CHAPTER II

Philosophy of Education in Mahabharata

2.1 Doctrines of Education

The doctrine of education, according to idealists, is to discover the mind or spirit. The 'mind' or 'self', a part of the Mind manifests itself in and through the body which is matter. When the individual realizes the 'Self', he becomes a part of it. The idealists believe that mind or spirit as each individual experiences it in himself is fundamentally real and that the totality of the universe is spirit. The mind is capable of creating the expressions and these are not perishable. Therefore, the mind is real, but the matter is destructible. In other words reality is spiritual but the material is not such. Each man possesses a 'mind' or 'Self' or 'spirit' which is spiritual. Individual minds are the part of the 'universal mind'. The great epic Mahābhārata also stresses to discover mind or spirit. There are lot of evidences to prove this. The people who are well-versed with the Śāstras see the soul with the help of acts described in the Śāstras. The soul is encased in a subtle body, is highly subtle and has no link with the gross body in which it resides—

शरीरादिक दृष्टम दि सूक्ष्ममूलं शरीरिरणत।
कर्मभिः परिपर्यन्ति शास्त्रोऽवसंगिने गार्तापेतात् ।।

The soul cannot be seen either by you or me or by others. The man who are possessed with the understanding and the senses but lack self-control and tranquility can not see Soul. The Supreme Soul can be seen only with the help of knowledge. Though shorn of bodies, He lives in all the bodies. While living in the bodies, He is beyond the acts done by those bodies. He is the inner Soul of me, of yours and of all other living organisms. He is the Omniscient Witness of all creatures. No one is capable to comprehend Him.

Another doctrine of education, as conceived by the idealists, is the knowledge of spiritual reality or Brahman which is the highest knowledge. The knowledge of physical universe depends upon the senses but the knowledge of Brahman can be obtained only through intuition. The knowledge of ultimate reality can not be obtained through the methods of observation experimentation, reasoning etc. The knowledge of the physical universe is basic to the knowledge of the ultimate reality. the great epic Mahābhārata emphasises upon the attainment of highest knowledge i.e. the knowledge of Brahman. Brahman is the effulgent seed. The entire universe has originated from Him. The two types of beings, i.e. the mobile

2. Ibid., 12/339/3.
and in mobile, also originate from Him.¹ Gânārī and a woman scholar, wife of Prabhāsa possessed the knowledge of Brahman. Yudhīṣṭhira² and Dhr-trāstra³ had also been imparted such education.

The other doctrine of education, according to idealists, is the belief in three spiritual values. There are: Truth, Goodness and beauty. Truth is an intellectual value, beauty an aesthetic and goodness, moral value. When combined together, there constitute 'Goodness, A.S.Seetharamu observes, "These values are already there at the purpose of man is to discover them. Man can not create values. Values are the essences. Essence precedes existence."⁴ The description of the values named Truth, Goodness and Beauty is available in Mahābhārata. Good People always respect Truth. Truth is eternal duty. All men respectfully bow to Truth. Truth is the last refuge of all.⁵ That virtue as a result of which one performs good acts with care to all creatures is called goodness. It has no particular shape and is attained by casting off all attachment.⁶ Yudhīṣṭhira, renowned character of Mahābhārata, is a living example of

¹ See Mahā, 12/224/32.
² Ibid., 5/203/50.
³ Ibid., 5/44/45.
⁵ Mahā. 12/156/4.
⁶ Ibid., 12/156/16.
2.2 Goals of Education

Of all other goals of education, individual and social goals are the most important because the remaining goals of education give stress either on individual or social goal. A man possesses certain potentialities and natural endowments by birth. Education develops these potentialities into a distinct individual personality and its development takes place by associating with others, cooperative living and by working together for the welfare of the society.

