chief means of education is the child's own activity.

Play, he felt, is an essential factor in the growth of the child. The free and unfettered natural development of the child takes place through play. For Froebel, play is not merely an addition to instruction; it is the most important phase in the spontaneous development of the child, because it allows the harmonious exercise of physical, emotional, and intellectual qualities. Play combines attention with relaxation, purpose with independence, and rule with freedom. Play for the child is as ethical as devotion to work is for the adult.

Education, he felt, should be in conformity with the child's nature and needs. He stressed the need for the study of the child's nature, impulses and instincts.

The Concept of Kindergarten

Froebel has made an important contribution to the theory and practice of early childhood education. He realised the paramount importance of childhood and opened the first Kindergarten, an institution for children between ages four and six, at Blackenberg in 1837. Kindergarten is a German word which literally means 'Children's garden.' Froebel found much similarity between a child and a plant. He believed that the process of growth and development of the plant and the child was the same: the plant grows from within, according to the seed that is within: in the same way, the child grows from within, unfolding her tendencies and impulses from within. Froebel conceived the school as a garden, the teacher as the gardener and the students as tender plants.

In the words of Froebel, the object of Kindergarten is "to give the children employment in agreement with their whole nature, to strengthen their bodies, to exercise their senses, to engage their awakening mind and through their senses, to make them acquainted with nature and their fellow creatures. It is specially to guide the heart and the affections, and to lead them to the original ground of all life – to unity with themselves".

According to Froebel: "Play is the purest, most spiritual activity of man at this stage ... It gives, joy, freedom, contentment, inner and outer rest, peace with the world. It holds the source of all that is good". Froebel recognised that play needs to be organised and guided. Thus, his kindergarten included the following elements: play, considered important for self-development; special games and songs which served to enhance learning; construction with materials, practice at various tasks especially gardening that served to build character; and nature study, which Froebel considered uplifting.

An important component of kindergarten was creativity. The child followed where her imagination led her. To Froebel, the child was the sole source of educational principles and the teacher simply followed where the child led. The child develops herself through her own creative activities.

Froebel's kindergarten centered around three elements – the use of his play materials, the singing of play songs and the playing of various educational games in the "play circle". The children played games by joining hands in a circle. Chairs in a KG are arranged in a circle so that the teacher has equal access to all children.

It was the play materials that made the kindergarten unique in its approach. These were of two types: geometrical patterns and the essentials for such activities as modelling, drawing, sewing and colouring. The geometrical patterns were known as "gifts" and the activities as "occupations". The gifts allowed a great deal of free play

and helped in all round development. They helped in the development of the concepts of shape, form, size, colour and number.

The gifts are carefully graded. The order of the gifts is devised in such a way that it leads the child from the activities and thought of one stage to another. These gifts are to be an effective basis of education.

Froebel saw an organic relationship between songs, gestures and art work. He regarded these as three co-ordinate forms of expression in the child. What is to be learnt by the child is first expressed in a song, then it is dramatised or expressed in gestures or movements and lastly illustrated through some constructive work with paper or clay.

The teacher in the kindergarten is not to remain passive. Rather, she must carefully guide children's play with gifts and occupations. She is also required to demonstrate certain activities to children, sings songs and suggest ideas when children play with the gifts. The teacher must also inculcate values like sympathy, humility, and co-operation. She has to avoid external restraint and bodily punishment. The child must be helped to realise that discipline depends upon one's love for order, goodwill and mutual understanding, and not on some outside authority. Froebel said that women should be trained for working with children at this stage.

In the kindergarten, responsibility was shared by all, individual rights respected and co-operation practised.

Froebel's contribution to preschool education has been the kindergarten. Its modern descendent, the nursery school, is more nearly Froebelian in spirit. He conceived the basic principles and designed the first materials of a kindergarten and these are equally applicable now. His concept of play gifts, songs, dramatization and stories are equally applicable now. Although few children today are presented with Froebel's original play gifts, the games and other educational equipment available in the market are closely based on his principles.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Answer the following questions briefly in the space below.

- 1) Match column I with column II.

Column I	Column II
a) Pestalozzi	i) Kindergarten
b) Froebel	ii) How Gertrude Teaches Her Children
c) Comenius	iii) Naturalism
d) Rousseau	iv) the first illustrated book for children

- 2) Who said the following statements

i) The schools are "the terror of boys" and the "slaughter houses of minds".

