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RIGHT UNDERSTANDING IS ESSENTIAL FOR MUTUAL HAPPINESS

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ABSTRACT Today's education, in its widely prevalent form, is not able to adequately empower students to think independently. This is clearly evident from the fact that the graduates are confused about their career and other important issues of life and living, even after spending 20 years in education. They are being driven by peer pressure, consequently leading to a blind race for jobs that are intellectually and mentally unfulfilling, and wealth that breeds chaos in family and in society.

Education is not just about learning skills (how to) but also about developing the ability to decide on what (what to do?) and why (why to do?). It should lead to the development of critical ability in students towards distinguishing between the essence and the form, or between what is of value and what is superficial, in life. It should develop their understanding which is a prerequisite for a movement from rule based society to a relationship based society. This paper discusses about basic human aspirations and steps towards holistic development of an individual.

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

The world today is ridden with problems galore. While the manners in which these problems are perceived, articulated and prioritized vary widely, there is a commonality of approach in how most civil societies in the world over are engaged in trying to solve them. Inherent in this approach is the assumptions, that with enough knowledge and technology, one can manage planet earth. We not only disagree with this assumption, we also feel that it has perhaps played a major role in severely restricting the scope of education in general and technical education in particular.

To elaborate, let us take two major problems we see at the societal level: poverty and unemployment. No amount of knowledge and technology can solve these without addressing the prevalent human relation issues such as those of dominance and exploitation. We feel that a major, if not the sole, purpose of education is to enable individuals in understanding these causal relationships. More comprehensively stated, education implies holistic inputs towards preparing the future generation to understand the essential harmony in the world around them and to empower them to participate proactively in its dynamics.

When one studies the situation we are in today, we arrive at the following:

At the level of Individual:

We see today that humans on the one hand have unhappiness, dissatisfaction, lack of hope, and a sense of futility about them, and on the other are faced with domination and other problems. The health of the body is steadily declining in spite of improved levels of material and medical facilities. A majority of people find themselves engulfed in the problems of some type, and some people have even come to believe that no solutions are even possible.

At the level of Family:

One sees complaints, fights inter-personal tensions, injustice, hatred and numerous attempts to solve these, ultimately leading to disintegration and a feeling of being deprived of material facilities.

At the level of Society:

Problems are visible in the form of tendency to snatch from one another, opposition, exploitation, struggle, war, poverty and unemployment. There is talk of working in harmony with each other, but never end up being successful.

At the level of Nature/environment:

Problems manifest in the form of imbalance, pollution, scarcity of physical and ecological disturbances. Poisonous materials are on the increase in the air, water, soil and food while the fertility of the soil is decreasing.

As a result, one is unable to find happiness and perpetually suffer from a sense of lack of prosperity. In such case individuals are not able to contribute to the real progress of self as well as community as a whole. This sense of disempowerment in the individuals in some ways put them in the service of the dominant trend of perceiving the only the financial interests.

Society and Human Aspirations

In any society there will be three systems i.e., i) Education, ii) Government and iii) Industry. For the well being of the society these three systems need to work together. However, the current society seems to be industry driven. In such situation, goal of education is to catering the needs of industry; thereby students are running money and career. If we look at basic human aspirations, the answer what we get is we need happiness however, to get it we need money. But, when you ask how much money, the answer is not that easy.

We see that some of our desires or wants are to do with physical things. We call these "Physical Facilities". We have desires which are other than physical facilities too. Now, here is a set of proposals:

1. Physical facilities are necessary for human beings and they are necessary for animals also.
2. Physical facilities are necessary and complete for animals, while they are necessary but not complete for humans.

***It is easy to verify this*:**

For animals: We see that animals need physical things to survive, mainly to take care of their body. Take a cow for example. A cow will look for food when it is hungry. Once it gets the grass or fodder, it eats it, sits around to chew at leisure. Hence, we can see that as long as animals have physical things, they are largely fine. They don't desire other things like knowledge, or a peaceful animal society or getting a good MBA! This is the case with humans, so let us look into how we humans fare.

For humans: Let's say you are hungry. What do you do? You would look for some food, perhaps, some tasty food. Once you have had your fill, do you just sit around and relax? The answer is an emphatic! We all have other needs, other plans, perhaps we think of going to a movie, or reading a book, or go to college, or watch some TV, or spend time with family and friends... the list is long. Thus, it is easy to see that while physical facilities are necessary for us human beings, they are not complete by themselves to fulfill our needs. Our needs are more than just physical facilities; we need physical facilities, but the need does not end there. Hence, we can say for animals, Physical facilities are necessary and complete, and for humans, Physical facilities are necessary but not complete.

Here is another proposal: Besides physical facilities, we want

relationship. By relationship, we mean the relationship we have with other people, or human beings: father, mother, brothers and sisters, our friends, our teachers; we desire good relationships with all of them. When we have a problem in these relationships, it troubles us, we are bothered by it. So let us write down relationship as well. So we have identified two categories of our needs so far: Relationship and Physical facilities. Now let us see how we want to be in relationship and what we want from physical facilities.