Individual Goal of Education

The goal of education is the training and development of the individual. Education helps an individual in understanding his rights in the society as well as his obligations towards community. Maximum opportunities should be provided to an individual enabling him to realize his physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual capabilities without any hindrance by environment and by the society. During the Mahābhārata age, such education was given to individuals which contributed a lot in their physical and mental development and in making them complete men. Education
of Veda,\(^1\) Vedānga,\(^2\) Purāṇa,\(^3\) Itihāsa\(^4\) Smṛti,\(^5\) Upaniṣads,\(^6\) Rāmāyaṇa,\(^7\) Mahābhārata,\(^8\) Dharmaśāstras,\(^9\) Arthaśāstra,\(^10\) Kāmaśāstra,\(^11\) secret subjects,\(^12\) Philosophy,\(^13\) science of calculation,\(^14\) religious education,\(^15\) science of morality\(^16\) cultural education,\(^17\), political education\(^18\) and education regarding different arts\(^19\) helped in the mental development of the individuals. While education regarding science of

2. Ibid., 1/54/3.
3. Ibid., 1/102/18.
4. Ibid., 1/54/3.
5. Ibid., 3/177/30.
6. Ibid., 3/197/2.
8. Ibid., 1/53/35, 36.
9. Ibid., 1/1/47.
10. Ibid., 1/1/47.
11. Ibid., 1/1/47.
12. Ibid., 1/120/20.
13. Ibid., 3/184/22 to 25.
15. Ibid., 3/50/3 to 58.
16. Ibid., 1/144/5.
17. Ibid., 3/49/29, 30.
18. Ibid., 2/77/45.
19. Ibid., 1/71/22.
weapons\(^1\) contributed in the physical development of the individuals Gāndhārī imparted political\(^2\) and religious education\(^3\) to her son Duryodhana. Kuntī imparted political education\(^4\) to her sons and Vidulī gave political education\(^5\) to her son Sanjaya which helped in the all round development of their personality.

**Social Goal of Education**

Education is the most important means which prepares individuals to play different roles in the society. Only those individuals who are physically fit, intellectually well off, economically self-sufficient and morally high can contribute a lot towards the welfare of the society. During the Mahābhārata age, people of all the four castes were imparted education in their respective fields or careers. This helped them in playing their role in the society in a better way. The main duty of the Brahmins was the study of Vedas, teaching and performing sacrifices.\(^6\) The Brahmins

---

1. Mahā., 1/94/35; 1/104/16; 1/123/1, 42, 43; 1/123/41; 1/143/31.
2. Ibid., 5/127/9, 19 to 53.
3. Ibid., 5/127/9, 19 to 53; 5/127/5, 6
4. Ibid., 5/130/12, 32.
5. Ibid., 5/132/30; 5/133/30.
6. Ibid., 12/60/9 to 12.
were imparted education in Vedas,\textsuperscript{1} Vedangās,\textsuperscript{2} Upaniṣads,\textsuperscript{3} Purāṇa,\textsuperscript{4} Dharmāśāstra,\textsuperscript{5} Yoga\textsuperscript{6} and religion.\textsuperscript{7} This education helped Brahmans in playing their role efficiently in the welfare of the society. The duty of the Kṣatriyas was to protect the subjects.\textsuperscript{8} The Kshatriyas were imparted education of science of weapons.\textsuperscript{9} Apart from military training they were also given education in Vedas,\textsuperscript{10} Vedāngas,\textsuperscript{11} religion, \textsuperscript{12} Śikṣa,\textsuperscript{13} Itihasa\textsuperscript{14} purāṇa\textsuperscript{15} Dharmāśāstra\textsuperscript{16} and Yoga.\textsuperscript{17} The education imparted to Kṣatriyas helped them in playing their role well for the

