

EDUCATION OF THE FUTURE

I. Introduction:

Dr. S Radhakrishnan, a great thinker and philosopher of India says, "Ancient Greece and India agree in holding that it is the aim of education to train us to apprehend human virtues and the simple decencies of life. We must educate not for cruelty and power but for love and kindness. We must develop the freshness of feeling for nature, the sensitiveness of soul to human need. We must foster the freedom of the mind, the humanity of the heart, the integrity of the individual."

Civilizations have advanced and the quality of life has improved with the difference that science and technology have brought into our lives. "Man's highest aspiration - his seeking for perfection, his longing for freedom and mastery, his search after pure truth and unmixed delight - is in flagrant contradiction with his present existence and normal experience.... Life evolves out of Matter, Mind out of Life, because they are already involved there: Matter is a form of veiled Life, Life a form of Veiled Mind. Man's highest aspiration would then only indicate the gradual unveiling of the Spirit within, the preparation of a higher life upon earth."

II Education : Then and Now :

In past the society was static in its vision, children did their parents' occupation and there was a little change from one generation to another. This was so till almost up to 15th century - almost

unchanged form what they had been in Greece in the fifth century B.C. It is with the seventeenth century that the notion of progress and development dawned upon the human mind, and within two centuries Europe has become the scene of a great intellectual activity in the cause of general education and culture, emancipation from tradition and with a keen interest in the theoretical and applied sciences. This was the period of "Enlightenment". An immense optimism swept over Europe. Says Condorcet (1743-1794) the French mathematician - philosopher:

"There is no limit set to the perfecting of the powers of man. The progress of this perfectibility, henceforth independent of any power that might wish to stop it, has no other limit than the duration of the globe upon which nature has placed us."³

Then we see the bubbling of the Age of Reason and the upheavals of English and French revolution, the notion of political equality was brought to the masses and infused the future with a new hopefulness. The nineteenth century was a terrible age for the industrial countries. "Moreover, Science has abandoned its ideal of "truth". Limiting itself to the knowledge reached through senses, and consistently refusing to admit any higher source of knowledge, science has found that it can truly know nothing. It declared henceforth truth unknowable and decided to confine itself to efficiency and convenience, i.e. it has taken utility and not truth as its criterion."⁴ No doubt, progress is immense in the scientific and technological fields, resulting in a marked growth in economic sphere and raising of the standard of living. The suppression of slavery and child-labours, improved working conditions and the social status of workers, emancipation of women, improvement in health, elimination of disaster probabilities, increased longevity etc. are some of the definite gains. But human nature has not changed to any appreciable extent. What has happened in the world in the last fifty years is sufficient proof of this obduracy. Egoism, greed, lust for material wealth and a craze for the physical luxuries have been widely observed even amongst educated and cultured class. With

the passing years and tremendous impetus given to scientific, technological and economical progress it seems 'a new conception of wealth has emerged.'

But then with the new situation, new questions arise. Technological progress has many social, cultural, educational and even political implications, pleasant and unpleasant. On one side there is a tremendous transformation in all the phases of outer and inner life seen, and on the other great dangers are looming in the future, doubts are rising whether humanity has wisdom and strength to avoid them. The vision of the future has been depicted by many thinkers, philosophers and writers like Aldous Huxley, George Orwell etc. And, as we see, a 'civilization of leisure', people are beginning to feel uneasy. To conclude the picture of the present day life, I shall quote an American writer in one of the issues of 'Life':

"Many thoughtful Americans are disturbed because as a nation we seem bereft of a sense of purpose. We have the mood and stance of a people who have 'arrived' and have nowhere else to go We have tried to fill ourselves with science and education, with better living and pleasure, with the many other things we thought we wanted, but we are still empty and bored..... We are confused by the prejudice, hatred, greed and lust that are within us. We seem to be caught helpless in quicksand: we want out of our human dilemma but are powerless. The American genius has enabled us to change virtually everything but ourselves... It is absolutely impossible to change society and reverse the moral trend unless we ourselves are changed from the inside."

