

Philosophy of Education, East: an Analysis in the Global Era



POLITICAL SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I would analyse oriental and western views on philosophy education the Indian Philosophy of education is traced to the Gurukula system, founded on the philosophy of Vedanta and upanishads. Swami Vivekananda presents a synthesis of western and eastern philosophy. Tagore views are based on the learning in the lap of Mother Nature. Gandhi insists on rural intensive education. Osho Rajaneesh characteristics the present system as leading to plasticity of the individual.

Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy of Education:

"Education is not the amount of information that we put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life building, manmaking, character making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library" Swamivivekananda *1

The word education is derived from Latin word "educare" which means "to lead out" or "draw out". Education is basically a social process which involves how the student develops as an individual and in group relations. The aim of education is to make human beings civilized. In the same way the aim of higher education is to inculcate social responsibility among students. The contemporary education system is hindered by numerous hindrances. It is lop sided.

Indian education is at cross roads, Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalisation has altered the philosophy and practice of education. Education is seen as a means and a tool to get a degree and consequently a good job i.e. careerism. LPG has resulted in 'a market driven educational system', leading to the marginalization of humanities, social sciences and other classical subjects. The intermixture of commerce and education, the commercialization has altered the basic principles (philosophy) of education. The Birla and Ambani report on higher education enunciates this view calling for Industry and university Interface.

Teaching has become mere transferring of the information to the students. It is beyond that, the roots of Indian and Western education and the underlying Philosophy has to be revisited to showcase the right path.

Traditionally, Indian Education stressed on the moral, ethical and social values. The Sanaathana Dharma (The Hindu) epitomized by the Vedantha and Upanishads represented the Hindu view of education. The Indian spirituality exemplified this philosophy of education. The ancient Gurukula system in which a few students were admitted studied the 64 disciplines. It was called a "Gurushishya Parampara" or "Teacher-student" tradition. Normally enlightened Yogis 'undertook the task of teaching to impart the Veda and Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita as the curriculum. Guru or the Teacher was accorded an incomparable eminent position in the society. He was to be a "parushamani" (mystic jewel believed to convert a stone into Diamond) transforming the student to attain his perfection. But this education was restricted by Varnashrama Dharma that deprived shudras of education, ultimate aim of Gurukula system was to acquire the "Perfect knowledge".

According to Swami Vivekananda education doesn't mean the mass of information which is inserted by force into the mind of child. In his own words "It is the manifestation of perfection already in man".*2 The good quality education must have the life building, man making, character building, and assimilation of

ideas. This would help to equip common people for the struggle of life.

The real education according to Swamiji, prepares individuals for struggle for existence. Education prepares a man for social service to develop his character and finally imbibes him with the spirit and courage of a lion. Getting degrees is not education, the proper education must be viewed on the basis of character, mental powers, intelligence and inculcates, self-confidence and self-reliance in the individuals. Swamiji has emphasized that all the knowledge which we get from worldly or spiritual lies embedded in the human mind. It is covered with a veil of darkness and ignorance. Education is a tool to open from the darkness and ignorance. After getting education, the knowledge will shine out dazzlingly.

The teaching and learning are the new way of process. The teacher only guides, suggests, points out and helps the student. Self learning and self getting knowledge is the real education. The teacher only motivates and encourages the student to find out the hidden treasure of knowledge that lies dormant within him. He condemned and refused the bookish learning and rote memory education. Condemning the theoretical and academic education, he spoke emphatically for practical and experimental education. He warned his country men saying "you will have to be practical in all spheres of work. The whole country has been ruined by mass theories".

According to Vivekananda, the means for education is love. Love and character building are the best means for education. Love is the best inspiration in character building. Love in the minds of the educator is the real source of his influence upon the educated. The true education gives the growth and expansion of personality. The education for total human development was his main vision.

"Character, efficiency and humanism should be the aim of all education, Vivekananda strongly pleaded that development of character through the service of his fellowmen, the utilization of his talents for ensuring the happiness and welfare of the millions of his unfortunate fellow citizens should be the aim of education*3. The child should be taught through by love, it makes fellow feelings and love for human beings. The education must help the individual to recognize his cultural heritage and the use it in his struggle of life. Education is a life long process towards the fullest development of human personality, self-discovery, self-perfection, self-awareness and self-manifestation.

According to Swamiji the main essence of Philosophy of life is to become fearless through struggle and serve humanity with peace. He wants to make a individual without fear from enemies, face all the challenges boldly and confidently without any suppression. By synthesizing the idealistic philosophy of the west and creative philosophy of the ancient Hindu Dharma, he brought a glory and greatness to the Hindu ways of living.