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textcite{Mahā, 3/44/17, 18; 1/70/12.}
\item \textcite{Ibid., 3/197/2; 1/154/5.}
\item \textcite{Ibid., 3/117/2.}
\item \textcite{Ibid., 3/185/2 to 54.}
\item \textcite{Ibid., 1/66/1.}
\item \textcite{Ibid., 3/2/17 to 77.}
\item \textcite{Ibid., 3/2/71.}
\item \textcite{Ibid., 13/128/47 to 51.}
\item \textcite{Ibid., 1/94/35; 1/104/16; 3/164/53, 55, 57; 3/224/10,11}
\item \textcite{Ibid., 3/80/21.}
\item \textcite{Ibid; 1/94/32.}
\item \textcite{Ibid., 3/2/71.}
\item \textcite{Ibid; 1/102/18.}
\item \textcite{Ibid; 1/102/18.}
\item \textcite{Ibid., 3/185/2 to 54.}
\item \textcite{Ibid; 1/111/27 to 30.}
\item \textcite{Ibid; 3/3/14.}
\end{enumerate}
welfare of the society. The duty of the Vaiśyas in the Mahābhārata age was: rearing up the cattle, agriculture, trade etc. Hence, the main stress in the education of Vaiśyas was given on these areas which prepared them in playing their role efficiently in the society. The main duty of the Śūdras was the service of the three twice-born classes. The stress in the education of Śūdras was given on this very area which helped in making them useful members of the society.

Specific or four-fold aims of education play a major role in the individual as well as social development. These are as:

1. Moral (धर्म)
2. Vocational (अर्थ)
3. Cultural (काम)
4. Spiritual (मोक्ष)

Moral Goal of Education

The most important function of education is to provide moral education to the people. Morality is a very comprehensive term because it includes in its fold all the important goals of education like the intellectual, the social, the aesthetic and the knowledge goal. The teachers in ancient India taught students to give respect to all that is noble and to strive after truth and purity of thought, word and deed. Moral virtues such as honesty, loyalty, tolerance,

2. Ibid., 12/60/27 to 37.
fellow-feeling, truthfulness, justice, sincerity, self-control, freedom and temperance play a major role in increasing the social efficiency of a man. Moral education elevates the individual not only morally but also physically, intellectually and aesthetically. During the Mahābhārata age, the moral education was imparted to the people which not only elevated them morally but also increased their social efficiency. For example, Bhīṣma narrated a story to Yudhīṣṭhira in which violence was regarded as an evil. Bhīṣma imparted education to Yudhīṣṭhira regarding truth and falsehood and the difference between the two. Bhīṣma told Yudhīṣṭhira that a man having self-restraint (dama) attained success in all the activities. It superseded all other ethical qualities. Forgiveness and truthfulness etc. were associated with this quality. The sage Samīka taught his son Sringī the importance of forgiveness. Hanumāna taught Bhīma to show kindness to all animals. Devasthāna told Yudhīṣṭhira that contentment was the highest heaven and bliss. There was nothing higher as compared to contentment. Sūta gave moral education to Saunaka related with the value called self-sacrifice. He narrated the story of Ruru and Pramadvarā in

2. Ibid; 12/109/4 to 18.
3. Ibid., 17/1549, 10,15.
4. Ibid., 1/38/4 to 10.
5. Ibid., 3/146/75, 76.
6. Ibid., 12/21/2.
which Ruru agreed to bestow half of his life upon Pramadvara to keep her alive.\(^1\) Describing the virtues—gratitude and friendliness, Bhīṣma said that man should always be grateful. Everything could be obtained from a friend. Truth and prowess originated from a friend. The wise man should worship his friend to the best of his power.\(^2\)

**Vocational Goal of Education**

Education should help a man in earning his livelihood. It should be useful rather than ornamental. One of the important functions of human life is to earn one's livelihood. It is, therefore, essential that education for life should be given. Social life used to be very simple in the ancient times. The son usually adopted the profession of his father. Therefore, specialized training, outside the home, in ordinary occupations of life was not required. But in the modern era, specialized training is required in every occupation. Vocational education makes an individual economically independent and also gives purpose to educational activity. In the Mahābhārata age, vocational education was imparted to the people which made them economically well-off as well as useful members of the society. For example the people of the four castes were given education keeping in view their duties in the society.\(^3\)

---

1. Mahā. 1/8th and 9th Chapters.

2. Ibid., 12/167/21.

3. See 4.1. of the thesis.
Arjuna, Dhritarāṣṭra, Vidura,1 Pāṇḍu,2 and Abhimanyu3 had received education in archery. The saga Kaśyapa,4 Śukra,5 Kacha,6 the saga Raibhya,7 Sugriva8 and the chariot-drivers 9 had been described as great physicians, Bāhuka,10 Granthika (Nakula),11 and Hayajñāh12 were famous veterinary doctors. A person, who was well skilled in mining, made a subterranean passage alongwith the door of the quadrangle house.13 Arjuna had received education in music (singing)14 and he imparted the same to Uttara, the daughter of king Virāṭa.

