Section One

The Problem
"If our young men are to live more abundantly, they should enter more fully into the experience and ideals of the race, they should be inspired in their minds and hearts by the great ideas enshrined in our culture".

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

I. PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION:

The Education Commission (1964–66) has stressed the importance of three major tasks before the nation:

i. To re-evaluate the role of education in the total programme of national development;

ii. To identify the changes needed in the existing system of education if it is to play its proper role and to prepare a programme of educational development based on them;

iii. To implement this programme with determination and vigour.

The Education Commission said that our educational system must be directly and closely related to the needs and problems of the society. In fact, the educational endeavour stands as the primary institution by means of which a society strives to strengthen and perfect itself.

If education is a deliberate effort to promote change for the better, we require some conception of what that 'better' is, for it is in such a conception of the 'better' that the authority for all educational activity must reside. This 'better' is contained in the basic ideals of some segment of society or of

society as a whole. Thus the aims of educational programme are essentially reflections of the basic ideals of the society in general. In the words of Gordon C. Lee, 

"An educational philosophy is at one and the same time an expression of what some one or some school of thought regards as the central social ideals to be approached through organised education and an indication of the means most conducive to the gaining of such ends".2

John Dewey, an eminent American Philosopher of the present day says:

"If philosophy is for anything - if it is not a kind of mumbling in the dark, a form of busy work - it must shed some light upon the path. Life without it must be a different sort of thing from life with it. And the difference which it makes must be in us. Philosophy, then, is reflection upon social ideals and education is the effort to actualise those ideals in human behaviour".3

Thus educational system of any nation should be based upon the great ideals which reveal the culture of that nation. It is an accepted fact that the present system of education in India is not based on a sound philosophy suitable to Indian Culture. Gandhiji, in formulating his own views on national education for India, criticised the existing system of education introduced by the British Government primarily because, 'it is based on foreign culture to the almost entire exclusion of indigenous culture'.4

In enunciating his own conception of national education for India, Rabindranath Tagore observed:

"We must for ever give up the habit of swearing by the West, for the western history and the western society are not ours. We shall have to understand clearly what ideal has long been admired and cherished by our countrymen and what means should be adopted to inspire the heart of our people." 5

Even Education Commission has clearly stated that the present educational system is not based on the rich cultural values of India:

"As education is not rooted in the traditions of the people, the educated persons tend to be alienated from their own culture". The old values, which held society together, have been disappearing, and as there is no effective programme to replace them by a new sense of social responsibility, innumerable signs of social disorganization are evident everywhere and are continually on the increase." 6

II THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIAN CULTURE:

In his book "Essential features of Indian Culture" Sri K.M. Panikkar defines culture "as the complex of ideals, conceptions developed qualities and organised relationships and courtesies that exist generally in a society". The difference between a cultured society and a civilized society according to Panikkar, is that, while the latter is one which is organised

5. Ibid., p. 11.
under conditions ministering to the welfare of the community, the former, the cultured society, is one which emphasises the ideals, conduct, relationships, aesthetic and other values which are cherished in that society. So, "the problem of culture can be discussed", he says, "from the point of view of a whole people only on assumption that there are, broadly speaking, a community of thought, a similarity of conduct and behaviour, a common general approach to fundamental problems, which arise from shared traditions and ideals". It is this common outlook which is described as the culture of a country or a people.

In spite of the diversities in languages, dresses, climates and food-habits, Indian culture has a common ground in as much as the general approach of the people to the general problems of life is identical. While some cultures are purely materialistic in their outlook, Indian culture emphasizes the "spiritual basis" as more important than any other aspect.

According to Sri Aurobindo, "Spirituality is indeed the master-key of the Indian mind, the sense of Infinite is native to it". Comparing the Indian Culture with that of Greece and Rome Sri Aurobindo says:

"Greece developed to a high degree the intellectual reason and the sense of form and harmonious beauty. Rome founded firmly strength and power and patriotism, and law and order. Modern Europe has raised to

9. C. C. Dutt: "The Culture of India as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo"; Bhavan's Book University, Bombay: 1964, p. 29.
enormous proportions practical reason, science and efficiency and economic capacity. India developed the spiritual mind working on the other powers of man and exceeding them, the intuitive reason, the philosophical harmony of the Dharma informed by the religious spirit, the sense of the eternal and the infinite). 10

"The Indian conception of life", says Sri Aurobindo,

"stands from a deeper centre and moves on less external life than the West. The peculiarity of the Indian eye of thought is that it sees or searches everywhere for the Spirit. Its idea of the world, of Nature of existence is not physical but psychological and spiritual". 11

