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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

Education in the East and the West has always had its foundations in the Metaphysical, Epistemological and Axiological outlook of the philosophers. As Metaphysics, Epistemology and Axiology differed, so differed the system of education. In India the philosophical traditions have continued since ancient times to the present day. Therefore one finds agreement on the broad issues concerning educational practice between the ancient and modern thinkers. This is the foundation of contemporary Indian Philosophy of Education. ¹

Fichte rightly said “The art of education will never attain complete clearness in itself without philosophy. Hence there is an interaction between the two and either without the other is incomplete and unserviceable.”

The educator is often faced with the problems in the sphere of education, which can be solved only on the basis of his conception of the universe. Every behavior or action has its own principle. Hence educational behavior too must have its own principles. This principle underlying all educational behavior is derived from philosophy of education. It is only through a philosophy of education that one can determine the curriculum, the text book, the methods of teaching, methods and

standards of evaluation, the methods of maintaining discipline etc. Hence educator should study educational philosophy.

Education seeks to reform society. This reformation depends on the philosophy concerning the individual and society. G. D. H. Cole says “The educational system which we attempt to set up must depend on the kind of society. We mean to live in, on the qualities in men and women on which we set the highest value and on the estimates which we make of the educability both of those who are endowed with the higher intellectual or aesthetic capacities and of ordinary people.”

Philosophy of education is theoretical. But this theory should lead to practice. John Dewey remarks “whenever philosophy has been taken seriously, it has always been assumed that it signified achieving a wisdom that would influence the conduct of life”.

In the schools of philosophy, Idealism has an important role. It has been the most ancient and the most prominent school in philosophy. In the words of Adams, “Idealism in one form or other permeates the whole of the history of Philosophy”.

Idealism again has been the most fundamental theory underlying educational principles.

About the importance of Idealism Robert R. Rusk says “It bestows dignity and grandeur upon human life by emphasizing the distinctiveness of man’s nature, attributing to him powers, not possessed by animals, which issue in ideals – logical and

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aesthetic, it admits the existence of a supreme being; by its respect for human personality it provides the basis for democracy” 5

The most fundamental question in the field of education is concerning its aim. The question of the aim of education is very much concerned with the question of the nature of the universe again; it is intimately concerned with the concept of culture prevalent in society. This makes for the close relation between philosophy and education.

Education is based upon the distinctions between animal and human nature. It has generally aimed to develop the characteristics peculiar to man. Robert R. Rusk remarks “those powers and their products are peculiar to man and differentiate him from other animals. They lie beyond the range of the positive science – biological and even psychological: they raise problems which only philosophy can hope to solve and make the only satisfactory basis of education a philosophical one” 6

Education aims at imparting knowledge. Knowledge however requires a global outlook and a synthesis of various types of information and experiences. This is a philosophical activity without which no education is possible. As Perry remarks “philosophy is neither accidental nor supernatural, but inevitable and normal”.7

Besides its synthetic function, another important function of philosophy is the criticism of the postulates and conclusions of different sciences. Whenever a scientist delves deeper in his own particular field, he reaches a depth where the process of his

5 Rusk R.R The philosophical basis if education (London University press 1956) p 154
7 Perry Approach to Philosophy P 22
thinking is not scientific but philosophical. This can be seen in thinking of many a great scientist of the world.  

The importance of philosophy in the field of knowledge is quite clear. From the point of view of different aspects of the individual and social life and in different fields of knowledge, the discussion on the value of philosophy shows the utility of its study. In the words of J.W. Cunningham “philosophy thus grows directly out of life and its needs. Everyone who lives, if he lives at all reflectively, is in some degree a philosopher”\textsuperscript{9}.

In the words of Chesterton, “the most practical and important thing about a man is his view of universe - his philosophy”\textsuperscript{10}.

**Meaning of Philosophy**

The meaning of philosophy has been a controversial matter since ancient times. Different philosophers defined philosophy from their own viewpoints. Some have given importance to psychological facts; some have given more importance to values.