Sri Aurobindo, a great philosopher and spiritual leader, a yogi of twentieth century, India, asserts that "We have arrived at a great crucial moment in human evolution, where the descent of new powers of consciousness and their establishment on the earth have begun to occur. The present world crises is nothing but the break up of the past indispensable to the forward movement. On the crest of an evolutionary wave man has to yield place to a new type of being".

Dissatisfaction with the conventional education of the time may be traced back to Rousseau, it was expressed forcefully later by Tolstoy. In the U.S.A. Dewey and many others also wrote about the new education. But a clear awareness of the true needs of education dawned really with 20th century.

III Education : An Indian Approach:

Vedas and Upanishads say: 'Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man'. Knowledge is inherent in man, no knowledge comes from outside; it is all inside. All knowledge comes from the mind. In this sense knowing is unveiling. One can help the child, can guide, or support. But you can't teach. The meaning of the word education is - to lead, to bring forth, to educe. Educe what? one might ask. To educe the inner, hidden, dormant potential within every human being. Sri Aurobindo, writing on education says : "The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught".

The aim of education is always two fold: there is a collective aspect and there is an individual aspect. Education aims to turn the individual into a good citizen. Education also aims, with good citizens to have a society with healthy social environment. We all know and have discussed the aim and purpose of education which is superficial or apparent. But what is the deeper aim of education? According to Indian Philosophy and culture, "There is a Divine Reality wanting to be manifested. We aim at knowing this Reality and working for its manifestation."⁵

Philosophers and prophets of Education have given many shining and revolutionary ideas on the future of education. The line of thinking pursued by Indian spiritual thinkers has laid emphasis on different aspects. The search is not merely for the type of education needed but the question is: What is the fundamental need or aim of future education? Is it simply to create well informed, efficient, skilful, rationalised and adaptable social being or "to create a new Man who goes beyond mind and reason to a higher dimension of consciousness which is free from the limitations of the mental consciousness and who can lead humanity and earth towards its

evolutionary fulfilment.”⁶ It is very necessary for the futuristic vision to have “a clear insight into the evolutionary predicament of modern man, the higher aim of terrestrial evolution and role of education in realising these aims”⁷

Indian Philosophy and thought believes that the theory and practice of the spiritual evolution of Man and planet Earth will be the paradigm of the Future. The central ideas of this paradigm are:

- Man is a transitional being, and the rationalised mental consciousness is not the last summit of human evolution. Nature is preparing humanity for an evolutionary leap towards a supramental consciousness which is free from limitations and disabilities of the mental consciousness.
- This higher evolution has to be effected by a new science and technology of Consciousness or Yoga, as it is called in India.
- Among all human activities, it is education based on the science of Yoga - and not economics, politics, commerce, management or material science and technology - which will play a major and prominent role in spearheading this higher evolution of humanity.”⁸

The ‘educational technology’ of the future will emerge from ‘a comprehensive understanding of the level of Consciousness’.

IV. Intuition and Intuitional Knowledge:

It is generally observed that the largest part of the studies consist of learning the past, in the hope that it will help you to understand the present better. But it is also necessary to understand that what happened is responsible for what is happening now and that prepares the way for the future,. **“It is by cultivating the intuition that one prepares oneself to live for the future”**⁹. If we examine carefully, we shall find: “Intuition is our first teacher. Intuition always stands veiled behind our mental operations.

Intuition brings to man those brilliant messages from the Unknown which are the beginning of his higher knowledge. Reason

only comes in afterwards to see what profit it can have of the shining harvest. Intuition gives us that idea of something behind and beyond all that we know and seem to be which pursues man always in contradiction of his lower reason and all his normal experience and impels him to formulate that formless perception in more positive ideas of God, Immortality, Heaven and the rest by which we strive to express it to the mind.”¹⁰ Vedas say:

“The intellectual understanding is only the lower knowledge (*buddhi*), there is another and a higher knowledge (*buddhi*) which is not intelligence but vision, is not understanding but rather an over standing in knowledge.”¹¹