.....
ii) "Let children be children"

.....
iii) "Play is the purest, most spiritual activity of man at this stage It gives joy, freedom, contentment, inner and outer rest, peace with the world. It holds the source of all that is good."

- 3) List three basic principles in the educational philosophy of the following educationists

a) Comenius

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b) Rousseau

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c) Pestalozzi

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d) Froebel

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) What are the features of a kindergarten ?

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2.6 MARIA MONTESSORI (1870-1952)

Maria Montessori, whose method has become equivalent to education in the preschool years, was born in Italy. While working for her medical degree, Montessori became interested in mentally retarded children and developed teaching materials and

methods to facilitate learning. On being successful with them, she tried new materials and methods and worked with normal children. She argued that if retarded children could progress by the use of her methods, one could do much more for normal children in a properly designed educational environment. She put her ideas to test while working with slum children in 1907. She created a learning environment through her approach called the 'Montessori method'.

Her publications include :

- The Discovery of the Child.
- Education for a New World.
- To Educate the Human Potential.
- The Secret of Childhood.
- The Child, Care and Education.
- Reconstruction in Education.
- The Absorbant Mind.
- What You Should Know About the Child.
- Child Training.
- The Montessori Method.

2.6.1 Basic Ideas in Her Educational Philosophy

Like Froebel, she believed that education must help in the complete unfolding of the child's individuality. Suitable environment should be provided so that the child may grow and develop her potentiality. She said : "The school must permit the free, natural manifestations of the child if he is to study in a scientific manner".

She was against material rewards and punishments. According to her, material rewards are unnatural incentives and punishment leads to forced efforts on the part of the child. Therefore, she believed, that the development that comes with their help will also be unnatural.

She believed that every child is unique and the rate of progress is also different for each child. Collective methods of teaching crush the child's individuality. She treated each child as a separate individual and recommended that the child should be helped and guided in a manner that helps in proper growth and development. Thus the teacher's strategy must be geared to each child's developmental level, interests and needs.

Montessori shifted the emphasis from teaching to learning. She believed that self-education is true education. It was important to help the child to learn rather than making her acquire information through formal studies.

The first six years of life is the most crucial period of a child's life when the teacher can capitalize on the natural energy of children.

Montessori asserted that **the senses are the gateways of knowledge.** On their training and development depends the acquisition of knowledge throughout life. She pointed out that the senses are very active during the early years and a lot of learning takes place during this period.

She also attached importance to motor and physical development as a part of the early education of children. She believed that fostering motor development would facilitate other activities like writing and drawing.

The Concept of Children's House

'Children's House' is the name given by Montessori to a school for young children. The original Montessori house consisted of a set of rooms for intellectual work, for individual play and sleep, a club room for games and music, a dining room, a dressing room and a garden. The activities organised in the house for children aim at their all round development. **Montessori developed her own educational materials, borrowing from Froebel and Seguin.** The Montessori system of education relies heavily on these educational materials and apparatus. These materials are mainly of three types: those

for training of senses, those that teach practical skills, and those that help children to adapt themselves to the needs of school life.

Montessori activities are arranged in a series from easy to difficult. **The emphasis is on encouraging the child to discover and understand concepts by herself.** For example, experience with building blocks of different shapes and sizes gives opportunity to perceive length, breadth and thickness. Arranging cylindrical pieces of the same height but different diameters in an order of increasing diameter, helps children to understand concept of relative size. Similarly, at first the children associate words with their sensory experiences and gradually they acquire a descriptive vocabulary. Among other activities are fastening and unfastening buttons, hooks, laces etc., putting the articles in a room in order, setting a table, moving chairs quietly.

Special emphasis has been in her teaching strategy to read and write. Her educational apparatus provides for properly graded and correlated exercises that lead to reading and writing.

She has provided practical exercises in her school which enable children to learn habits of cleanliness and order. The students learn the lesson of dignity of labour and self-help by attending to their needs themselves.

Social values are also stressed in the Children's House. Children serve lunch, eat together and later clean the plates. Many other activities are also performed cooperatively.