According to John Dewey “whenever philosophy has been taken seriously, it has always been assumed that it signified achieving a wisdom that would influence the conduct of life”\textsuperscript{11}.

There is much difference in Indian and western definitions of philosophy, one finds widely different definitions, presented by western philosophers also. Some

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\textsuperscript{8} G.R. Sharma Trends in contemporary Philosophy of Education (Atlantic Publishers - p 4)
\textsuperscript{9} Cunningham J.W Problems of Philosophy (Calcutta Chakravarthy & Chatterjee & Co 1957) p 5
\textsuperscript{10} Quoted by Hocking Types of Philosophy p4
\textsuperscript{11} Dewey. J Democracy and education (New York the Macmillan co. 1916) p 378
emphasize the critical aspects of philosophy while others lay emphasis upon its synthetic aspect. Let us take some examples of these two types of definitions.

(A) Critical Method

1. Philosophy is essentially a spirit of method of approaching experience rather than a body of conclusions about experience.¹²

2. It is not the specific content of these conclusions, but the spirit and method by which they are reached which entitles them to be described as philosophical.¹³

3. “Were I limited to one line for my answer to it, I should say that philosophy is general theory of criticism.”¹⁴

(B) Philosophy is comprehensive synthetic science

1. Philosophy like science, consists of theories of insights arrived at as a result of systematic reflection.¹⁵

2. “Philosophy is concerned with everything as a universal science.”¹⁶

3. “Our subject is a collection of sciences, such as theory of knowledge, logic, cosmology, ethics and aesthetics, as well as a unified survey.”¹⁷

So we find some thinkers have described it as critical discipline, some considered it as synthetic discipline. But philosophy is both critical as well as synthetic. Literally the word philosophy is derived from two Greek words- Philo – meaning ‘love’ and ‘Sophia’ meaning knowledge.

¹² Brightman E.S. Introduction to Philosophy (New York, Henry Hold & Co 1925) p9
¹⁴ Ducasse C.J. Philosophy Art (New York, Dial Press 1926)
¹⁵ Leighton J.A. The Field of Philosophy – (New York, Appleton Century Crafts 1910) p4
¹⁶ R.N. Sharma. Problems of Philosophy (Meerut, Ketharnath, Ramnath 1982) p5
“Thus philosophy means – love of knowledge” or love of wisdom. Philosopher is one who is constantly engaged in the search for truth. He is not bothered much to arrive at the conclusion and continues with his search for truth throughout his life.

In an effort to define philosophy one arrives at the difficulty that there is no genus in this case and also no differentia. In defining a science one point out to the genus science and also to the particular area of the particular science which differentiates it from others.

This is however, not possible in the case of philosophy because philosophy is one and not many. Hence in order to arrive at the meaning of philosophy we will have to discuss its problems, attitude, method, process, conclusions and results18.

Science cannot be understood without knowing scientific method. Similarly we cannot understand philosophy without knowing philosophical method. In understanding definition of science, we are required to understand not only scientific method but also scientific attitude, scientific process, scientific problems and scientific conclusions, because all these together form a science. “Therefore what is vague and inadequate if we say that in order to understand philosophy one must understand the attitude, problems, activity, and conclusions and results peculiar to it? This will also clarify the distinction between philosophy and science, which has been forgotten by many philosophers”19.

Contemporary Indian Philosophers have used the term philosophy almost in the same sense as it is used in the west. Thus according to Sri Aurobindo “the work of philosophy is to arrange in the data given by the various means of knowledge, excluding

18 Sharma R. N Problems of Philosophy P.6
19 G. Ranjit Sharma Contemporary Indian Philosophy of Education. P- 6
none and put them into synthetic relation to the one truth the one supreme and universal reality.\(^{20}\)

Philosophy should be all comprehensive, affirmative synthetic and spiritual. As per Indian tradition, is the knowledge of that by knowing which every thing else can be known. Thus philosophy is the knowledge of ultimate reality. But ultimate reality is not only existence, but also consciousness and bliss. Science philosophy as the quest after ultimate truth is science of value par excellence.\(^{21}\)