Writing about Indian culture, Sri J.C. Wadayar states:

"Indian culture has had a long and distinguished history and it has been studied widely and with attention. Some study Indian culture with a view to understanding the early conditions of Indian life at the very dawn of Indian civilization. Some approach the study with an archeological or anthropological interest. Some uphold its historical interest to mankind by a retrospective reconstruction of its periods of past achievement. Some discern in it a dominant religious interest which is at the same time an expression of a perennial philosophy - an unceasing attempt to catch glimpses of ultimate truth. According to some it is a living force still operating in the Indian mind and hence of great value in understanding the present and predicting the future. Some study it as one of the several cultures of the world without feeling any special need to spotlight it. There are some who perceive in it potentialities of a contribution to modern civilization even to the extent of influencing present and future patterns of thinking.... One thing is clearly discernible. The impact of Indian Culture on the thought and mind of the world is silent, but subtle and steady". 12

Speaking about Indian Heritage, Dr. D.S. Kothari writes:

10. Ibid., pp. 20-21.
"Our country is passing through many difficulties and facing many changes. Millions of our countrymen live in great poverty, ignorance and disease. Yet, in spite of these things, we could honestly say that there can be no greater fortune for a person than to be born in this great land of ours. Its heritage is incomparable and matchless. So will be its future if we hold true to the faith within us. Refering to the philosophical thought and culture of our times, George Sarton said that the discovery of eastern thought was infinitely more important than the discovery of a new material world by Columbus. It unfortunately attracted less attention because of the conquest of the eastern nations by western powers seeking large colonial empires. Sarton observes that the western nations did not simply exploit and enslave their eastern brothers but did much worse; they failed to appreciate the spiritual heritage, tried to deprive them of it and in the process they killed their very soul. What we need in India to-day is to regain our soul. All this implies that there is need for a radical reconstruction of education".13

In the light of these evidences, it is undoubtful that Indian Culture had a glorious past both at the national and International levels, because of its striking characteristics which are peculiar to it.

III PRESENT SITUATION:

When a nation is rich and prosperous materially, people have a chance of spiritual uplift. It is because the ancient India had nothing to worry about material comforts, she could devote her mind in artistic and spiritual pursuits. The golden era of Mournians, Guptas and Moghals witnessed the glory in arts and literature. As Sri Aurobindo pointed out, "It is when the race lost its vitality and its intellect became petrified, that she reached the bottom of decline".14 Now with the loss of

vitality, she trenched herself passively behind blind conventions and a series of meaningless rites and ceremonies and sat dreaming of her past glories. Under such conditions, when a nation cannot make urgent and timely changes in its institutions, Nature comes forward to play her master card and brings about foreign domination. This is what happened to India. The Brahmin and Ksatriya had ceased to exercise their hereditary functions, but instead of retiring gracefully from their respective positions, they clung tenaciously to their rights and privileges and clogged the wheel of general progress. A powerful foreign nation had to step in and help on the course of evolution. The sudden and crude impact of Western aggression opened our eyes. This resulted in the Cultural Renaissance in India during 1850 to 1950. With the attainment of political independence, India again has become static and stagnant. We must admit that there are men of apparent education in our midst who have not yet been able to come out of the morass of ignorance and superstition that characterised our dark age.

IV NEED FOR EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION BASED ON MORAL AND SPIRITUAL VALUES:

How can we revive this past glory of Indian Culture? We cannot lag behind the western societies in material progress, nor can we imitate all that is west, including their limitations. To-day the western nations are dominated by science and technology. As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan pointed out:

"The food we eat, the clothes we wear, the houses we live in, the words we use, the thoughts we think and the way we entertain ourselves have all been produced by a large number of industrial progress, large-scale industry, mass production and labour-saving devices. These have made possible a great improvement in
standards of living and have contributed to the comfort of life. In our fight against disease, poverty and hunger, we can use the resources placed at our disposal by science. We can change living conditions for the better.  

Many people who live in this science-dominated society claim that scientific knowledge would bring with it perpetual progress, a steady improvement in human relations. The expected transformation of men and their social relationships has not been achieved. Growth in wisdom has not been commensurate with the increase in scientific knowledge and technological power. The fear of universal destruction hangs over us like a dark cloud. The nations that have advanced in the field of science and technology and made much material progress are mainly living under the roof of a kind of 'gun-culture', competition, mutual distrust, envy and fear. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says, "For the proper adjustment of man to the new world, an education of the human spirit is essential. To remake society we have to remake ourselves."  