The Montessori system is child-centered. The child is free to choose the activity she desires. Yet, **there is structure with freedom.** The educator structures the activities so that their performance leads to a certain development, but that is all she does. The child is free to proceed through the activity at her own pace. The activities are challenging as well as interesting. **Individualized teaching is the focal point of the Montessori method i.e.,** the teaching strategy is evolved individually for each child, based on her needs and interests. This enables the child to progress at his or her own pace and promotes optimal development. Her method is a reaction against collective teaching.

Montessori did not approve of fairy tales for children, as she felt that these tend to confuse children and hinder them in the process of adjusting themselves to the real world.

The Role of the Teacher

Montessori replaces the word 'teacher' by the word 'directress', as she thinks that the function of the teacher is to direct and not to teach. The motto of the directress should be : "I must diminish, to let you grow".

She suggested that a teacher should care for the child like a gardener who cares for plants, so that the natural growth of the child is properly guided in the process of unfolding itself.

The directress should have an intimate knowledge of the mind and character of each child. She should keep the physiological records of each child's development: the weight, height and other measurements. In the words of Montessori: "The Directress should be partly doctor, partly scientist and completely religious. Like a doctor she should avoid scolding or suppressing the patient in order to avoid worse situations. Like a scientist, she should wait patiently for the results..... Like a religious lady, she should be there to serve the child".

The directress should allow the child to grow according to his or her own inner law. Her business is to provide a suitable environment. She should provide children with suitable opportunities to think for themselves. "Virtues, and not words, are the main qualifications of the Directress". She must acquire moral alertness, patience, love and humility. She must banish anger, which prevents one from understanding the child. The soul of the child, which is pure and very sensitive, requires her most delicate care.

Merits of the Montessori Method

Montessori ushered in a new era in early childhood education. She writes : "Today there stands forth one urgent need—the reform of methods in education and

instruction, and he who struggles towards this end is struggling for the regeneration of man". To her the child was god.

Many preschools today are based on the Montessori method. Others, while they have not adopted her approach totally, use the educational materials, in one form or the other.

The child centeredness of her method, the freedom given to the child, the relatively few constraints on learning yet the presence of a person to guide the child, helps in the total development of the child. While her stress on realistic methods of teaching through the senses and through concrete experiences is reminiscent of Pestalozzi and Froebel, her method of education gives greater freedom to the child and is more individualistic in nature.

Limitations of the Montessori Method

There is a heavy reliance on the educational apparatus and materials. Beyond a point, this limits the child as well as the teacher. The child's expression is limited to what is possible with these materials. The pupil is expected to do different types of exercises with the help of the apparatus and the teacher also has to teach through the didactic apparatus, with the result that the free expression of the children is limited as is the work of the teacher.

Also the Montessori equipment is very expensive.

Individualized teaching, which is the hallmark of her method, requires that the educator work with a fewer number of children. This is not always possible in our preschools.

The teacher in this system takes special care in keeping records of the height, skull and limbs of each individual child. She hardly observes temperament and other emotional traits. These, as you know from your study of Course 1, contribute in a major way to the child's social and emotional development.

2.7 RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861-1941)

Tagore, popularly known as 'Gurudev', was a poet, an educationist, an artist, a social as well as a religious reformer.

Tagore was a naturalist, believing in immediate and direct contact with nature as a means of education. His ideas can be compared, to some extent, with those of Rousseau. He felt that the cares and miseries of the world, which are created by man, wear away one's power to be happy. He wrote: "The inexpensive power to be happy which, along with other children, I brought with me to this world was being worn away by friction with the brick-and-mortar arrangement of life." He did not like the lessening of contact with nature brought about as result of modernization and industrialization and tried to bring back the balance. He said that "Children with the freshness of their senses come directly to an intimacy with this world. This is a great gift they have... and must never lose their power of immediate communication with it..... We should have the gift to be natural with nature and human with human society."

The suffering and misery of a child's under a heartless educational system has been forcefully brought out in his educational writings. Tagore started a Bengali school at Bolpur in West Bengal, in 1901, which was called Shantiniketan. It was here that he evolved his ideology of education and gave practical shape to his ideas. Later this school grew into a world university called 'Viswa Bharati'.

