CHAPTER 9
THE IDEAL OF EDUCATION

Bajaji's concept of education is consistent with his concept of society according to which the society is an organic whole. The individual according to Bajaji, is not a mere 'scullion' mechanism, but is a complex formed by the material body acting under the directions of the spirit. Although his concept is idealistic, it is not just abstract to the extent of keeping education and society in two disconnected levels.

Learning should lead to a practical way of living towards progress and should not be restricted to academic level alone. Harmonious development of the various faculties of the individual and the various sections of the society of all ages should be the aim of education. The ideal of education should be to achieve happiness of each and every individual (sarva jana) and not just the Utilitarian maxim of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. It is with this point in view that he encouraged the development of education at all levels ranging from the child to the elderly persons. Whenever time permitted he devoted himself for the cause of adult education by conducting classes in his own house and in the Tiruchengode
Ashram. Not satisfied with his work in this field, he published some books for the cause of adult education. Rajaji believed in a qualitative and quantitative approach to education. It is qualitative in the sense that education should develop knowledge of the surrounding world combined with practical skill to solve situations keeping in mind the law of jharm. Rajaji's concept is quantitative in the sense that one should develop an interest for learning even after completing his formal education and at the social level all sections should be exposed to the benefits derived from good education. Such a concept agrees with a total social evolution of the society towards progress at all levels.

9.1 Principles of Education:

Rajaji analysed the fundamentals of education like, the basic theory behind teaching in schools and colleges, the quality of teachers and the content of education to build a society based on values. We see a number of similarities between Rajaji and masters of education theory like Plato, Aristotle and Bentham who gave much importance to the

### Adult Education Readers by Rajaji

**First Book:** Jñāni Mā

**Second Book:** Svarakshī Ballada

**Third Book:** Idairma Kaśi

(Nadiyan Bookhouse & Sons Ltd., dates and other data are not available)
affecteante way of training the child giving full recognition to the aptitude and individuality of the child. Education, according to Njaa, is not mere accumulation of knowledge. It should be a something more than mere addition of knowledge by way of stimulating the student to develop his or her capacity for learning. In the case of a passive system of teaching, one teaches only to add more details to the existing bits of information but the mind of the child remains inactive except for the process of simply recording what is said and trying to memorize them to please the teacher and certainly to avoid punishment. Njaa differentiates between the capacity to learn and the passive reception and recording of what is given to us in experience. He believes that education is a continuous process irrespective of whether one is through the stage of formal education or has completed formal education. If an individual is unable to solve situations without making use of his insight, then whatever he has learned is a waste to himself and to the country. More concentration on intellectual development leads more to an imbalance than adding any benefit to the learner. In his speeches meant for students and teachers, he brings out the value of a balanced education which can be seen from the following extract:

The education that we receive in schools and colleges is worth nothing if it does not prepare us for life. It is not a mere process of acquiring knowledge.
It is a process of acquiring the method of thinking, of correct feeling and correct action. If they keep this in mind, all colleges and schools, whatever their deficiencies, will do good, 2

Educating the child, says Anjaji, is a delicate task in that the child should be stimulated to develop interest instead of fear. Anjaji's approach is more inclined towards the psychoanalytic approach than the Pavlovian approach in that he believes in stimulating insight in the child and not merely in conditioning the child, which only reduces the learner to be a mechanical complex. The child with its curiosity, at times, shoots questions which are difficult to answer. In his own way, whenever possible, he devoted himself to the task of stimulating thought in children belonging to his household. He remarks, recollecting his own experience in this regard as follows: 'When showing something to my child,' he wrote in 1927, 'I have often observed him make a remark which ninety-nine percent of our teachers would have considered a mere child's vagary, whereas the fact was that the child was exercising most surprising memory.' He further remarked: 'That an enormous wrench from the right path the infant brain would have had, if, instead of perceiving the association, I had asked him for wondering.' 3

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Najaji believed in allowing children to have a free association of ideas, which when unchecked, lead to frustration. He further remarked, regarding the attitude and the equipment of primary school teachers, that some of them are 'intellectual assassins' in that they curb the child from exercising its intellect. Curiosity displayed by children is often misunderstood as a sign of mischief and impertinence prejudicing the discipline of the class.

