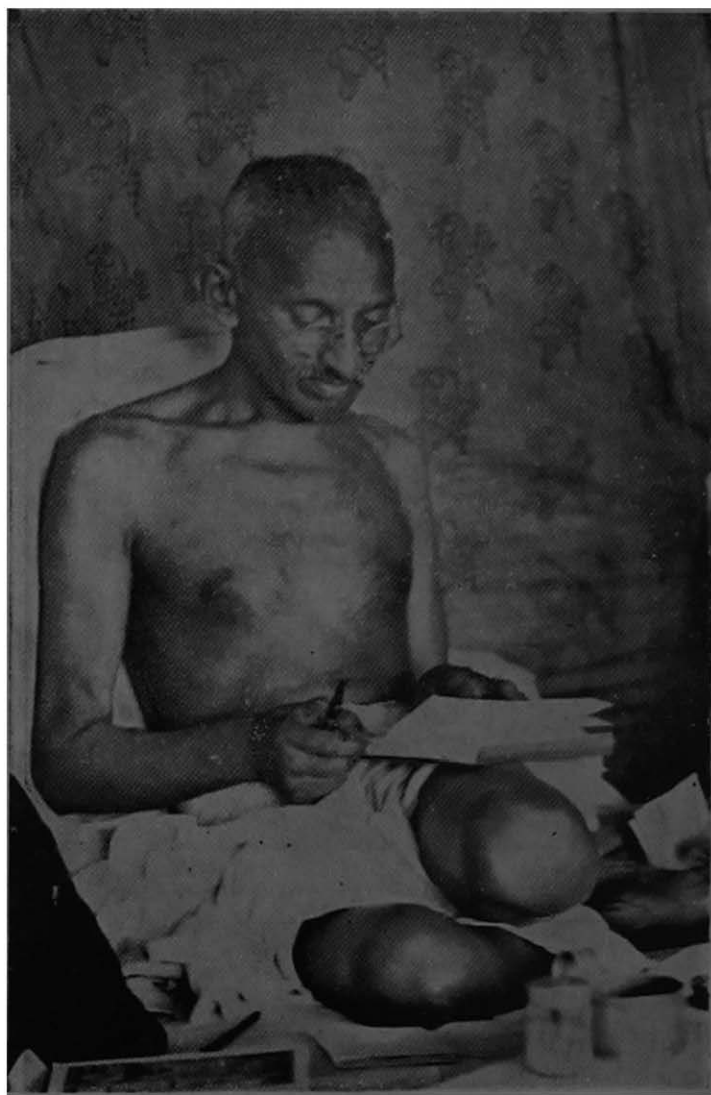


TO
MAHATMA GAN



MAHATMA GANDHI

THE
WARDHA SCHEME
OF EDUCATION

EXPOSITION AND EXAMINATION

By

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HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1939

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
AMEN HOUSE, LONDON, E.C. 4
EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK
TORONTO MELBOURNE CAPETOWN
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS
HUMPHREY MILFORD
PUBLISHER TO THE
UNIVERSITY

First published January 1939

TN3
G9
11489

PRINTED IN INDIA
AT THE DIOCESAN PRESS, MADRAS—1939. C6937

FOREWORD

THE inception, propagation and final shaping of an idea is always an interesting and instructive object of study. The story of how the new theory of Basic National Education came to be embodied in a scheme has to be studied for the additional reason that it has been a controversial issue through all its phases, and there are not wanting lovers of the past who still see in the scheme dangers and snares and complications that suggested themselves to their timid imaginations when the foundations of the scheme were being planned and laid.

Mr Varkey has rendered a great service to the cause of Basic National Education by blowing away the smoke and dust of controversy that hung around some of its phases. But, of course, experience will suggest improvement of the scheme, and the smoke and dust of controversy will continue to rise. Mr Varkey has answered a host of just the kind of questions people commonly ask and has thus settled a host of misconceptions and doubts. But people will never stop asking questions and expecting you to answer them. The next edition of this book will probably be more bulky!