His books include –

- Shikshar Herpher;
- 'The Parrots' Training and
- 'Shiksha Samasya'.

2.7.1 Basic Ideas in his Educational Philosophy

Tagore was convinced that in the early years the child should arrive at truth spontaneously, through natural process, by coming in contact with things and persons.

This would pave the way for the widest possible development of child's interests. **Learning for the child, he felt, is essentially explorative, active, and full of joy.**

The curriculum in his preschool was activity-centered rather than subject-centered. He believed in education through play and activity. Art, for him, was the bridge between the man and the world. **The cardinal principle in his educational theory is the freedom for creative self-expression** and so he stressed the creative aspects of learning, crafts, work and play. He felt that literature was the true vehicle of education and encouraged reading of folk literature for its cultural significance and in order to grasp the psychology of people.

Tagore emphasized the following three methods of teaching:

- **Peripatetic method** : A follower of the peripatetic method, Tagore was concerned with the association between body and mind, in order to establish a total rhythm and harmony in life. He believed that drama and histrionic arts should be an integral part of the preschool curriculum. This is because children need the opportunity to express themselves through bodily movements.
- **Activity method**: Believing in learning by doing, he emphasized that children must learn through activities.
- **Learning through the environment**: Tagore stressed teaching through environment. To the preschooler, he said, teaching should be done when they are on 'nature walks' or 'on trek'. "If possible I would recommend children to carry their notebooks and to go on writing while they are on trek", he said.

Tagore was against rigid discipline. He believed that the object of education was the freedom of the mind. He would give a break between two class periods, and would change the place of the class from one tree to another. Too many restrictions would make education joyless, he felt.

The student-teacher relationship was the most significant aspect of his educational philosophy. The primary function of the teacher, he believed, is to produce an atmosphere conducive to creative activity.

Tagore's emphasis on teaching through the environment, learning by doing, education through self-activity are all considered qualities of good preschool education today.

2.8 MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI (1869-1948)

Gandhiji will always be remembered not only as the great apostle of non-violence and truth but also as an important philosopher of education. He aimed at evolving an educational system based on the Indian Culture. In 1937, he gave an ideological basis for his scheme of new education called Nai-Talim or Basic Education. However, at that time he did not think of preschool education. It was in 1944 that he realized the importance of early childhood education. It was now that he felt that : "The real education begins from conception, as the mother begins to take up the responsibility of the child. It is very clear that if this new education is to be effective, its foundation must go deeper, it must begin not with the children but the parents and the community."

Gandhiji's publications on education include :

- **Basic Education,**
- **True Education,**
- **Tasks before Indian Students,**
- **Towards New Education,**
- **Medium of Instruction.**

2.8.1 Main Aspects of His Educational Philosophy

Gandhiji wrote in his biography : "We labour under a sort of superstition that the child has nothing to learn during the first five years of its life. On the contrary, the fact is

that the child never learns in after life what it does in its first five years. The education of the child begins with conception. The physical and mental states of parents at the moment of conception are produced in the baby. Then, during pregnancy, it continues to be affected by the mother's moods, desires and temperament, as also by her way of life. After birth, the child imitates the parents, and for a considerable number of years, entirely depends on them for its growth". **He gave the term 'Pre-Basic Education' for the education of children under seven years of age.** He stated that **pre-basic education must aim at "the development of all their faculties, conducted by the school teachers in cooperation with the parents and the community in schools, in the home and in the village."**

Gandhiji was also concerned with the defects of elementary education, particularly its emphasis on memorization, the divorce of the contents from the environment and the impracticability of the curriculum. He recommended a new approach during the elementary years called 'Basic Education'. Both Pre-basic and Basic education are based on the principal idea of imparting education to the mind and the body.

Good education, according to him, was "that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical capacities of the children. **In Gandhiji's philosophy of education, children are at the centre of the process.** Their needs and interests are the deciding factors in the teaching strategy. **The child's own interest and activity are the core of the Gandhian philosophy of education.** Instead of loading the child with bookish knowledge, he stated, that the child must learn by doing and through experience and purposeful activities. The curricula of Pre-basic Education is accordingly to be built and the teaching is to be done through concrete life situations.

He laid great emphasis on crafts, not merely for productive work, but also for developing the intellectual capacities of the children. He said that all teaching is possible through the processes of the handicraft.