In Relationship

Mutual fulfillment: We want to have mutually fulfilling relationships. [You can verify this for yourself]. If there is a problem in relationship, we feel uneasy, it bothers us. Even if we are interacting with someone, and something we said or did offend them, it makes us uneasy; i.e., we want mutual fulfillment in relationship. Both, us and the person we interact with need to feel fulfilled, need to feel satisfied from the interaction. You can check this in your daily life as well. For example, let, us say you had an argument with a friend in the morning. You find that the uneasy feeling stays with you for a long time, even after you have stopped speaking to your friend and have physically moved away from him/her. You may keep thinking about it, may get angry or frustrated, perhaps you wonder what may have gone wrong and how it could have been avoided or perhaps you wonder how you should not commit the same mistake the next time, but, it stays with you. On the other hand, had there been no such problem with your friend, you are fine, you don't have any issues, and if you had a great time with him, then too it stays with you, as a good feeling or a good memory. Thus, mutual fulfillment in human relationships is something we want, we aspire for.

From Physical Facilities

Prosperity in us, enrichment in nature: Let, us ask ourselves, do I want to live with a sense of prosperity or with a sense of deprivation? The answer is, I want to live with a sense of prosperity. Prosperity means the feeling of having or being able to have more physical facilities than is needed. (We had drawn a distinction between prosperity and wealth, wherein we saw that just having wealth is not sufficient for prosperity. For ensuring feeling of prosperity, identification of need for physical facilities is also essential, over and above having wealth. Further, feeling of prosperity will lead to sharing with the other, becoming an aid by enriching the other. Deprivation will lead to exploiting the other. This is a simple test of prosperity).

As we interact with nature for our various physical needs, we can either exploit nature or enrich it. Let us ask ourselves, what is naturally acceptable to me? Do I want to protect and enrich nature, or do I want to exploit it? The answer is the same for each one of us – we have a spontaneous expectation to enrich nature. We may not know how to go about it, but if we ask ourselves this question, if we ask it deep within, the answer is, given the choice, we want to live in harmony with nature.

Similarly, in order to be prosperous and to enrich nature, we need to have the, right understanding. The right understanding will enable us to work out our requirements for physical facilities and hence correctly distinguish the difference between wealth and prosperity. Thus, the three basic requirements to ensure happiness and prosperity for human beings are: Right understanding, relationship and physical facilities. Working with this order, we are able to ensure mutual fulfillment with human beings and mutual prosperity with the rest of nature.

- Right understanding + Relationship = Mutual fulfillment
- Right understanding + Physical facilities = Mutual prosperity

Our Program: Understand and Live in Harmony at All levels of Living. Let us now explore into what this right understanding is. Remember, the need for right understanding is tied to our need for happiness. In order to find out what this right understanding is, we need to find out the various situations or states we live in, on which our happiness depends. Why is this needed? The answer is simple. If we ignore any of these states or situations, if we have incomplete understanding of any state or situation we live in, then we risk becoming unhappy and uncertain in that state or level. In order to ensure happiness and its continuity, we need to make sure we cover all states and situations we live in. As humans there are several situations we live in. There are many aspects or levels to our living. It is an increasing expanse that starts with ourselves and expands to include things around us; namely, the people we live with on a daily basis i.e., our family, the larger society we live in, the nature we are dependent on, and then everything else, which we can call as existence (existence means all that exists). Some of these we are aware of and of some we are not. Some of these we give significance to and to some we do not. But regardless of our attitude and awareness, we are in this totality and live with this totality. Let us see if we can find out the expanse of our living from the point of our need for 1. Right Understanding 2. Relationship and 3. Physical Facilities.

It becomes clear to us that our state of happiness or unhappiness depends on the above three aspects. If we have the right understanding then we can be happy in ourselves and work to, have fulfilling relationships with humans and mutual prosperity with nature. If we do not have the right understanding, then we have problems. Thus, our happiness depends on the fulfillment of these three basic requirements.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS:

Today's education, in its widely prevalent form, is not able to adequately empower students to think independently. Even at the level of higher education, mere imparting of skills does not fulfill this requirement. Technology only tells us *how to do* things which we want to do. However, without an understanding of *what to do & and why* and that of *what is of value to the individual and to the society*, the students cannot become proactive in their social environment. Instead, in the absence of a proper understanding, the student community tends to get oriented with the defaults in the society viz., emphasis on superficial and non-essential glamour, consumerist lifestyle, and a false sense of satisfaction (or dejection) in competition and one-upmanship.

To fulfill our basic desire of continuous happiness and prosperity, one need to have holistic education with consists of (1) right understanding, (2) relationship and (3) physical facilities in the right order. We need to understand the harmony at all levels of our living, ourselves, family, society and nature/existence.

The need for right understanding and relationship is what distinguishes a human being from an animal. Fulfillment of relationships based on right understanding leads to mutual happiness. Fulfillment of need for physical facilities through nature-fulfilling production activities, (both identified on the basis of right understanding) leads to mutual prosperity. To live only for physical facilities is called, animal consciousness, while to live with all three: right understanding, relationship and physical facilities leading to mutual happiness and mutual prosperity is called, human consciousness.

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