CHAPTER FIVE

PRAGMATISM IN EDUCATION

I. Introduction

Pragmatism is midway between Naturalism and Idealism. It believes that only those theories are true which work in practical situations. To it problem of the moment is more important than that of the future. It believes that ideals are to be achieved here and now. It takes one thing at a time and tries to solve its problems cooperatively. Its aim is to prepare the child for membership in a modern community. It is against objective information. It believes in the usefulness and practical utility of subjects. It also stands for the principle of correlation and integration. It accepts whole-hearted purposeful creative activity proceeding in a social environment. It is the dynamic philosophy of education.
Its main tenents are as follows:

Pursuit of truth is the aim of life and of education, not the idealistic truth but the practical truth. Truth is that which works. It is man made. There is no absolute truth. It is relative. There are no fixed or final values, no ultimate goals, no absolute reality. Mind is an instrument evolved in the process of life. Change and novelty are the rules of life.

1. Aims of Education. - Education is its own end. Aims are revised as the child advances in growth. There can be no fixed aims in advance. Human welfare or better living may be taken as the aim. Education is growth. Education is bounded by here and now. Education should not be preparation for life but life itself. Individuality and freedom are the educational aims. Use and growth of intelligence should be promoted. Better living and democratic ideals are the aims of education.

2. Principles of Learning. - It believes in learning by doing both in group and in individual projects. 'Learning by doing', 'Learning by activity' and 'Do and learn' are the main principles of learning.
3. Methods of Teaching. - It follows the project method or experimental activity method leading to integration. It follows the problem-solving method and believes in action rather than reflection. It stands for practical work rather than book-reading. It believes in laboratory rather than in library. According to it listening is no learning and lecturing is no teaching; but doing is learning and discussing is teaching. If a belief works we have a moral right to hold it. It accepts the method of integration and cares for studies. Pragmatic or practical methods relate learning to the life of the pupils. A project is a purposeful activity carried on in a life situation; e.g. playing at families, shops, farms, post office, self-government in schools, etc. They believe in the activity schools and not in listening schools.

4. Curriculum. - It believes in core-curriculum and not in subject matter curriculum. It follows a suggested list of project activities. It follows activity curriculum and not in water-tight subject-matter curriculum. There should be no external examinations according to this school.
5. Discipline. - It believes in discipline by free will and in social discipline, not imposed by an external authority; but the child voluntarily imposes it upon himself. Learning and teaching should be motivated by child interest and purposes.

6. The Role of the Teacher. - The teacher is to be a guide, a coworker and a participant. He is the adviser and a guide and not a spectator as in Naturalism, and he is to make the child competent to deal with the problems of later life.

II. Aims of Education

1. Introduction. - Aims of education in the beginning of the nineteenth century were not very clear. The conflict between the Orientalists and Occidentalists was going on. Some wanted to preserve and develop the trends of Oriental education while others were in favour of English education and Western sciences. This conflict was going on for a long time and at last was finally settled by Macaulay by the introduction of English education and Western sciences.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar were for English education as they were practical and
pragmatists in their outlook; but the first trend of Pragmatism is seen in the educational philosophy of Keshav Chandra Sen. He introduced some crafts in his educational system thus making education practical and utilitarian. It may not be called Pragmatism in the real sense of the term; but the trend is no doubt Pragmatic. The following makes his aim clear.

2. Keshav Chandra Sen's Contributions.

"The Industrial school gave instruction to gentlemen of the middle classes in useful arts with a view to train for independent occupations. It is to be hoped", says Keshav Chandra Sen, "that with such taste and training they will be able not only to benefit themselves by earning independent livelihood but also to confer lasting benefit on their country by prompting its material resources. The young men of higher classes may also find in this school opportunities of learning useful arts for purposes of utility and pleasure". 1

Swami Dayananda's gurukula system does believe in manual work and in close contact with Nature as the aims of education. Community life is also a chief aim in this school of thought.

1P. K. Sen, Kesub Chander Sen, p.106.
3. Swami Vivekananda's Contributions. - Swami Vivekananda has tried to develop some pragmatic trends of aims in education as he believed in dignity of work and utility of play. He advocated the education of hand, heart and head for the progress of the individual and of the nation. Vivekananda held that in true education all that we have to do is to ensure that children may learn to apply their own intellect to the proper use of their hands, ears and eyes. Better living was his aim.

4. Dr. Annie Besant's Contributions. - Dr. Annie Besant believed in "Paying special attention to manual and technical training, to science applied to agriculture and manufacture and to Indian arts and crafts so as to revive these decaying industries, while bringing from the West all that can usefully be assimilated for the increasing of national prosperity".²

While drafting the powers of the Benares Hindu University which was to be established she says -

The university shall have the powers to impart and promote the imparting of education, literary, artistic, and scientific as well as technical, commercial and professional on national lines and under national control.3

Her second aim was -

To promote and encourage the study chiefly of such branches of the Arts, Sciences, Industries and Commerce as are best calculated to develop the material resources of the country.4

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya who carried on her work in the Benares Hindu University placed great stress on higher technical education and on scientific and technological education.