He believed that the child is active, creative, and playful. She learns through the medium of play. The home is the first centre of education and learning. The teacher and parents should co-operate in carrying out the education of young children. The teacher must understand the child's likes and dislikes. **Preschool education, he stated, must be inexpensive** so that it can reach the millions in the villages. Though the child in the preschool period cannot be self-sufficient or self-supporting, an attempt should be made to develop this quality. According to him, no one must be a parasite on the family or society.

Based on his above ideas, the first experiment in Pre-Basic education was started in 1945 at Sevagram, Maharashtra, under the guidance of Smt. Shanta Narulkar. The Pre-basic school is geared to the needs of the following four groups of children :

- Stage 1 : Conception to birth
- Stage 2 : Birth to 2 1/2 years
- Stage 3 : 2 1/2 years to 4 years
- Stage 4 : 4 years to 7 years

The first two stages involve both the mother and the child. Mothers are helped to learn about new trends and scientific methods of child rearing, health and hygiene. The physical and health needs of the children are also looked after, during this period.

Children from 2 1/2 to 4 years of age are provided stimulating play activities. They are free to act, to move about and to chose their own activities. The teacher sees to it that the child handles the play materials effectively and correctly.

After four years of age, the child participates in activities like cleaning the classroom, washing small vessels, watering the plants, measuring and weighing things, ginning cloth with a small iron rod and wooden plank, bringing water and other similar activities.

Though Gandhiji's scheme of education was started with great enthusiasm in the country, by the end of the Second Five Year Plan, only 24 per cent of the elementary schools were of the basic pattern. **The influence of his approach on preschool education does not appear to be marked.** However, **play activities did become an active component of the existing preschools, balwadis and baby clinics of that time.**

2.9 TARABAI MODAK (1892-1973)

Padmabhooshan Shrimati Tarabai Modak was a pioneer in the field of preschool of education. She was the principal of a Training college for women at Rajkot in Saurashtra when she came in contact with Gijubhai Badeka, another educationist in the field of preschools education. Badeka was experimenting with preschool education at Bhavnagar in Gujarat. Greatly influenced by what she saw at Gijubhai's Bal-Mandir scheme, she resigned from her post as the principal and went to work with Gijubhai.

This was the period when the national movement in education was at its peak and efforts were on to Indianise the system of education. Gijubhai and Tarabai were convinced of the importance of preschool education and they started the movement for preschool education in India. Preparing the necessary literature for student teachers they started a training College for pre-primary teachers in 1925 – the first of its kind in the country. Later, they founded a society for propagation of preschool education, brought out a monthly journal and published instructional material for teachers and parents.

In Gujarat where they worked, the preschool movement was criticized on the ground that preschool education was only for the rich and India could not afford it. Tarabai Modak took this up a challenge and in 1931 extended the preschool movement to Maharashtra, where she set up a Balwadi in a Harijanwada at Amravati.

In 1936, Tarabai started a centre for preschool children called Shishu Vihar Kendra at Bombay. This centre had been established in a well to do locality. Subsequently, in 1945 Tarabai founded the Gram Bal Shiksha Kendra at Bordi, where she worked for 12 years. Then she shifted to the tribal area of Kosbad in 1957, where she worked and tried her methods with tribal children.

Tarabai pioneered the concept of balwadi – a centre for preschool children. She started two types of balwadis at Bordi – Central Balwadis and Angan Balwadis. The Central Balwadis were run during regular school hours for five hours. They were fully equipped with educational play material. The children were brought from their homes to the central balwadi.

The angan balwadis were conducted near the children's huts under the eyes of the parents and elders, in the courtyard or under the trees. These were run at the convenience of children, for an hour and a half. The angan balwadi was almost without any materials, except a mirror, combs, buckets, scissors, napkins etc. Activities in the angan balwadis included personal and general cleanliness, rhythmic movements, games, oral language activities, hand work and crafts. Tarabai stressed that the teachers should make their own play material from locally available materials. The things that could not be made by teachers were made by local artisans.

Tarabai also initiated the concept of the Meadow School where teachers went to the meadows to teach the children who could not leave their cattle.