More emphasis upon bookish learning creates monotony or at times a dichotomy between academic learning and practical life. On the lines of Beetham, Najaji believed in exposing the child to interesting stimuli and taking the child by stages from the familiar to the unfamiliar levels. Regarding the establishment of contact between theory and practice at all levels he observed:

In the years of childhood, it is the reaction to the external physical world that enables the child's talents to be evolved and to grow, and this is secured more by work and play than by a disproportionate concentration on the acquisition of the capacity to deal with written symbols. In the later years of education also actual contact with the external, be it worship, or in the laboratory, or in the playing field, is of the greatest importance as a necessary supplement to knowledge through words, written or spoken, lectures or books. 4

Najaji draws our attention to the habit of exercising

which produces sometory instead of interest and involvement among students. Anaji's theory of learning is not just academic but is based on his own experience and evidence produced by others after much scientific investigation. He refers to Prof. Lehmann, head of the Max Planck Institute in Germany and his co-worker, Prof. D.A. Mueller, who did much work in the impact of overdoing at the physiological and psychological level. Overdoing produces failure and in addition to that, may produce contra-indications, which he observes as follows:

"Our objects are so often frustrated by excess of application as by failure. Overdoing anything defeats its object. ... The main thing in training is that the learner should not reach the point of being tired. ... Overdoing is not merely purposeless, but self-defeating and productive of a contrary effect. Overmuch propaganda, for instance, for any cause, good or bad, leads to the opposite of what is intended. When a certain line is advanced, propaganda tends to induce a reaction of sympathy in favour of what is opposed, rather than for the view pressed forward."

Though the point looks simple, Anaji sees the importance of it in all fields from child training to the level of propaganda done by nations to justify their ideological position.

Having dealt with the aim and method of achieving good education, Anaji covers one more aspect, which is

neglected in many cases. Rajaji refers to the teacher as one who leads a noble life because of his sacrifice for the cause of disseminating knowledge. Rajaji refers to [*Tejpad*](#), which says that the teacher belongs to one of the thirty-six professions which are based on sacrifice and responsibility. This is made possible if the following point is understood and implemented in its true sense: "As much care and caution should be taken over the habits of thought and action of the persons recruited for holding teachers' and tutors' posts and other positions of authority in educational institutions, as over their exper qualifications in the realm of knowledge."7

Education should also be made free from commercial and political interests. It is interesting to note that a contemporary educationist refers to this point as follows:

John Dewey wrote that it follows from the notion that education of teachers consists in transmitting to them certain collections of fixed immutable subject matter which they in turn are to transmit to students, that the end result is propaganda, not education. 8

Education becomes effective only when the ideal of educating the next generation is entrusted to teachers who

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are devoted to the cause of knowledge and character and to agencies who do not make education a means for commercial or political interests.

9.2 Education for wisdom/dharma:

Rajaji's concept of improving the dharma of a society is based on education through stages, which is similar to Plato's concept of evolving a just state through stages of training. Physical fitness, knowledge of science, acquaintance in arts and finally training in morals and religion play a major role in shaping one's personality.

Being an admirer of Swami Vivekananda's Vedanta and Kautilya's Artha Æśāstra, Rajaji believes that a sound body and a sound mind go together. Addressing a boxing association in Bengal he commented as follows: "Boxing is good. It imbibes the young soul with grit and courage and carelessness of pain and develops a watchful eye and an agile body. These are invaluable. Nevertheless, keep the proper balance. A religious spirit and nobility of conduct should be developed alongside good boxing."9 Training in manual labour should go along with physical fitness to break some of our notions regarding the low status associated with manual work. "Our education seeks to convert the whole nation into a swarm of soft-job seekers. The distance for manual labour is thus

being steadily universalised by the 'education' we give in increasing measure. It is not my plea that education is bad, but what we give as 'education' is wrong. The progress achieved in some of the communist countries, Majaji says, is commendable in that they consider manual work as part of education.

Majaji maintained a 'living interest, not merely a temporary enthusiasm,' in science. Majaji felt that intellectual and scientific service is worse than social, economic and political service. Majaji is probably the first of the twentieth century reformers who tried to bring science to the lay men in vernacular. The following are some of the booklets produced by Majaji in easy Tamil:

1) Can it be done in Tamil?
2) Chemistry on the front Verandah
3) The domestic life of plants.