India is the only nation which can hope to fulfill this task, as observed by Lord Linlithgow, former Viceroy of India:

"Even the most enthusiastic believer in western civilization must feel to-day a certain despondency at the apparent failure of the west to dominate scientific discoveries and to evolve a form of society in which material progress and spiritual freedom match comfortably together. Perhaps the west will find in India's more general emphasis on simplicity and ultimate spirituality of things,

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a more positive example of the truths which the most advanced minds of the west are now discovering".17

How can India make the expectations of Linlighgow true? Is it by ignoring the science and technology to live in a bullock-cart age when the world is in the jet age? Or is it by imitating the west and accept their miseries along with the enjoyments which science can bring to us? To quote Sri Jawaharlal Nehru:

"Can we combine the progress of science and technology with this progress of mind and spirit also? We cannot be untrue to science because that represents the basic fact of life to-day. Still less can we be untrue to those essential principles for which India has stood in the past throughout the ages".18

So there must be a synthesis of science and religion.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan visualises such a world order in which science and religion are harmoniously blended. He says:

"Under the influence of the universal experiences of religions and modern science and technology, mankind is being moulded into a single community. The common man has to discover what is uncommon in him and to learn to live as a citizen of a world community. Science will triumph over ignorance and superstition and religion over selfishness and fear and nations will come together to build a great future for humanity, the brotherhood of man which has been the vision of the prophets since the beginning of time".19

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If such a synthesis has to be brought about and if India hopes to be a guiding star to the world in realm of soul and spirit, she has to change herself, keeping pace with other advanced nations and at the same time retaining her values, which are the basis of her culture, for a society cannot hope to enlighten others while itself wrapped in darkness. It would be like "blind man leading the blind".

The Education Commission emphatically stated that combination of knowledge given by science and technology with moral and spiritual values is the need of the day:

"Modernization does not mean least of all in our nations situation - a refusal to recognise the importance of or to inculcate necessary moral and spiritual values and self-discipline. Modernization, if it is to be a living force, must derive its strength from the strength of the spirit while a combination of ignorance with goodness may be futile, that of knowledge with a lack of essential values may be dangerous. The weakening of social and moral values in the younger generation is creating many serious social and ethical conflicts in western societies and there is already a desire among some great western thinkers to balance the knowledge and skills which science and technology bring with the values and insights associated with ethics and religion at its best, i.e., a search for the knowledge of the self, of the meaning of life, of the relationship of man to other human beings and to the ultimate reality. In the situation that is developing it is equally important for us to give a proper value orientation to one educational system".20

This change can be brought about only by education, which alone is the most potential instrument for social change. In a

masterly analysis of the concept of national education in the Indian context. Sri Aurobindo states, "This is the aim and principle of true national education, not certainly to ignore modern truth and knowledge, but to take our foundation on our own being, our own mind, our own spirit".\(^2\)

It is with the same view in their mind, the Education Commission in the foreward of their report stated:

"There is, of course, one thing about which we feel no doubt or hesitation; education, science-based in coherence with Indian Culture and Values, can alone provide the foundation— as also the instrument—for the national progress, security and welfare".\(^2\)

To quote Education Commission again about the need of educational reconstruction based on moral and spiritual values:

"We can harness science to support rather than weaken our basic commitment to cultural and spiritual values. It should be our goal and obligation to re-interp\(eter\), and raise to a new level of understanding, the insight gained by the ancient as regards the fundamental problems of life, which in some ways is unique and represents the quintessence of deepest insight into the happenings of the world".\(^2\)

**SUMMARY:**

An Educational Philosophy is an expression of what the society regards as the central social ideals to be approached through organised education. If philosophy is a reflection

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\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 21-22.
upon social ideals, education is an effort to actualise these ideals in human behaviour.

It is an accepted fact that the present educational system in India is not based upon the great ideals which reveal the culture of India. Culture is defined as the complex of ideals, conceptions, developed qualities and organised relationships and courtesies that exist generally in a society. Indian culture is marked by the spirituality and the sense of infinite.

The present world is dominated by science and technology. But this advancement in science and technology could not commensurate with the improvement in human relations. A world order, in which science and religion are harmoniously blended, is a necessity.

India can play her role in guiding the world in the realm of soul and spirit. In order to reach the heights of her past glory in material and spiritual fields, a radical change in Indian society is the need of the day. Education being the most potent means for effecting social change, we need an educational philosophy which can become the basis for our educational system.
REFERENCES:

1. Dutt C.C.: "The Culture of India as envisaged"; Sri Aurobindo; Bhavan's Book University, 1964.