The Gram Bal Shiksha Kendra at Kosbad, which under Tarabai's leadership began the programme of preschool education for the tribal children of Kosbad Hills, now runs a complex of educational institutions ranging from a balwadi to a high school, training institutions for teachers at different levels and a workshop for preparing educational materials. The trainees of Kosbad, after receiving training in the institutions, are sent to villages to set up anganwadis devise play material from locally available material and mobilize community support.

Tarabai's idea of the angan balwadi is a unique contribution which greatly helped in making the nursery education truly indigenous in content and form. Her ideas of anganwadi and meadow school were an eye opener to the people working with preschool children. Her educational materials and method made a tremendous contribution to the preschool movement in India. The concept of anganwadi in the ICDS scheme has been drawn from her work.

2.10 ANUTAI WAGH

Anutai Wagh worked closely with Tarabai Modak. While Tarabai initiated the concept of the meadow school, it was Anutai Wagh who developed and carried this concept further. She made a major contribution by Indianizing Montessori materials, using stones, leaves, pebbles etc. available in the environment.

Anutai Wagh, who died in 1993, held executive positions in several organizations and committees and initiated many programmes for the welfare of women and children in her life-time. She was the Director of the Gram Bal Shikshan Kendra at Kosbad. She was the President of the Thane District Stree Shakti Jagriti Samiti and under its auspices initiated many programmes for women and children.

She wrote many books in Marathi on Child Education and was also the editor of the monthly magazine of the Nutan Bal Shikshan Sangh – "Shikshan Patrika" – and of a journal for women – "Savitri".

In 1972, the Maharashtra Government awarded her the "Ideal Teacher Award". In 1974, the State Government conferred on her the title of "Dalit Mitra". The FIE Foundation of Ichal Karanji in 1978 awarded her for her outstanding contribution to education. In the International Year of the Child (1979), she received the National Award from the Government of India for being the best worker in the field of education. She has been felicitated and awarded by many other organizations in Maharashtra and elsewhere. She was a great source of strength and inspiration to the Indian Association for Preschool Education, taking an active leadership role in its functioning effectively to refresh and re-educate teachers of the very young, country-wide.

3) What has been Tagore's contribution to preschool education ?

2) What are the main features of the Montessori system of education ?

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| a) Montessori | i) pre-basic education |
| b) Tagore | ii) pioneered the concept of balwadi |
| c) Gandhi | iii) set up the first training college for primary teachers |
| d) Tarabai | iv) peripatetic method |
| e) Badeka | v) rebelled against collective methods of teaching |

Column II

Column I

1) Match column I to column II

Answer the following questions briefly in the space below:

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

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- 4) What role has Tarabai Modak played in promoting the preschool movement in India ?

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2.11 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit you have read about the ideology and philosophy of some eminent educationists as related to early childhood education. The work of these educators has had a tremendous influence on the principles of early childhood education, as we know it today.

Comenius laid great emphasis on the stimulation of senses and developing the powers of observation as a means of acquiring knowledge. He believed that during infancy (the first six years in his classification) the mother's lap should serve as the school. He believed that play was very necessary for all round development. He was against rote memorization and stated that the desire for learning has to be kindled. He wrote the first picture book for children.

Rousseau introduced the 'naturalism' movement in education. In contrast to the ideas of that time, he stated that the child is active and continuously attempts to understand the world. The child explores the world and 'learns by doing'. He stressed that nature should be allowed to take its course in the development of children. He stressed the necessity of play for learning and was against harsh discipline.

Pestalozzi emphasized that education should be child centered and that learning was more important than achievement. He emphasized the role of the mother in preschool education. He stated that the spontaneous activity of the child leads to learning. He laid great emphasis on games in development and education and made great use of objects in his teaching. He developed some exercises for preschoolers which he set forth in his book.

Froebel was the founder of the kindergarten system of preschool education. His work has had a tremendous impact on the nature of preschool education as we know it now. The present day nursery schools and preschools are heavily based on the principles and methods developed by him. Froebel believed that childhood had a value in itself and the growth of the child is directed by an inner force. He believed that the chief means of education is the child's own activity and that play is an essential factor in the growth of the child. He believed that play allows the harmonious exercise of physical, emotional and intellectual qualities. However, play also needs to be organized and guided. Froebel's KG centered around three elements – the use of his play materials, the singing of his play songs and the playing of various educational games in the "play circle". The play materials were of two types – gifts and occupations.