In October 1916 Majaji formed an association and started a journal, with K.S. Venkatarambier as the joint editor, named Journal of the Scientific Society, in which scientific literature was disseminated in simple Tamil for the benefit of the simple folk who had no knowledge of English. As for the value of science education, Majaji's attitude is revealed by the following statements: "It is wrong to think that science

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teaches only science. Science brings about a change in
the whole attitude of the young. It brings about correct
judgment, alertness and obedience to laws. In fact,
science is an excellent medium of culture for both boys
and girls.11 Rajaji acquired more knowledge in science
than was generally expected of a man of his stature. He
believed in making use of science for the benefit of
mankind and, of course, knew very well that science is a
bad master.

While sciences teach us knowledge of the external
world, art leads us to form a link between our mundane
existence and the level of pure joy that one derives under
inspiration. "A training in melody and rhythm certainly
helps in shaping character and behaviour better than
reiterated precepts. Music as well as dancing furnish a
most appropriate medium for the expression and cultivation
of pious and devotion."12 Subjecting art to extreme
analysis, Rajaji considers, is nothing but killing the life
in it and defeating the very purpose of art.

Rajaji is aware of the fact that a number of individuals
and associations thrive making much fuss about their work,

which may not have any relevance to the contemporary society. According to Anjali such an enterprise is a selfish pursuit and a national waste. In his Jail Notes dated 5.2.1922, he makes the following remark as to how one should utilise his spare time:

There are so many books I have not read. If I kept reading them, no one would accuse me of misusing my time. However, when one seriously considers the matter, one must come to this conclusion, that at a time of life when you know for certain that additional learning will only make you die more learned, and not enable you to do anything further useful to mankind, or to correct your character in any manner, it is mere self-indulgence and folly to be reading books, if you can spend the time otherwise in producing or doing something useful to man. Under the circumstances, helping to produce a yard of cloth or a handful of food is a much more meritorious and proper, though illiterate, act, than merely to acquire knowledge which you know will be sterile and pass away with you in smoke and dust when you lay your

Anjali is not against those whose work in pure science or art who can produce something useful to mankind. Anjali, who translated Sankara's Bhajapaivima in mind the fact that some of the intellecturals are prone to become arrogant because of their little immature knowledge. Education without service is just a waste and such people who claim academic privy are only segregating themselves from public life out of selfishness.

Bajaji believed that: "The most important equipment that a young man must get before he leaves his university is personality, not learning, but character." As one who believed in making a moderate approach Bajaji insisted upon introducing moral education to set right the axiological imbalance at the university level. Moral education is something that cannot be achieved just by lecturing or by crash-courses in a system of values. Training should be capable of achieving the desired result namely, that of developing, in the minds of youngsters, a love for truth and revulsion from falsehood. Bajaji repeatedly warned us that knowledge and virtue are not always the same.

The knowledge, that is merely so much undigested information crammed into the mind, cannot instil virtue. It is just an outward show like our clothes and is no real part of us.

It is interesting to note that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa used to tell his disciples that intellectuals without virtue are similar to vultures which soar high, but still, having an eye on the ground in search of some rotten piece of meat. Knowledge without virtue could prove more dangerous in that it becomes a subordinate to passions of a selfish and cruel nature. Organised crime and knowledge of


destructive weapons is a standing example for unguided intelligence and knowledge.

Virtue acquired by ignorance is equally dangerous in that an exposure to life of senses will cause an easy break down of such virtue. The story of Bhaktivinoda in Samayana is a typical case of such a failure. As for sex education Rajaji says, that literature producing more excitement is of a dangerous quality when compared to genuine scientific literature. There is some similarity between Gandhiji and Rajaji in this regard, which can be understood from the following remark made by Gandhiji: "Sexual science is of two kinds, that which is used for controlling and that which is used to stimulate and feed it. Instruction in the former is an necessary a part of child's education as the latter is harmful and dangerous..." 16 Pornographic literature, says Rajaji, thrives on the weakness of man than on reason. He cites the case of literature produced in America of such a nature that would weaken the nation's effort. In this regard Rajaji appreciates the stand taken by communist countries which prohibit such literature as would weaken the will of the people. Rajaji comments on the ill-effects of pornographic literature as follows:

All-absorbing lusts and passions necessarily displace and undermine the energy needed for patriotic effort. Brahmacharya is the fountain of vitality for nations as of individuals. Pornography is, therefore, a terrible fifth column endangering national security, even if it be not an evil by neo-moral tests. Something should be done to bring more wisdom to bear on the issue and bring this increasing misuse of freedom to a stop. 17.