DELHI

ZAKIR HUSAIN

15 December 1938

PREFACE

THE idea of writing this book originated from a happy suggestion made by the Honble Dr P. Subbarayan, Minister for Education, Government of Madras. Having seen that people criticized the Wardha Scheme of Education in the press and from the platform without an adequate knowledge of the subject, he suggested that I might undertake to publish, in book form, the proceedings of the Wardha Educational Conference, as well as the Reports and Syllabuses of the Zakir Husain Committee, prefacing the whole with an Introduction explaining the principles and features of the scheme.

While the plan of such a book was being drawn up, two publications made their appearance in quick succession. The first of these was *Educational Reconstruction*, and the second was *Basic National Education*. These publications contained only the bare Reports and Syllabuses of the Zakir Husain Committee. The former published in addition the proceedings of the Wardha Conference, as well as some extracts from the writings of Gandhiji in the *Harijan*.

It was, nevertheless, felt that there was room and need for yet another, independent, treatise which would explain the underlying principles, describe the details of the scheme, solve difficulties, answer queries and refute criticisms. The public, teachers and officers of Education Departments are all seeking for fresh light on this novel system of education. This little volume is, therefore, intended to meet a distinct

demand at the present moment. In fact, as Dr Subbarayan has observed in the Introduction, the 'book' will be of great use not merely to teachers, but also to administrators in understanding the problem in all its aspects'.

The principal aim of the book is to interpret the mind of Mahatmaji, the originator of the scheme, and to portray the ideas and ideals of his system of national education intended to inaugurate a new era in India. How far the Zakir Husain Committee has accepted or modified the scheme as originally formulated by Gandhiji, and how far the Central Advisory Board of Education at Delhi has recently suggested further modifications, have also been pointed out. In the course of the examination of the scheme, as a teacher of twenty-three years' experience, I have, here and there, offered practical suggestions for adapting the scheme to varying local conditions. The chapters on 'Queries' and 'Criticisms' are not supposed to be exhaustive; but an attempt has been made to answer the most important ones. The public as well as teachers and administrators will be specially interested in the chapters on 'The Wardha Syllabus' and 'The Wardha Experiment', which help to throw further light on the practical aspects of the scheme. A few pictures have been included to illustrate the life and work of the Training School at Wardha.

I am very grateful to Dr Subbarayan for his suggestion and for his encouragement to write this book, and particularly for revising the manuscript and writing the Introduction. I am also thankful to the Rev Fr D. J. Albuquerque, S.J., Professor of English, St Aloysius College, Mangalore, for going

through the manuscript and suggesting verbal improvements. I would also like to thank the Oxford University Press, which has always shown a special interest in bringing out works on Indian topics and problems.

In a special manner have I to express my gratitude to Dr Zakir Husain for his kindness in writing the Foreword and for his appreciation of this modest attempt to further the cause of national education.

FORT ST GEORGE

C. J. VARKEY

MADRAS

18 December 1938

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	v
PREFACE	vii
INTRODUCTION	xv
CHAPTER	
I. HISTORY OF THE SCHEME ...	1
§1. Introduction	1
§2. The Wardha Conference	2
(a) <i>Agenda.</i> (b) <i>Proceedings.</i>	
(c) <i>Resolutions.</i>	
§3. The Committee	8
§4. Reports and Syllabuses	10
(a) <i>The First Report.</i> (b) <i>The Second Report.</i>	
II. GANDHIJI'S IDEAS ON EDUCATION ...	15
§1. Defects of the Present System ...	15
§2. True Education	17
§3. Two Propositions	18
§4. His Convictions	19
APPENDIX: Mahatma Gandhi's Inaugural Address at the Wardha Conference ...	21
III. FUNDAMENTAL FEATURES OF THE SCHEME	28
§1. Manual and Productive Craft ...	28
(a) <i>Its Meaning.</i> (b) <i>A Misconception.</i>	
(c) <i>Its Feasibility.</i>	
§2. Self-supporting Education ...	33
(a) <i>Its Twofold Meaning.</i> (b) <i>Raison d'être of the Idea.</i> (c) <i>Feasibility of the Idea.</i>	
§3. Seven Years Compulsory Education ...	41
(a) <i>Contrast with the Present System.</i>	