V. Education of the future:

1. Thinkers and scientists have visualised the future changes which are likely to occur as a result of scientific and technological advancement. Dr Philip Handler says: “In the near future, each individual will have a private, pocket size, two way television instrument and immediate personal access to a computer serving as his news source.” He further says, “Less than five percent of the working population will be engaged in primary agriculture, with no more than another 20 percent engaged in other productive activities. The bulk of the labour force will engage in services rather than production of goods. The principal pursuit of mankind will be cultural, recreational or devoted to the expansion of knowledge and understanding”.¹²

2. The future is the future of mankind. The future ‘should not be just hope and opportunity. The future should be absolutely ours.’ We have to create a future which is really ‘golden’. Future means the new age, new way of life, new education... the new man who is the greatest revolution that has ever happened in the world. It is a future in which ‘man can avoid all the miseries, all the jealousies, all those angers, all those wars and destructive tendencies.’

The future is a golden one and the new man is going to live his life -not according to ideals but according to his own longings, his own passionate intuitions.

In such a future, the new man is neither an improvement nor a refinement. The new man is the birth of an absolute fresh man - unconditioned, without any nation, without any religion, without any discrimination between man and woman, black and white, east and west or north and south.' The new man is the manifestation of a new humanity, one humanity. Dr. S Radhakrishnan says, "We are dedicated to the production of a democratic non communal, scientific, welfare state. It is this vision of our future that we have to communicate to our young men and women, to the elders too because most of us are not still out of date!" ¹³

3. We have seen that the education that prevailed in the past is insufficient, incomplete and superficial. It only helped to earn livelihood and not to develop an insight into living itself. In the system of education, so far, what is important is the examination - a goal that will make the future important - more the present. It creates tremendous emptiness in life. In today's prevailing system of education both wisdom and knowledge are lost in information, cramming has taken the place of creativity, and being based on competition it is harmful too. In almost all countries education is becoming a commercial activity and missionary spirit to teach the student is over shadowed by the professionalism of the teachers. The joys of childhood, the choice of adolescent and the passionate indulgence of youth is all lost in too rigid, and formal frame work of the system. It being too theoretical and full of information is far away from reality. It is not in tune with Life. Education, to day, is not for Life, but for degree of diploma. It is full of drawbacks, full of limitations and full of problems.

4. When we have the problems posed by rapid technological advances, military threats, inequalities among nations, the break up of the family and the erosion of religious values, unchecked urban growth, the population explosion, and environmental damage, how can the education of the future be made effective and relevant? If society wants promising future it is necessary that it takes special interest in a topic of fundamental importance: Children's Education. Education and awareness are important tools to shape the future

generation. Children are our future and so our future will be what our children shape out to be.

5. There is an intimate connection between the mind of man and moving spirit of the universe. "What are we to do with our lives?" asked H.G Wells, and said in answer: "Put our minds in order".¹⁴ Education is the means by which we can tidy up our minds, acquire information as well as a sense of value. "Education should impart to us that bent of mind, that attitude of reason, that spirit of democracy which will make us responsible citizens of our country".¹⁵

6. For a golden future, a bright tomorrow, we need a vital change. The solution to problems and the implementation of new ideas, a new approach to education is required. This again means, a new approach to different dimensions of education. Man is a moral agent who can determine his behaviours. He can grow by the exercise of his will. He is not body and mind alone. He has, in addition the spiritual dimension. According to Shri Aurobindo, mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis; a new man with a new awareness is the urgent need of the hourIn order to gain inner strength and light from within, educators and psychologists are once more drawn towards the foundations and soul of education - the spiritual education." One of the prominent and most controversial thinkers of 20th century Prof. Rajnish (Osho) divides education into five dimensions. The first is Informative; the second is the enquiry of Scientific subjects; the third will be the art of living; the fourth dimension should be art and creativity; and the fifth dimension should be the art of dying (all the meditations) so that you can know there is no death and become aware of an eternal life inside you" ¹⁶ The above mentioned dimensions, according to Prof. Rajnish (Osho) will have full education, a whole education. To him, education as a whole does not exist anywhere and therefore there should be a vital transformation.

