

## INDIVIDUALISTIC AND SOCIALISTIC AIMS OF EDUCATION

"There can be no universal aim of education if that aim is to include the assertion of any particular ideal of life"—says Nunn in his "Education—its data and first principles." It is a fact that educational aims are many in number. All those aims if analysed properly will sharply denote that some of them either belong to the individualistic view or to the socialistic standpoint. Educational aim can be judged from two angles—the individual existence of a man and the social aspect of his life. These two groups of thought may seem to be conflicting at the outset of our discussion but a little pondering over the matter will lead to the dissolution of the apparently knotty conflict. According to some, education is meant for an individual and to others social well-being is the objective of education. Let us critically consider the two views separately.



Individualism in education can be traced back to the earliest days of civilisation. The early Greek culture hailed individual existence. Sophists of Athens, Socrates, Plato, attached importance to the manifestation of the individual splendour. 'Man is the measure of all things' was the dictum of the Sophists. Man of that day was a free man—free from all sorts of social taboos. Socrates enkindled the people with the inspiring ideal 'know thyself'. Comenius, Bacon, Erasmus all spoke about individuality and its development through an effective system of education. Descartes, a mathematician and philosopher halted at the idea of Cogito ergo sum, 'I think, therefore, I exist'. So individualism got its fervour from various philosophical thoughts. Ancient Indian education preached the gospel of Brahma Jnana or salvation of an individual, from the pangs of suffering in the unreal world of appearance. Individualistic objective of education found its expression in Renaissance Movement of Europe when the broad humanistic education pioneered by Petrarch laid emphasis upon living experiences of the individuals and their interests. The 18th Century saw a new and stormy movement which fought against the artificiality in the society. This movement was naturalism piloted by Jean Jacques Rousseau according to whom "a child is good, man meddles and makes him bad....cities are the graves of human civilisation." So he prescribed an ideal education for his imaginary child 'Emile' who should be kept away from the contaminating influence of the society—the artificial creation of man. B. Hobbes, a philosopher also spoke of the development of an individual through education. This individualistic aim of education got its nourishment from the different branches of studies—Philosophy, Biology, Psychology and Sociology.

The major schools of philosophical thought—Idealism, Naturalism, Pragmatism though may have some differences in their procedure they have all emphasised the individual—drawing out all the best from him through educative process as education means the process of leading out.

Biology considers human beings as individually separate entities having their unique brain functioning, peculiar sensory-motor nerves and the endocrine glands secreting hormones. Education thus should consider every individual as an individual.

Psychology specifically mentions the outstanding principle of individual difference. Individuals cannot be lost in a group. Education should aim at the development of the individual powers.



151

Sociology also does not negate the individuals without whom there cannot be a society.

Critically considered, though individualism has got many words to say for its acceptance yet this is an extreme step. An individual cannot be an individual if there is no consideration for society or the social environment. Let us see now what the other groups say regarding the aim of education.

The socialism in educational thought owes its origin to the Absolute idealism of Hegel. According to this view the state or society is the expression of the absolute and the individuals are enveloped in the Absolute whose concrete manifestation is the state or the society and so the individuals do not have any separate entities. They are required to surrender their everything to the state or the society. Educational aim thus is to satisfy the society.

The Spartan system of education crushed individual under the wheels of the state or the society. Tyrannical picture of such an extreme thought can be imagined in the helpless cry of the dying weaklings left alone to die. That was the custom of that state. Only sturdy bodies were allowed to survive.

Buddhistic education to some extent put some importance upon the Sangha Spirit or the monastic life. This socialistic group of thought can be argued for from different standpoints.

Philosophically considered society is the reflection of the individual and so society should have preference in education. If the aspirations of a society are not fulfilled through educative endeavours individuals will not get a rich heritage in future.

Psychology though speaks of individual differences it attached importance to the 'sympathy of numbers' in practical situation. An individual grown apart from social environment will be a highly mal-adjusted personality. The development of personality requires an environment for its adjustment. Sociology obviously dictates education to aim at the inculcation of social habits, social modes of living etc. for the better adjustment with the social environment.

These two views on the aims of education are extreme and one sided. Let us come to a reconciliation between these two.