Philosophy should not only criticize facts, but also satisfy human aspirations. It should synthesize value and existence, religion and science. Sir Aurobindo remarks; “it should be discovery of the real reality of things by which human existence can learn its law and aim and the principle of its perfection.”\(^{22}\)

**Meaning of Education in India and west**

The word education has its origin in the Latin word ‘education’, itself composed of two terms ‘E’ and ‘Duco’. ‘E’ implies a progress from inward to outward, while ‘Duco’ means developing or progressing. In its literal sense, education means becoming developed or progressing from inside to outside education is the process of developing the inner abilities and powers of an individual. The term is also connected with the Latin ‘Educere’ meaning propulsion from the internal to the external. This Latin term means to educate through a change brought about by practice or usage. In this manner, education implies some kind of change for the better in a person.\(^{23}\)

\(^{20}\) Aurobindo. S The Renaissance in India (Pondichery the Aurobindo Ashram 1951) p72

\(^{21}\) Maitra S.K Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual Vol II p61

\(^{22}\) Aurobindo. S the Human Cycle (New York: the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Library Inc (1950) p 93

\(^{23}\) Indian philosophy of Education , P - 7
When the word is accepted in its more liberal meaning, an individual imbibes education at all times and places and education is not merely confined to the class room. It can be obtained from all and even from nature. Considering from this stand point, it can be said that the child gets education not only from his teacher, but also from the entire complexity of his environment. Each object which is a means of educating him. With this definition, the subjects of education cannot be determined, for they are far too numerous. Education is, there fore, is not limited to students, but comprehends all human individuals of all ages, races and groups.

The child learns many things from his parents, friends, neighbors and other members of society. Learning many things is happened by observing others. Learning whether it is formal or informal is usefull to the learner. An individual who is formally educated is not necessarily completely developed, but is unquestionably better informed than the average uneducated person. But we also find many eminent persons, who learnt through informal means.

**Some western concepts**

The meaning of education in west is initially available in the works of Plato. Plato defined education as a life long process starting “from the first years of childhood and lasting to the very end of the life”\(^{24}\).

Education not only provides knowledge and skills, but also inculcates values, training of instincts, fostering right attitudes and habits. In Republic Plato points out “that true education, whatever that may be, will have the greatest tendency to civilize and humanize them in their relation to another and to those who are under their

\(^{24}\) Plato, Protagoras. Jowett 325
This humanist definition of education, propounded by Plato is still the most widely accepted meaning of education in the west.

Education everywhere has been used as process of inculcation of values. As Plato said “now I mean by education that training which is given by suitable habits to the first instincts of virtue in children”\(^{26}\). These views of Plato have been universally accepted in the west as well as in the east.

Education has been defined differently by idealists, the pragmatists, naturalists and realist philosophers. However, its meaning has been generally idealistic. Without some sort of Idealism there can be no education worth the same.

In the words of Robert R. Rusk “we may accept that the aim of education the enhancement or enrichment of personality, the differentiating features of which is the embodiment of universal values\(^{27}\).

In the Middle Ages Comenius declared education to be a process where by an individual developed qualities relating to religion, knowledge and morality, and there by established his claim to be called a human being. The principle of liberty has found most eloquent expression in the definition of education given by Rousseau when he said “let us obey the call of nature, we shall see that her yoke is easy and that when we give heed to her voice we find the joy in the answer of a good conscience\(^{28}\).

Aldus Huxley laid emphasis upon the social meaning of education, whereby it aims at making an individual fit in the society. He said “a perfect education is one

\(^{25}\) Plato Republic Jewett’s, p 416
\(^{26}\) Plato Laws Jewett’s p 653
\(^{27}\) Rusk R R The philosophical basis of Education (London University of London Press 1956) p 154
which trains up every human being to fit into the place he or she is to occupy in the social hierarchy, but without, in the process, destroying his or her individuality”29.