1. Maha.1/102/17.
2. Ibid., 1/102/17, 19.
3. Ibid., 1/213/65.
4. Ibid., 1/38/31 to 39; 1/39/1 to 19.
5. Ibid., 1/71/7, 9, 11, 31, 35.
6. Ibid., 1/71/46 to 51.
7. Ibid., 3/136/16.
9. Ibid., 8/28/7.
10. Ibid., 3/64/2, 6.
13. Ibid. edited by Satavalekar, Damodara, 1/135/1, 2, 16 to 19.
etc. Some great artists like Viśwakarma, Maya Dānava etc. find a mention in the Mahābhārata. Draupadi chose the work of a Sairandhri and performed it well. Bāhuka was well-versed in the art of cooking. Viśwakarma made the celestial Vimānas for the gods. Achārya Garga possessed the knowledge of astrology.

**Cultural Goal of Education**

Culture is the foundation or the primary thing. It is exhibited through the smallest details of conduct and personal behaviour—how one walks and dresses etc. Inner culture is reflected in speech, the way in which one treats guests and behaves towards one another, teachers and elders. The aim of education for culture is to provide such knowledge and characteristics to man which may add beauty and grace to his life. In the Mahabharata education regarding hospitality, different arts, respect towards teachers and moral values was given to the people which added grace to their life. For example—The king Yudhisthira etc. had received education

---

1. Ibid., edited by Sukthankar, Vishnu S., 4/11/12.
2. Ibid., edited by Satavalekar, Damodra, 1/60/26, 27, 29.
3. Ibid., 1/1/89; 1/55/38; 2/3/17, 19 to 23.
5. Ibid., edited by Satavalekar, Damodra, 3/72/12.
6. Ibid., 9/36/15 to 17. For detail see Chapter IV.
7. Ibid., 3/49/29, 30; 3/162/7; 1/200/9, 10. For detail see 3.7 (Cultural Education).
regarding hospitality. Education regarding different arts like singing had been imparted to Kacha. The disciples like Āruni had been imparted education regarding paying of respect to teachers. As a result of this education, Āruni completed the tough task assigned to him. Saunaka was given education of moral values like self-sacrifice.

Spiritual Goal of Education

A number of saints and sages have kept the lamp of Indian spiritualism burning even under the storms of opposition and unfavourable environment. Spiritualism has its deep roots in the very life and social fabric of Indian culture. The major goal of education is to make the individual realize that he has within himself something deeper than intellect called the spirit, help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make the soul perfect for a noble use. The education of the intellect devoid of the perfection of the moral and emotional nature is harmful for human progress. The development of spiritual qualities should be the ultimate aim of education. The main aim of education during the age of Mahābhārata was spiritualism or attainment of mokṣa and such education was imparted to the people. For example—Describing the meaning of mokṣa, Vyāsa wrote that the escape from Trivarga is called

2. Ibid., 1/3/17 to 31. For detail see 5.6.
3. Ibid., 1/Bth and 9th Chapters. For detail see 2.2 (Moral Goal of Education).
The sage Mārkanḍeya explained the nature of mokṣa to Yudhiṣṭhira as was explained in Vedānta philosophy through the discussion of Saraswati and Tārksya.