We have to strike a balance between virtue and knowledge without misguiding youngsters into false notions on certain fields of knowledge.

As a means to solve the situation Rajaji suggests the introduction of moral education in combination with religious instruction. As the child does not receive at home the proper religious education that is necessary for its development, Rajaji suggests that religious education should be imparted in schools to compensate for this imbalance. It may be urged by some that teaching religion leads to religious factions, for which Rajaji suggests that freedom should be given to children to pursue their own faith without any external compulsion. It is also possible to expose some of the common tenets of the major religions where there is no conflict between different faiths.

No subject stimulated so much debate in the

legislative assembly and public platforms as Rajeji's concept of basic education. What was evolved by Rajeji out of humility and concern for the social good, later on provided plenty of ammunition to his opponents in attacking him from different angles mere to excite and divide the public than to enlighten them. Rajeji was called conservative and a kulhara bhatta on the ground that he rised at preventing the upward movement of people in the lower rungs of the social ladder.

In the pre-independence days the freedom-fighters, under the leadership of the pioneers gave much thought to the question of basic education to be imparted to our students. The result was Gandhiji's Nai Talim (meaning new education), which he himself tried in South Africa. Rajeji tried to implement this system when he became the Chief Minister of the Madras State.

Rajeji appointed a committee headed by Dr. A.L. Mudaliar, to go into the content and manner of school education and suggest ways and means of carrying out the objectives of the Article 45 of the Indian Constitution. The committee

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19. Article 45: Provision for free compulsory education for children. The state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children.
examine the problem and submitted a report according to which over-emphasis on bookish learning should be eliminated and adequate training must be provided to pupils in manual work and crafts so as to equip them with the necessary skills to take up different professions and trades and also to promote a sensitive awareness for the dignity of labour. The committee recommended that the student will attend school for one session, in the forenoon or afternoon, and incidentally the school will work in two shifts to accommodate more students. During each session some students will be attending class room teaching and the remaining students will be taken out to farms, cottage industries or apprenticed to tradesmen or home crafts. Favouring this report Majaji introduced a bill to implement the new scheme of education which he called the modified scheme of Elementary Education. Some of the sections launched an agitation charging Majaji of perpetuating casteism. High passions have been roused in the Legislative Assembly questioning the loyalty of the scheme to the purpose of education. The matter was referred to the Central Board of Education, which immediately endorsed the scheme as competent to bring into practice the objectives stated in the Article 43 of the Constitution.

The main objection was that the new scheme would
undermine the objectives of Article 46, which aims at protecting scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and the weaker sections from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

One member of the Legislative Assembly referred to the modified Scheme of Elementary Education as an attempt by the government crying 'to catch fishes without wetting their paws.' The member said that according to the new scheme, the work load of teachers would be increased and also remarked that many school children were loitering in the streets.31 Sri S.D. Dassanathan observed that the son of a labourer has to be apprenticed to work as a labourer only, losing scope for further development. He felt that great injustice was aimed at the weaker sections through the introduction of the new scheme of education.32

Bajaji's justification for the introduction of the modified Scheme of Elementary Education is not baseless. It would be interesting to note that Bajaji's reforms in education bear some similarities to those of Bentham's work in this line. Bentham called his system Crematism, which takes into consideration the following basic principles:

i) teach first through those which are the easiest to learn

ii) pay the regard to the learners' capacity and do not force him contrary to his aptitude and his natural inclination.

iii) education should lead to _practical skill_.


22. Ibid., p.1174.
Even in England higher education was inaccessible to the poor in those days. Bentham devised a system of education which would at least provide them with some basic skills in crafts and enough education to read and write so that their business activities could be carried out with ease.

Though Bentham's system and Rajaji's new scheme do not show complete agreement, their basic motives are the same in that, they aimed at helping the poor. The charge that they looked at the poor as a segregated group is wrong, because, at least in their system there is some scope for the weaker and poorer sections to learn some trade and also gain some progress in academics. Otherwise the children of the poorer sections would not attend the schools.

Rajaji differs from Bentham in that Rajaji is more democratic and more considerate in his approach. While Bentham showed a dichotomy between the poorer classes and the rich, Rajaji wanted to introduce his system to all students irrespective of class and status. India being a poor country should have a system of basic education with minimum expenditure. Basic education should be such that all students should be exposed to the basic requirements for survival through some manual skill. Whether a student is rich or poor, belongs to a 'higher' or 'lower' caste, learning the basic skills is not a waste or in detrimental
to one's development. It is clear that the basic scheme evolved forms the base of the pyramid of education and skills to be acquired, which may later develop into specialization.