CHAPTER	PAGE
	(b) <i>Duration of Compulsory Education.</i> (c) <i>Age-limits for Compulsion.</i> (d) <i>Justification for Seven Years Compulsion.</i>
§4. Emphasis on Indian Languages ...	46
(a) <i>Mother-Tongue.</i> (b) <i>Hindustani.</i>	
§5. The Cult of Non-Violence ...	50
IV. SECONDARY FEATURES OF THE SCHEME ...	53
§1. Matriculation Standard ...	53
§2. Different Steps in Education ...	56
§3. State to Buy Products of Children's Labour ...	58
§4. Relationship with Life ...	60
§5. Ideal of Citizenship ...	61
V. WARDHA SCHOOL TEACHERS ...	64
§1. Special Teachers and Books ...	64
§2. Selection of Teachers ...	67
(a) <i>Two Suggestions.</i> (b) <i>Standard of Attainments.</i> (c) <i>Present Teachers.</i> (d) <i>Women Teachers.</i>	
§3. Conscription and Persuasion ...	72
(a) <i>Conscription.</i> (b) <i>Persuasion.</i>	
§4. Courses of Training ...	75
(a) <i>Two Courses.</i> (b) <i>A Shorter Course.</i>	
VI. QUERIES ON THE SCHEME ...	77
(1) Can everything be taught through a craft?	
(2) Why is special emphasis laid on spinning and weaving?	
(3) Cannot other handicrafts also be adopted as Basic Crafts?	
(4) Can one school teach all or many crafts?	
(5) What about advanced courses in these crafts?	

CHAPTER		PAGE
	(6) Are seven years needed to study a craft?	
	(7) Will there be other types of schools?	
	(8) What will happen to the present schools?	
	(9) Can this system succeed in cities and towns?	
	(10) What about college education?	
VII.	CRITICISMS OF THE SCHEME ...	88
	§1. The Theory of Self-supporting Education ...	89
	(1) <i>Duty of the State.</i> (2) <i>Waste of Raw Materials.</i> (3) <i>Sale of School Products.</i> (4) <i>Factory Labour.</i>	
	§2. Craft-centred Education ...	93
	(5) <i>Culture Neglected.</i> (6) <i>Unbalanced Time-table.</i> (7) <i>A Dull Course of Education.</i> (8) <i>Premature Specialization and Choice of Career.</i>	
	§3. Teachers' Problems ...	100
	(9) <i>Hardship for Teachers.</i> (10) <i>Teachers' Pay.</i> (11) <i>Teachers' Training.</i> (12) <i>Lack of Teachers.</i>	
	§4. Omissions in the Scheme ...	105
	(13) <i>Pre-Wardha Education.</i> (14) <i>Neglect of English.</i> (15) <i>Neglect of Physical Education.</i> (16) <i>Neglect of Religion.</i>	
	§5. Other Points of Criticism ...	112
	(17) <i>Number of School Days.</i> (18) <i>Migration from Villages to Towns.</i> (19) <i>Check on Industrial Progress.</i> (20) <i>Gandhiji is thrusting the scheme on the country.</i>	
VIII.	THE WARDHA SYLLABUS ...	119
	§1. The Basic Craft ...	119
	<i>Process of Correlation.</i>	

CHAPTER	PAGE
§2. Advancement of Culture ...	131
(a) <i>Syllabus in Social Studies.</i> (b)	
<i>Syllabus in General Science.</i>	
IX. THE WARDHA EXPERIMENT ...	148
§1. The Training School ...	149
(a) <i>Administration.</i> (b) <i>Training</i>	
<i>Courses.</i>	
§2. The Practising School ...	152
§3. Productive Manual Work ...	153
§4. Attainments of Pupils ...	154
APPENDIX: The Vidya Mandir School ...	157
X. CONCLUSION ...	161
§1. Originality of the Scheme ...	161
§2. Benefits of the Scheme ...	163
(a) <i>Liquidation of illiteracy.</i> (b) <i>Free</i>	
<i>elementary and secondary education.</i>	
(c) <i>Poverty of Indian villages.</i> (d)	
<i>Practical Education.</i>	
§3. Imprimatur of the Congress ...	167
§4. Support of the Central Advisory Board	
of Education ...	170
§5. Hope and Appeal ...	174

INTRODUCTION

THIS is the first book dealing constructively with the scheme adumbrated by Mahatmaji with regard to the reorganization of elementary education in this country. The basic principle underlying the scheme is teaching through a craft. It was considered at a conference held at Wardha under the auspices of the Marwari Education Society in October 1937 with Mahatmaji himself as President. It was attended by well-known educationists and by Ministers of the various Congress Provinces including Mr B. G. Kher, the Prime Minister of Bombay. It was welcomed on all hands, and the educationists present at the Conference felt that a new era had begun in the field of elementary education.