7. What is the best education a country can give to its children ? The Mother - a French Lady, a spiritual leader, in the last century in India says, "In any country the best education to give to

children consists in teaching them what is the true nature of their country, its particular qualities and the mission their nation has to fulfill in the world, its true place in the terrestrial concert. To that should be added a large comprehension of the role of other nations, but without the imitative spirit and without even losing sight of the peculiar genius of their country."

Education, in future, will certainly have to see that it prepares for a safe and peaceful world. "Our conscience must grow and our comprehension of human dignity must increase."¹⁸

8. The report of UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century - the *Delors report* - sees the most important consequences of this complex phenomenon to be its socio-cultural and ethical dimensions as regards the growing interdependence and inter relationships between peoples and cultures the world over: "the far reaching changes in the traditional pattern of life require of us a better understanding of other people and the world at large today; they demand mutual understanding, peaceful interchange and indeed harmony". However, the report stresses that "learning to live together" - one of the pillars of education - will only occur through the possession of self-knowledge and understanding, and appreciation of one's own origin and culture."

Here the commission has put emphasis on the four pillars as the foundation of education. The four pillars are

- i. Learning to Know,
- ii. Learning to Do,
- iii. Learning to Live Together, and
- iv. Learning to be.

Out of all these, "greater emphasis has been put on Learning to Live together" by developing and understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values and, on this basis, creating a new spirit to manage the inevitable conflicts in an intelligent and peaceful way. The other three pillars will provide the base for learning to live together.

VI. Conclusion:

In our final conclusion, let us note that today the world has become small and our vision is enlarged. "We must, if we are to prepare ourselves for a new world which is on the horizon, rid ourselves of racial pride and religious intolerance and of that deep seated lust for powers Civilizations are not built of machines but of values. The driving forces of civilization come from within. The pursuit of scientific truth is a great value. It shows mastery of mind and the will of man over the forces of nature. The progress of civilization depends not only on intellectual creativeness but on the moral qualities of gentleness and compassion." It is therefore, imperatively important that our children, through education, develop these moral qualities. If we stifle the spirit in us, our society will go to pieces. To control this we need effort and discipline. This can come not from science but from the discipline of religion and philosophy. Teaching Children Value education, study of classics, meditation for a few minutes, comparative religions and philosophy will result in genuine love for mankind which will transcend group loyalty and will preserve intellectual integrity.

"We have in our country, in India, a very great tradition of not merely reverence for life but reverence for suffering. The greatest of our seers were people who tried to help those that needed comfort and relief. We will have to educate our children to attain a strong conviction that we are born in this world to live for a great cause, to live for some supreme purpose. Thus one great thing very much essential is "to instil into our young men a purpose of life, a sense of dedication and to make them feel that they are born in this life to do something great."

And, finally a precise and a straight forward question :

What is the essence of our Education of the Future ?

"For the teacher, it is a specific attitude towards the child, for the child it is a way of living, growing and progressing."

One sentence to sum up: **"We do not want brilliant students, we want living souls."**

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9. Ibid. P8&9 10.Ibid-p. 8&9 11.Ibid-p. 10
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“Tantra is an Indian cult; but since it has evolved continuously from the remotest antiquity it is not limited to any of the particular Indian religions which arrived later on the historical scene. Groups of Hindus, Buddhists and Jains share Tantrik ideas and do Tantrik things; but there are symbols in the vast natural caverns of Palaeolithic Europe (c. 20,000 BC) which can be accurately matched with symbols still used today by Tantrikas. Hundreds of generations have devoted themselves to developing and refining Tantra, so that it now conveys with extraordinary purity the most essential patterns of human symbolic expression. It is widely recognized that this is what makes it so valuable for people of the present, Westerners as well as Indians.

It would be wrong to call Tantra a religion; that term has too many misleading overtones nowadays for far too many people. Tantra is not a ‘way of thought’, either. Thought, in the sense of ordinary logical and very useful reasoning, Tantra sees as one of the chief causes for people gradually becoming disillusioned and miserable in what they believe to be their world. So Tantra works with action”

From :

“Tantra : The Indian Cult of Ecstasy”

By : Prof. Philip Rawson.