Hajaji differentiates between what goes by the name 'education' and real 'learning'. He aimed at real 'learning' and not mere bookish education, which creates a hatred towards manual work.

The existing pattern of education left by the Britisher aimed at making everyone a clerk in an office. From a practical point of view all the people cannot be recruited in the offices nor can we expect the government to create office jobs for all the people. His scheme prepared the student to stand on his own legs without depending too much upon the various employment agencies.

Instead of loading the child's mind with too many ideas, the new scheme provides an alternation between mental and physical work which also promotes 'spaced learning'.

The financial restrictions and limited resources are such that the new scheme would provide for educating more students by utilising the same school premises and other resources. This approach provides plenty of scope for realising the objective stated in Article 45 of the Indian Constitution.

In some of the poor families, sending children to the
school affects the earnings of the family and consequently the parents prefer to retain their children at home. The new scheme provides scope for combining earning and learning in a balanced way without affecting either the family trade or the education of the child.

The 'Chalk and talk' method has a tendency to produce an air of idealism and does not reach practical life. Anajall says that there is a difference between theoretical learning and attaining practical skills. Taking the example of making pots, an elaborate lecture on pottery cannot excel the benefits derived from actually watching and working on clay. Thus concepts come in last of precepts the rate of learning at the elementary school is limited. The new scheme aimed at direct learning by bringing the pupil into contact with actual working conditions. Even coming to the principles of learning, it is easier to show things to children and make them take interest in work than to teach them unfamiliar concepts. Basic education provides plenty of scope for finding out the learner's aptitude. We have a number of examples of people who join professional courses with more theoretical background than practical training before being admitted to these courses. The students later on discover that they are not suited for such courses, probably because of unsuitability of aptitude.
Training in the real sense should aim at making the student gain versatile skill, which Anajji says, was maintained in the traditional society, referring to Lakshmana’s skill in constructing a thatched shed. Anajji comments as follows:

We may infer that in those days education even of princes included a knowledge of the realities of life and development of manual skills such as could enable one to collect materials in a forest and put up a neat cottage for oneself. 29

Anajji differentiates between the two concepts 'activity' and 'work'. While 'activity' will mean anything that keeps one engaged, 'work' refers to useful and productive activity. Instead of wasting time in non-productive activities, learning and working keep pupils engaged in enlightened activity which is productive and conducive to skilful activity.

As for the charge of casteism, Anajji takes a practical stand. Helping one’s parents does not always mean maintaining casteism. Instead of searching for jobs after education, a student is allowed at least to learn some skills in the trade or crafts already established as part of the parent’s economic system. If the student has the aptitude and scope for higher levels of education, he has ample scope to raise his professional capacity by virtue of his education.

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Each of those who step with basic education are made fit to take up some trade. Rajaji does not say that a labourer's son should become only a labourer. Assisting his father does not in any way disqualify the student from going higher up in education or in choosing an administrator's job. In the absence of the new scheme the student who steps with basic education becomes unfit for anything, even to take up his father's vocation. Rajaji's scheme definitely provides scope for greater employment potential at all levels of education both within the parent's vocation and outside.

He comments as follows:

My opponents may argue that I might be doing good to the poor but that I am still caste-conscious. They may even go to the extent of saying that I do not like to see any person belonging to another caste coming up or prospering. That is a wrong charge, and I can only pity those who believe this. This again only shows that all the propaganda which is being carried on to remove caste distinctions has only resulted in aggravating the differences.

Contrary to the charge of elitism, Rajaji suggested that teaching skills and handicrafts could be entrusted to skilled craftsmen instead of the so-called trained teachers who have not acquired manual skills to work on materials.

As an answer to his critics Rajaji said that he did a right thing in consulting educationists and not

24. C. Rangaswami, "Public meeting to explain the new scheme of education at Madras, Rajaji's Speeches, Vol.XII, p.115.
newspaper editors whose only concern is improvement of sales.

His message on education is that we will have to face the difficult process of unlearning before we really learn. He did not believe in miracles which promised to change the society overnight. "Folly must be replaced by reason, passion must be put aside in favour of reflection, ideals must be installed where caprices govern, in fact principles must prevail, not opportunism." 