Tagore's Views on Education :

Rabindranath Tagore was the Renaissance man of modern India. The bridge between Indian culture, traditional education system and on the other by Imperial rule which was based on materialistic approach. Tagore says "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence"*4.

Tagore did not write any educational philosophy in particular. They are dispersed in his writings and educational experiments at Santiniketan. He visualized nature as the real teacher but associated to the cultures of the wider world, predicated upon pleasurable learning and individualized to the personality of the child. In Tagore's philosophy of education, the aesthetic development of the senses was as important as the intellectual. With his broad vision, Rabindranath foresaw the coming of the global village and the need to educate children in a way that roots them in their own cultural history, yet enables them to personally identify with other races and cultures. Gurudev argued that education should seek to develop sensitivity in a child through a direct experience of nature when her/his consciousness is at its freshest level. He recognised early childhood as the most critical time for developing empathy and the ability to connect with one's surroundings. According to Tagore From our very childhood habits are formed and knowledge is imparted in such a manner that our life is weaned away from nature and our mind and the world are set in opposition from the beginning of our days. Thus the greatest of educations for which we came prepared is neglected, and we are made to lose our world to find a bagful of information instead.

We rob the child of his earth to teach him geography, of language to teach him grammar. His hunger is for the Epic, but he is supplied with chronicles of facts and dates Child-nature protests against such calamity with all its power of suffering, subdued at last into silence by punishment.

Tagore's progressive educational philosophy is largely forgotten today. He wrote about many ideals for education but his ideals have not found their way into India's schools. According to Tagore, if we want to give proper education to the students, we should teach them well right from the beginning when they are very young. But, in India, it is not like that because the teachers who teach the students of primary schools are not well trained for that job. He wrote that they knew neither good English nor their mother tongue and the only work they could do was mistreating students.

Tagore was against the heavy load of books and bags students had to carry to the school. Tagore notices that, at the very starting age of the life of a student, his/her parents keep a lot of burden of bags and books on his/her shoulders. He wrote, "From childhood to adolescence and again from adolescence to manhood, we are coolies of the goddess of learning, carrying loads of words on our folded backs". According to Tagore, it makes education joyless. He was in favour of easy education, that is, education through music, art, literature and nature, etc. He wrote that the books we read have no vivid pictures of our homes and our society. He also felt that our education is directing us to a land of enchanting falsehood.

He thought that as a teacher we should provide such an environment, that students have confidence to express their own learning ability. Tagore was opposed to any form of corporal punishment to discipline students because he thought that the fear of making mistakes prevents an individual from being free to venture a new thought, to innovate, to ask questions, to be creative, etc. Discipline should be based on motivations like joy and pursuit of creative tasks.

Tagore was in favour of good education, in which a teacher can prepare the student for a good future and character as well. So he introduced work education as -" a joyous exercise of our inventive and constructive energies that help to build up character" It is right to say that in our childhood we learn everything with the aid of our body and mind, with all the senses active and eager. When we are sent to school, the doors of natural information are closed to us; our eyes see the letters, our ears hear the lessons, but our mind misses the perpetual stream of ideas from nature, because the teachers, in their wisdom, think these bring distraction and have no purpose behind them. But Tagore was in favour of teaching the things from nature a lot.

The core of Tagore's educational philosophy was learning from nature, music and life. This is the reason why his education is easily acceptable by human mind. The visionary in Rabindranath and the great educationist in him solved the problems of today a century earlier. The problems of modern education are attendance, use of other unfair means and indiscipline. It is more of certificates oriented, irrelevant of intelligence and correlation with Nature. Tagore solved these problems in a grand way. Freedom in the class solved the problems of attendance, absence of invigilator solved the copying or use of unfair means.

EDUCATION AS ENVISAGED BY MAHATMA GANDHI :-

With the attainment of freedom in 1947, India embarked on a new era. On 15th August, 1947 people showed a definite and spontaneous indication to embrace the newness of the times. Mahatma Gandhi, whose interest had always been co-extensive with social needs, had all along been advising the Congress to take up the cause of education from pre-independence times. Mahatma Gandhi had, earlier in his career, stated, like Ruskin, that "Speed is not always progress", and according to that idea he had resolutely set his face against accepting all type of education as of equal importance*5. So, education, according to Mahatma Gandhi, was not exactly a pursuit of freedom of expression, but a modified method to specifically suit the goal of nation building of the new India. He was thinking of a revolutionary type of education for upliftment of the vast rural India as a prime goal, and due to his insistence National Educational Conference was held at Wardha in as early as 1937 to set the ball rolling. A Committee of distinguished educationists, headed by Dr. Zakir Husain, was entrusted with planning a syllabus for basic education. The basic concepts can be noted as:-