Rationally viewed Individuality apart from society is 'a figment of imagination' and society negating individuals is an absurdity in



thought. Both are inseparable, interdependent entities. Educational scheme should aim at the development and well-being of both—the individual and the society. Individuality development implies the existence of a social environment which will select, organise, co-ordinate and nourish the individual qualities. Social well-being also naturally signifies individual up-bringing. A healthy society needs the healthy individuals who again depend upon the congenial social atmosphere. So educational aim should strike a balance between the two—following the example of frozen porcupines in the cold countries where they assemble together to find out a golden mean between their separate existence and group proximity. John Dewey prescribes the democratic atmosphere as the most suitable place where such a happy blend is possible and justifiable.

**Aims of Modern Education with special reference to the Education Commission chaired by Jacques Delor's (U.N.E.S.C.O) in 1996—**

Change is the very spirit of life. Everything changes and naturally **Education** as the **life itself** changes in all its aspects from time to time, from country to country, to cope up with the varying, conditions of life.

This is the 21st Century with diverse problems and possibilities and education, the strongest lever to manipulate the situations properly has to change its course of action. So the concept, **aims** and objectives of education should be different, keeping in **view** the modern trends, like **modernization, globalization, and industrialization**. Education must have its foundation upon the **ideals** of **humanitarianism, secularism, internationalism** and the values like **tolerance, equality, Dignity of labour, Justice and freedom**. So the Modern concept and **aims** of education will be different. Let us try to discuss the Modern education in its aspects like **concept** and **aims**.

'**Modernism**' is a difficult term to be defined properly. **Modernism**, generally, implies the **predominance** of **rational thought** in every aspect of life and free and **in-depth enquiry** into **different facets of human world**. There must be **objectivity, reliability and Validity** in the **results of enquiry** and this must have **trends towards synthesis** between **General and Special, National and Global, Tradition and Modernity**. So **Education** is no longer accretion or Mental Disciplining or **formation of a particular aspect of life**. Man



has to **cross through the boundaries** of one's own **region** and reconcile the **near and far** and become a true human being, able to fit oneself in the **global** as well as local **social surrounding**.

We shall now point out the special features of the Commission, known as Delors' Commission of 1996, to usher in a new era in the field of education. This Commission is described as '**Learning : the treasure within**'. Really the **treasure of knowledge is within the individual**, it is the **Process of education** which unfolds the **knowledge and powers** within and nurtures those through **proper guidance** and direction. In this Commission, it has been stated that there are **four Pillars of education**. They are **learning to know, to do, to live together and learning to be**.

(1) **Learning to know** implies learning how to learn by developing one's **concentration, memory, skills and ability to think**. From infancy, young children should **learn to concentrate on objects and other people**.

**Swami Vivekananda** thought in this very way. To him the difference between a man and another lies in this differences in their power of **Concentration**. **Memory** through **cultivation** must be trained up. From infancy **memory skills** have to be developed. Memory must not be an automatic process : **Thinking** is another very important process which should be developed and continually cultivated. This is a life long process.

These are within an individual, education has to strive to develop and cultivate those.

(2) Next arises the question of very important pillar of education, that is, **learning to do**'.

Learning to know is not enough. Children, adolescents, adults must learn from the very beginning how to actualize knowledge. The Commission known as 'Delors' Commission has analysed that the process of learning to do is associated with the issue of occupational training.

The industrial model as prevalent in the twentieth Century is not sufficient. **Learning to do can no longer mean performing only some specific physical task in a manufacturing process**. The Key concept is now one of "**Personal Competence**."

"This **Personal Competence** is assessed by looking at a **mix of skills and talents, combined certified skills** acquired through



vocational and **technical training**, social **behaviour**, **personal initiative** and **willingness to take risks**".

The Commission makes a survey on the service sectors where information and communication play vital roles. The growing service sector needs people with **good social and communication skills**. Unfortunately these skills are not taught in school or University.

Moreover, **intuition**, **Common sense**, **judgement** and **leadership skills** are very important and vital for rendering **useful service** in **different occupations** and **places of work**. These qualities also do not develop through formal education always.