As was said recently by Lord Hailey in London: 'British rule in India has not succeeded in solving the problem of literacy, and organization of education began at the wrong end. The Company Government, having in mind the question of competent men to run the administration in the lower ranks, devoted their thought to higher education rather than elementary education.' In this country, therefore, the Universities came first: primary education was relegated to the background, and was considered only as a stepping-stone to secondary schools and university education. The problem of the removal of mass illiteracy was never considered at all, but with the growth of governmental organization, education of the masses had eventually to be considered. The finances of the country did not allow the tackling of the problem on the vast scale it required. As Lord Hailey has said: 'There are many who will readily agree that the conduct of education

is one of the less happy features of our rule in India. Britain's mistake lay in the wide expansion of academic secondary education, before she had laid a sound basis for primary education.'

The new democratic Governments which have now come into being have naturally to look at education from a different angle altogether. Mahatmaji's contribution to it is not a day too late, and all our Governments, not merely Congress Governments, are beginning to turn their attention to this scheme. The Central Advisory Board of Education appointed a committee with the Prime Minister of Bombay as its Chairman and Dr Zakir Husain, the Chairman of the Wardha Education Committee, as one of its members. They went through the Wardha Scheme and have accepted the fundamental principles of the scheme as a concrete solution of the problem of elementary education.

Mr Varkey's book is the first attempt at a treatise on the scheme in all its aspects and brings to bear on it the ideas of an educationist. In a work of this kind he has naturally had to use the *Reports* of the Zakir Husain Committee and the writings of Mahatmaji on the scheme. He has succeeded in bringing before the public the essentials of the scheme by quoting, wherever possible, the recommendations in the Zakir Husain Committee's *Reports* and Mahatmaji's writings. The book, I feel sure, will fill a void in our literature on elementary education and help to focus attention on the essentials of the scheme.

Teaching through a craft may not be new, but Mahatmaji's idea is essentially new; and I may respectfully say that he has applied his great doctrine of non-violence and truth to the problem. Elementary

education as hitherto imparted in this country has never paid much attention either to the environment or to the aptitude of the pupils who go to school. There has been no attempt to educate our masters, as Gladstone once tersely put it, and to create in the pupils a civic consciousness which is so necessary for a democratic electorate. 'The three Rs' were the only consideration that was before educational authorities as a scheme of elementary education. It was good in the beginning, but as a solution of the problem it has become a failure. The huge wastage that goes on in the field of education has been well brought out in the report of the Hartog Committee. Mahatmaji's scheme which gives a complete course of basic education for seven years will help to solve this problem of wastage. The great difficulty is the availability of teachers who will understand the essentials of the scheme as now propounded.

Mr Varkey has visited the Training School at Wardha and has devoted a chapter to the working of the school and has shown how the teachers are being trained and what reaction the scheme has on the minds of the pupils who are at the model school of this institution.

All provincial Governments will approximate themselves gradually to the scheme when they have been able to train teachers to run schools on Wardha lines. Mr Varkey's book, I feel certain, will be of great use, not merely to teachers but also to administrators in understanding the problem in all its aspects. I wish the book all success.

FORT ST GEORGE

MADRAS

P. SUBBARAYAN

15 December 1938

God did not create us to eat, drink and be merry, but to earn our bread in the sweat of our brow.—Gandhiji (quoting from the Bible)

Without the use of our hands and feet our brains would atrophy.—Gandhiji

The true development of the mind and the heart can be only through manual labour.—Acharya Kalelkar

The co-ordination of the hand and intellect is very much needed in our country.—The Honble Dr Syed Mahmud

The ideal of education is to bring out the best in man, to create a love for God and man.—The Honble Sri Vishwanathan Das

Nothing great in this world was ever accomplished without a living faith.—Gandhiji