The foregoing definitions have stated that education is the process of development. Although the ability to learn depends upon development, but development is not synonymous with education. Development means the gradual and continuous progress of mind and body. The child acquires the following elements through development.

1. Knowledge of environment by which he is surrounded.
2. The necessary motor control to fulfill individual needs.
3. Some knowledge of individual and collective relationships.
4. Linguistic abilities to enable to converse.

The development of all these elements begins at home itself. The task of the teacher is to continue this process and to encourage it while the child is at school.

The process of development continues lifelong. It continues throughout an individual’s natural span of life. Even the teacher or educator himself remains a student throughout his life. He teaches to some people and also learns certain things from everyone and not only teachers30.

**Meaning of Education in India**

When we discuss about Indian approach to education, we have to include the spiritual aspect also. Yajnavalkya and Sri Sankaracharya considered that education leads to salvation. This tradition of giving importance to spiritual aspect of life continues till today. In the words of Altekar “education has always been regarded in

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29 Huxley, A proper studies (London, Chatto and Windus 1928) p 136
30 Indian philosophy of education p 11
India as source of illumination and power which transforms and enables our nature by the progressive and harmonious development of our physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual powers and faculties”\(^{31}\).

This spiritual tradition has been carried on by contemporary Indian philosophers of education, in their internal approach, synthesizing Idealism, Pragmatism, Rationalism and Humanism unity in diversity and harmony of the individual and society. It was due to this emphasis on the spiritual meaning of education that Swami Vivekananda said “Religion is the inner most core of education”\(^{32}\).

Aurobindo says “the child’s education ought to be an out bringing of all that is best, most powerful, most intimate and living in nature, mould into which the man’s action and development ought to run is that of innate quality and power. One must acquire new things but acquire them best, most wholly one the basis of individual development and inform force”\(^{33}\).

Similar ideas are expressed by Mahatma Gandhi on education. He says “By education I mean an all round drawing out of the best in child and man: body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education, not even beginning. It is the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education”\(^{34}\).

**Definition of Education**

According to G.R. Sharma, the following points concerning the meaning of education emerge from a review of the meaning of education in the west and in India.

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\(^{31}\) Altekar. A.S. Education in Ancient India (Benaras: The Indian Bookshop 1934) p 8

\(^{32}\) Vivekananada. S The Complete works (C.W) (Calcutta Advaita Ashram) vol 5 p 161

\(^{33}\) Aurobindo’s Essays on Gita ( Calcutta. Arya Publishing house 1949) p 319

\(^{34}\) Gandhi. M.K, Harijan 31-7-1937
1. **A lifelong process**

   According to most of philosophers education continues from birth to death. Madam Paul Richard pointed out, the education of man ‘should begin at his very birth and it is to continue the whole of life’\(^{35}\).

2. **Unfolding**

   Education is a gradual unfolding. In his allegory of the café, Plato observes “that the power and capacity of learning exists in the soul already and just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light, without the whole body, so too the instrument of knowledge can only, by the movement of the whole soul, be turned from the world of becoming into that of being and learn by degrees to endure the sight of being and of the brightest and best of being or in other words of the good”\(^{36}\). Aurobindo also expresses the similar opinion. He says “the chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for noble use”\(^{37}\).

3. **Based on Psychology**

   Western thinkers unanimously agreed that true education should be based on child psychology. Aurobindo also says “nothing can be taught to the mind which is not already concealed as potential knowledge in the unfolding soul of the creature”\(^{38}\). He considers that education must be based on sound psychology. Aurobindo says, opined that “The true basis of education is the study of the human mind, infant, adolescent and adult”\(^{39}\).