1. Free and compulsory education for seven years on a nation wide scale.
2. The medium of instruction must be in mother tongue.
3. Through out this period education should centre round some form of manual and productive work, and all other activities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to handicraft pattern chosen with regard to the environment of the child. The idea was to develop a basic craft model adopted to suit different areas of learning, including say basic Mathematics or Science, and it was even envisaged that those craftworks be sold to the Nation to make education self reliant. Generally speaking, it was felt even at that time that the prevalent education with the colonial legacy led us to learn from books and did not allow us to garner knowledge by perception. The use of craft had been no doubt accepted as an education technique, and the Abbot Wood report drew the attention of educationists here in India to the subject, but it was never thought of as the medium of instruction before Mahatma Gandhi had boldly placed it as such.

The basic features of the Wardha scheme could be summarized into two relevant factors. The education should be imparted

through a basic craft at least during the first seven years of basic education, and that the sale of products of craft work done under the system should make the system self-supporting. The principle that education should be imparted not through passive reception but through a productive activity was an acceptable principle to the educationists of the world. Among all kinds of productive activities craftwork was acknowledged to be suitable for educational purposes. Psychologically it was sound as it saved the child from the tyranny of purely academic and theoretical instructions and balanced the intellectual and practical elements in child's experience. It was also envisaged that by sale of craftworks the student might be able to earn some money as well. Few communist thinkers of India in that era welcomed the Wardha scheme, as Mahatma Gandhi insisted that all work should be purposeful and productive even in the context of basic education. The communist intellectuals thought that education through work would be a revolutionary program for leveling and equalizing, where every citizen would be groomed to perform his / her quota of work. The idea was very much in consonance of the philosophy of life Mahatma Gandhi, as every effort conceived by him was ultimately a struggle for freedom—freedom from ignorance, inefficiency, insecurity, oppression, exploitation, injustice. Naturally, to Mahatma Gandhi, education needed to be designed as a tool to attain freedom, particularly freedom for the rural people of India. Cult of power created by assimilating knowledge without a definite view would seem to Mahatma Gandhi a dangerous process. He could only conceive education as a dynamic force leading to a definite destination. In Mahatma's own words "My plan to impart primary education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carting, etc., is thus conceived as the spearhead of a silent non-violent social revolution fraught with the most far reaching consequences. It will provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village.

Osho on Education :

According to Osho (Rajaneesh), a real education will not teach "competition" but "co-operation". It will not teach to fight and come first. It will teach to be creative, to be loving, to be blissful. It never believes in "Comparison with other". A real education teaches not to be first. But enjoy what ever one does, not for the result but for the act itself like a painter a dancer or a musician. Amir Khan's movies Taare Zameen Par (a case of Dyslexic child), Three Idiots vividly picture this story.

Society teaches "Become this, become that". It teaches becoming, whole education system is based on the idea of becoming. The child when born functions from the "center". Society teaches child how to function from the "circumference", by peeling away from the centre. The twenty five years of conditioning (education) makes him ambitious. Thus it creates a false, "plastic personality" around and it forces the child to identify with that is not education but mis-education⁶.

It is destructive, and violent. It robs the individual of the true core. The society needs clerks, station-masters, deputy collectors, policemen, magistrates, soldiers but not human beings. It is more interested in making the individual to be skillful, productive and less creative. It wants human machines to function efficiently. The pop group Pink Floyd's album Another Brick in The Wall and song 'we don't need no education' visualize this theme. It doesn't want Buddha, Christ, Socrates, Pythagoras, Plato, Lao Tzu as they are awakened.

Osho criticises the present education system as "past-oriented". All our doctrines, ideas and ideals are taken from the past. Any developmental creative activity is always future oriented. Old beliefs, ideas are imposed on the child, by the teacher, leaders, religions, state and the society.

conclusion

of globalization and education point to the continuing relevance perspectives for educational philosophy and practice today. Indeed, the continuing viability of Marxian perspectives today are bound up with the continuing expansion of capitalism in a global economy and growing importance of the economy in every domain of life. Marxism has historically presented critical perspectives on capitalism and the ways that economic imperatives shape institutions like schooling to correspond to the interests of the ruling class.

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