Montessori, like the other progressive educationists before her, believed that education must help in the complete unfolding of the child's individuality and that a suitable environment should be provided so that the child may develop her potential. She was against collective methods of teaching. She held that the method of instruction must be geared to each child's level of development, interests and needs,

since each child is unique and the rate of development is different for each child. She believed that it was important to help the child learn rather than acquire information through formal studies. She stressed that the senses are the gateways of knowledge and that the first six years are the crucial period of a child's life. Montessori developed her own educational material and her teaching methodology is heavily based on these.

Her system of education is child centered and the child is free to choose the activity she desires. She has laid great responsibility on the directress to guide children's learning.

Tagore, like Rousseau, was a naturalist. He believed that the child is essentially explorative, active and full of joy. He believed in education through play and activity. The curriculum in his preschool was activity centered. He believed that children learn by doing. He also stressed teaching through the environment. He was a follower of the peripetatic method of teaching. He was against rigid discipline and the student-teacher relationship was the most significant aspect of his educational philosophy.

Gandhiji evolved a system of education based on the Indian culture. He gave the term Pre-basic education for the education of children below seven years of age. He believed that the early years are crucial in learning. In his philosophy, the children are at the centre of the education process. He was against loading children with bookish knowledge. He believed that children must learn by doing and through purposeful activities. He laid great emphasis on the crafts. He stressed that preschool education must be inexpensive and that the parents and the community must be involved in it.

Tarabai Modak, Gijubhai Badeka and Anutai Wagh were pioneers in the field of preschool education and to them goes the credit of Indianizing preschool education. Tarabai and Gijubhai started a training college for pre-primary teachers in 1925 – the first of its kind in the country. Tarabai pioneered the concept of balwadi. She also proved that access to preschool education need not be limited to children from the upper strata, but that with imagination the preschool worker can adapt her teaching strategy and methodology to work with children from the poorer sections. Anutai Wagh carried Tarabai Modak's work further. She made a major contribution by Indianizing Montessori materials, using items available in the environment.

2.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) a) – (ii), b) – (i), c) – (iv), d) – (iii)
- 2) i) Comenius
ii) Rousseau
iii) Froebel
- 3) a) Comenius : (i) Stimulation of senses as a means of acquiring knowledge
(ii) the importance of play in development
(iii) interesting books specially adapted to the needs of children
b) Rousseau : (i) Child is an active being who participates in her own development by acting upon the environment
(ii) Child is explorative and learns by doing
(iii) Necessity of play for learning
c) Pestalozzi : (i) Education should be child centered
(ii) The spontaneous activity of the child leads to learning
(iii) Importance of games in education and development
d) Froebel : (i) Childhood has a value in itself and is not merely a preparation for adulthood
(ii) Child's own activity is the means of education.
(iii) Play is the most important phase in the spontaneous development of the child.

- 4) In a kindergarten, children participate in activities in agreement with their whole nature. Self activity is the basis of learning in a KG. Creativity is an important feature of a KG. The child follows where her imagination leads her and the teacher follows where the child leads. The child is at the centre of the teaching. Play is the means of instruction. The KG is centered around three elements – the use of play gifts and occupations, the singing of play songs, and the playing of educational games in the play circle. The seating arrangement in a KG is circular. Nature study and gardening are also components of a KG.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) a) – v)
b) – iv)
c) – i)
d) – ii)
e) – iii)
- 2) Individualized teaching is the focal point of the Montessori method. The teacher teaches through the educational materials prepared by Montessori. The child learns by doing, through self activity. Special attention is given to the stimulation of the senses. Learning is through the play way method. Child is free to choose the activity she desires while the directress is present to guide the child through it.
- 3) Tagore emphasized that education should be child centered and that the curriculum in the preschool should be based upon the activity by the child. The child must have freedom for creative self-expression. Play and activity should be the means of education. He emphasized learning through the environment and the use of peripatetic method in teaching.
- 4) Modak helped to Indianize preschool education and was responsible for the spread of the preschool education movement, in the country, particularly for children belonging to the lower income group families. She pioneered the concept of balwadis.