2.3 Eligibility for Education

The eligibility for education has strictly been laid down in the Mahābhārata. According to Veda Vyāsa, the education of the Vedas should not be given to one who has not become a student formally, who does not observe vows and who is of impure soul. The qualities of disciples should be known properly. No knowledge should be given to one whose character has not been examined previously. As pure gold is tested by heating, cutting and nabbing, similarly the students should be examined on the basis of their birth and accomplishments. The knowledge of a student will be fruitful according to his understanding and diligence in the study. Men of all the four castes are competent to listen to discourses on Vedas or Vedic recitations.

2.4 Concept of Discipline:

During the first stage of human life, the student had to dwell in the preceptor's house for the acquisition of knowledge. The life of the āśramas was very hard and the student had to lead disciplined life there. The student could not dare even to think of breaking the discipline of the āśrama. The conduct of the student was very much controlled.

---

1. Quoted from Essays on Sanskrit Literature, p.154.
3. Ibid., 12/314/41 to 45.
during the Mahābhārata age. According to Vyāsa, the student should go to bed after the preceptor has gone to his and rise before the preceptor has risen. ¹ He should never take food before his teacher does so; never drink water before his teacher drinks and never sit down before his teacher does so. ² He should abstain from the use of such scents and tastes as are not worth-using by a student ³ and avoid evil speech. ⁴ According to Sanatsujāta, the student should never hurt the preceptor remembering the good done to him. ⁵ He should refrain from becoming wrathful. ⁶ According to Bhrigu, he should salute his preceptor by shaking off procrastination and idleness. He should perform his ablutions thrice a day. ⁷ The student had to perform certain duties. According to Bhrigu, he should go out for alms daily and offer to his teacher all the things obtained in alms along with his soul. ⁸ The student carried out the behests of his preceptor willingly. For example the sage Āyuda-Dhoumya ordered his disciple Āruni to stop a breach in the water-course in his field. Āruni did so by entering into the breach and lying

2. Ibid., 12/234/21.
3. Ibid., 12/234/25.
4. Ibid., 12/234/17.
5. Ibid., 5/44/7.
8. Ibid., 12/184/8.
himself down there.\textsuperscript{1} The examples of such other obedient and disciplined students are Upamanyu, Veda and Uttanka.\textsuperscript{2}

2.5 Doctrines of Brahmacharya:

In ancient times, the first stage of human life was studentship or Brahmacharya. The students were bound to follow the doctrines of brahmacharya during this stage of life.

The great sage Vyāsa explained the doctrines of brahmacharya to Śuka. According to him, brahmachārin, devoid of malice and conversant with dharma and artha, should live with the preceptor or preceptor’s son for twenty five years in the first mode of life. The student, desirous of obtaining the knowledge, should study from preceptor after performing all acts. He should always behave with simplicity and avoid evil speech. While dwelling in the teacher’s house, the student should go to bed after the teacher has gone to his and rise before the teacher has risen. He should perform all such acts which are worth-performing by a disciple or a servant. He should perform all such acts as are ordered by the guru and stand by him. Becoming pious, skilled in work and acquiring virtues the student should now and then speak what is pleasant. Controlling his senses he should look at his preceptor without curiosity. The brahmachārin should never take food before his preceptor; never drink water before his preceptor and never sit down before his preceptor has sat down. He should touch his teacher’s feet gently with both the

\textsuperscript{1} Mahā., \textsuperscript{2} For detail see 3.6 of the thesis.
hands, the right foot with the right hand and the left foot with the left hand. The student should salute his preceptor reverentially and request to teach him. Having obtained permission of the guru in all matters and offered money to him, the student should perform all acts. He should abstain from the use of such scents and tastes as are not worth-using by a brahmachārin. He should use these after the completion of the life of celibacy. The brahmachārin should always practice those observances which have been laid down in the śāstras for him. He should remain busy in the service of the teacher. The student should delight his preceptor by his service to the best of his powers, enter into other āsramas from brahmacharya āsrama and practise the duties of these āsramas. Having spent first part of his life in the study of the Vedas and observance of vows and fasts and having given the preceptor his fee, the student should return from the āsrama of the guru and become a house-holder.¹