\(^{35}\) Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education (Pondichery. Sri Aurobindo Ashram 1972) first edition p 59  
\(^{36}\) Plato – Republic Jewett’s 518  
\(^{37}\) Aurobindo. S a system of National Education. (Calcutta: Arya Publishing house 1949) p5  
\(^{38}\) Aurobindo’s - The synthesis of Yoga (New York Sri Aurobindo Library. Inc 1950) p 2  
\(^{39}\) Sri Aurobindo. A system of National Education (Calcutta Arya Publishing house 1949) p 1
4. **Individual as well as social**

Recognizing this aspect Plato brought out a scheme of education in which he draws a scheme for the individual to serve the society. Many thinkers in the west have emphasized the individual as well as the social aims of education. M.K. Gandhi observes – “I value individual freedom, but you must not forget that man essentially a social being. He has risen to his present status by learning, to adjust his individuality to the requirements of social progress”\(^\text{40}\).

5. **Total Development**

Thus education is meant for total development, physical, mental, spiritual, individual as well as social development. The synthesis of the different aspects of man’s development is characteristic of not only idealism but also naturalism, pragmatism and realism. It is again the meaning of perfection. It is also what is known as complete education. It is also the humanist meaning of education since man is complex being having several, aspects of his personality all of which require full development\(^\text{41}\).

According to Aurobindo education should help individual growth, “into a fullness of physical and vital energy and utmost breath, depth and height of emotional, intellectual and spiritual being”\(^\text{42}\).

The total development lays equal emphasis upon physical as well as spiritual growth. In words of Aldous Huxley “where the body is maladjusted and under strain, the minds relations, sensory, emotional, intellectual, curative with external reality are likely to be unsatisfactory”\(^\text{43}\).

\(^{40}\) Gandhi M.K. Harijana 27-5-1939
\(^{41}\) Indian Philosophy of Education, p 13
\(^{42}\) Aurobindo. S Birth centenary Library Vol 15, 1971. p 605
\(^{43}\) Huxley A. Ends and means (London Chatto & Windus, 1951) p 220
The aim of education should be all round and total development and perfection of the individual and society. Hence physical culture also should form an important part of educational process. As Aurobindo aptly puts it “if seeking is for total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside, for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use”\(^{44}\).

We find such opinions, in abundance, in both the western and Indian philosophies of education. “The total development involves character development, development of social virtues and individual skills. It includes all the various aims of education. It involves all the functions of education in human life such as development of natural abilities, character building, personality integration, preparation for adult life, control and sublimation of basic instincts, education for useful citizenship, development of sense of community, progress of culture and civilization, social welfare. Use of leisure and synthesis of national as well as international consciousness”\(^{45}\).

The synthetic definition of education will be however put into practice according to indigenous philosophy of education. Though philosophy is universal, each society has developed a national philosophy characteristic of the thinking of a particular society. This is so since philosophical reflection does not act in vacuum but is very much influenced by the cultural ethos and social values of given society or a country.

Philosophy influences not only the world view but also the political, social, economic, religious, cultural and spiritual life of nation. But at the same time the cultural, social values and the history of a nation, influences the thought patterns of its philosophers.

\(^{44}\) The Supra Mental Manifestation (Pondicherry sri Aurobindo Ashram 1952) p 8

\(^{45}\) Indian Philosophy of Education. P-14
Indian philosophy of education is rooted in Indian culture. The basic characteristic of Indian culture is an integral approach to life. Therefore, only an Integral philosophy of education can suit Indian society. Indian philosophers have interpreted human nature as essentially good and divine. They have considered liberation as the goal of life.

On the human nature itself the Indian psychologist has always kept his eye on totality including physical, vital, mental psychical and spiritual aspects. He always aim at integral personality.

Indian thinkers have recognized the value of plurality, multiplicity and individuality as equally important expressions of the ultimate reality. Therefore, a philosophy of education, integral in aims curriculum, psychology, practice, teaching methods will alone suit Indian society.

Such integral, value oriented philosophy of education has been advanced in contemporary times by Swami Vivekananada, Aurobindo, Swami Dayananda, M.K. Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarvepalli Radha Krishnan, Pandit Jawharhar Lal Nehru and M.N. Roy. Of these the first six belong to ancient Indian tradition and the next two are influenced most by modern western thinking. However all these thinkers are humanist nationalists and aimed at educational and value regeneration of Indian society.