The **Commission** views that people should be prepared to **innovate**. This preparation is made possible through **sport**, **club membership** and artistic and **cultural activities**. **Excellent interpersonal relationship** is of **tremendous importance** in the lives of people of both developed and developing countries. **Personal Competence** is based upon application of information, knowledge and creativity. Both the theoretical and practical knowledge are to be combined together leading to the development of personal dynamism and **good problem solving**, **decision making innovative** and **team skills**.

Learning to know will be effective partially when learning to do will be added. But other two pillars, like, learning to live together and learning to be' are to be included within educational system, otherwise the aspirations of the new millennium will never be fulfilled.

(3) **Learning to live together** : This **learning of coexistence** in human social structure is of tremendous importance, specially in this period of tension, conflict, **undesirable rivalry** and intolerance. Competitive attitude among young people in school is healthy, so long as it aims at development of **good traits**, but if this leads to conflict or **destructive attitude**, that **competition** is to be avoided.

The Commission suggests that in this context education should adopt **two complementary approaches**. 'From early childhood, it should focus on the discovery of other people in the first stage of education. In the second stage of education and in life long education, it should encourage involvement in common projects. The students should be made conscious of human diversity and they should be aware of the similarities and interdependence of all people. Children in their stages of development should be educated to understand other



people's reactions. Teachers should enable students through study of social sciences like **Geography, history, literature, language** etc. to be acquainted with other people's societies, political ideologies, customs, traditions etc.

The Commission suggests that "one of the essential tools for education in the twenty first century will be a suitable forum for dialogue and discussion". For facilitating this learning to live together, formal educational system organize projects for learners from an early age. The social activities like renovation of slum areas, help for **disadvantaged** people, **humanitarian action, senior citizen help schemes** should be organized for developing learners.

(4) **Learning to be** : This learning to be implies the **re-assessment** of the **fundamental principle of education** which should contribute to every person's complete development—mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic appreciation and spirituality. A man through education should learn to judge and take his own decisions.

In this respect the Commission embraces one of the basic assumptions stated in the report. "Learning to be : the aim of development is the Complete fulfillment of man, in all the richness of his personality, the complexity' of his forms of expression and his various commitments 'as individual, member of a family and of a community, citizen and producer, inventor of techniques and creative dreamer". Human development, the commission holds, is a dialectic process which is based upon self knowledge and on inter relationships with other people.

People have their own talents with the help of which they will create their own worlds of imagination, creativity and freedom of thought and action. This century will need a varied range of talents and personalities even more than exceptionally gifted individuals, who are essential in any society."

So education should provide children with all types of opportunities to develop their powers- "aesthetic, artistic, scientific, cultural and social discovery and experimentation."

From these ideas as stated in the report of the **commission of 1996** we are to come to are realization that modern education implies the **full fledged development of an individual in all his powers and talents**. This does not mean acquisition of some information which do not have relevance to life situation. The information and experiences gathered through self-learning, activities, participation in actual



learning situation and his creative power, imagination abilities to discover and innovate new and novel ways and techniques are the very materials of New Education. Through education he will have to know his own world and the society surrounding him. He must be aware of the ideas, thoughts and feelings of other people.

Inter personal relationship is very important in this era of globalisation. He should develop so many important skills through education.

Educational aim of the modern period is to synthesise the individual and social, regional and global needs and aspirations and to bring about a harmony between Tradition and Modernity. The four pillars of education, like learning to know, to do, 'to live together' and 'to be' will surely build up an-integrated and strong world with so many diverse possibilities as well as challenges.

An in-depth study of the history of both Indian and Western education reveals that the basic principles as enunciated in the report of the above stated Commission were prescribed and practised in some cases by all the great educators and the Indian and other Education Commissions. Modern Education should be learner centric, experience oriented, socially relevant and must have basis upon knowledge, acquisition of information, creativity, inter personal relationship and personal competence. Education means the expansion of the entire horizon of the learner. The aim of Education is the full fledged development of Man, which is described as 'Man making education'. Education has to be adapted with industrialization, globalisation and humanization as education of all times should fight against the dehumanization process. Education is the key to the modern world