Bhīṣma described the doctrines of brahmacharya to Yudhīṣṭhīra. According to him, the brahmachārin should recite the mantras even at the time of eating and walking and serve his teacher with his body smeared with clay. Observing rigid vows, engaged in deekṣa, controlling his senses and performing all acts according to the Vedas, the student should dwell in the brahmacharyā-āsrama. He should always serve his guru and salute him. He should refrain himself from doing six kinds of acts. The brahmachārin should neither show

¹. Mahā., 12/234/16 to 28.
favour or disfavour to anyone nor serve his enemies.¹

Sanatsujāta explained the rules of brahmacharya to Dhritarāṣtra. According to him, those who enter into the āsrama of the preceptor, serve him and practise celibacy, become conversant with the śāstras in this world and are united with Brahma after their death. The brahmachārin should regard the teacher as father and mother because the teacher frees a man from untruth by giving discourses on the Supreme soul. He should never hurt the preceptor remembering the good done to him. The student should pay respect to his guru everyday, engage himself in the study and refrain from becoming wrathful. This is the first step of brahmacharya. The student should perform the acts desired by the teacher even at the cost of his life or the last penny by mind, speech and action. This is the second step of studentship. The brahmachārin should behave with the wife of the preceptor in the similar way as with his preceptor. This is the third step of studentship. The student should neither speak nor think that he is doing any good to his guru. This is the fourth step of brahmacharya. He should offer to his preceptor all the wealth obtained by him by way of begging alms. By doing so, he gains prosperity. His conduct towards the preceptor's son should also be likewise.²

In the view of Bhrigu, the student should cleanse his soul by purity, rites, humility and by obeying the rules of

². Ibid., 5/44/6 to 12.
the āsrama. He should adore the Sun and the Agni in the morning and evening twilights. He should salute his teacher by shaking off procrastination and idleness. The brahmachārin should purify his soul by studying the Vedas and by listening to his preceptor’s instructions. He should perform his ablutions, thrice a day and lead a life of celibacy. He should attend to his consecrated hearth and serve his teacher. The student should carry out willingly the behests of his guru and remain always ready to receive such Vedic instructions as his preceptor may give him as a favour.¹

2.6 Pursuit of Highest Knowledge

The realization of the highest knowledge i.e. the knowledge of Brahman, requires dedication of whole life and not only a part of it. Some of the moral attributes, regarded as presuppositions of instruction are the preparatory means to the highest end of man’s life—the attainment of the knowledge of Brahman and belong to the last stages of a disciplined life. These attributes cannot be considered as the normal initial endowments. According to Vyāsa, Brahman is the effulgent seed. The entire universe has originated from Him. The two types of beings, i.e. the mobile and the immobile, also originate from Him.² Two types of Brahman should be known—the one represented by the Vedas and the other beyond the Vedas. One, who is conversant with Brahman

¹ Mahā., 12/184/8.
² Ibid., 12/224/32.
represented by sound, attains Brahman which is supreme.\textsuperscript{1}

According to Vyāsa, the soul, which has created the entire Universe, dwells in all the creatures whether mobile or immobile. When a living creature sees his own soul in all things and all things in his own Soul, he is understood to have attained Brahman.\textsuperscript{2} There is description in the epic of some person who possessed the highest knowledge called the knowledge of Brahman. For example- Gautami possessed the knowledge of the Brahman. When her only son died as a result of snake-bite, she could deliver a scholarly lecture on the state after death due to this very supreme knowledge.\textsuperscript{3} A woman scholar, named Ansūya, was a Brahma-vādinī (or an expounder of Brahman).\textsuperscript{4} The sage Mārkanṭeya imparted such education to Yudhiṣṭhira. He told him that a man, who had renounced worldly things, could attain Brahman.\textsuperscript{5} Sanatsujāta gave education regarding Brahman to Dhritarāṣṭra.\textsuperscript{6}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Mahā., 12/224/60.
\item Ibid., 12/231/20, 21.
\item Ibid., 13/1/10, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22, 24.
\item Ibid., 13/14/65.
\item Ibid., 3/503/50.
\item Ibid., 5/44, 45.
\end{enumerate}