5. Rabindra Nath Tagore's Contributions. - Though Tagore was an Internationalist and a Spiritualist, he had some pragmatic aims of education too. Humayun Kabir says, "Tagore had a deep sense of the spiritual nature of man, but gave almost equal importance to his material needs."5 Again he says -

3Ibid.
4Ibid.
Education cannot be merely abstract and intellectual. Tagore held that education to be truly creative should be in full touch with the complete life of the people.

Harmony and integrated personality of the child is the aim of his educational philosophy.

6. Dr. Dhondo Keshav Karve’s Contributions. - Dr. Karve tried to make women’s education as pragmatic as it was possible. His aim was most practical and utilitarian education for women in existing Indian conditions and circumstances. His aim was to make them ideal housewives and good mothers in Indian homes.

7. Sri Aurobindo’s Contributions. - Sri Aurobindo is a spiritualist but he has also accepted practical outlook in educational aims to a certain extent. We cannot see much of pragmatism in his educational aims as he is more or less an Internationalist and a Supernaturalist rather than a Pragmatist. Introduction of Arts and Crafts and importance of science and technical education indicate his pragmatic aim.

8. Mahatma Gandhiji's Contributions. - Most of the educationists in the present century aim at arts and crafts in education; but Gandhiji has been one of the greatest Pragmatists in India. He aims at education through craft, Nature and community life. Education through craft and not with craft is his aim. His another aim was to make education self-supporting and to prepare ideal citizens. His ultimate aim was to create a co-operative commonwealth without any exploitation. Sarvodaya or the uplift of all through education was his highest ambition and aim in life.

9. Conclusion. - Thus we have seen that pragmatism reached its climax in the educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Dr. Zakir Hussin is the main architect of the Wardha scheme. Dr. S.P. Radhakrishnan and Maulana Azad have contributed their share to formulate the aims and objectives of this national scheme of Indian education. Modern India has been greatly under the influence of this Gandhian school of educational thought.

India has become free from the foreign rule; but she has not become free from the economic poverty and illiteracy. India has got enough of man-power which
can be utilized for the welfare of the nation. Gandhian school of educational thought aims at making the best use of the men, money and material for the national and individual prosperity. So creative, productive arts and crafts are introduced to cultivate the faculties of children. Creative arts and productive crafts are at the centre, community life and close contact with the surrounding nature also aim at practical development of the all sided development of the pupils. Better living and democratic ideals are the aims of education according to this school of thought.

III. Methods of Learning

1. Introduction. - Learning by doing was first introduced by Keshav Chandra Sen in his night schools for the labouring classes where he had introduced craft education for them. It was further developed by the gurukula system of Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Dignity of labour, personal hygiene and manual work are here accepted as the part and parcel of their educational programme. Pupils residing in the gurukula are supposed to do all practical work necessary for the welfare of the community. They come into close contact with the nature around and learn much directly from nature and the community life.
2. Swami Vivekananda's Views. - Swami Vivekananda advocates two methods of learning. The first is concentration on the point of study and the second is the detachment from all other things at that particular point. He says that the power of concentration is the only key to the treasure house of knowledge. He also advocates celebacy and faith as the principles of learning.

Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose accepts observation, experimentation and varification as the scientific methods of learning as he was a great scientist himself. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya accepted scientific methods of learning so far as technical, scientific and technological subjects are concerned. Dr. Dhondo Keshav Karve accepted the principles of learning by doing and learning by productive and creative activity so far as the subjects like Fine arts, Home science and Domestic science were concerned. Thus "Do and learn" has been accepted by him as the method of learning.

3. Mahatma Gandhiji's Contributions. - The greatest Pragmatist in the real sense of the term has been Mahatma Gandhiji. He believes in learning by doing both in group and in individual projects. Craft centred
education, learning by correlation with craft, community and the Nature are the fundamental principles of learning accepted by him. Learning by experience, practical work, solution of life problems in actual practical situations are some of the ways of learning according to him. The same views have been supported by his followers like Dr. Zakir Hussain and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

4. **Conclusion.** - Dr. S.P. Radhakrishnan has also supported the views on these methods of learning in his life and work. In short the activity school of Basic education has the dynamic methods of learning. John Dewey accepts learning by doing as the method of learning; but Gandhiji has added even one step more and he accepts learning by creative or productive work as the method of learning. The activity must be purposeful and creative. Thus Gandhiji does not accept mere playway method of learning if it is not practical and utilitarian in its outlook. Gandhiji's Pragmatic outlook towards life and education, his practical, realistic and utilitarian approach to the problems of life and education have made him a Pragmatist in the real sense of the term. No other Indian educationist has been so clear
in his approach and so systematic, scientific and methodical in formulating the system of education as he has been in modern India; so far as pragmatism in Indian education is concerned.

IV. Methods of Teaching

1. Introduction. - Methods of teaching in the gurukula system have been more or less traditional so far as the ordinary subjects are concerned. Direct touch and personal attention to the needs and problems of the pupils are the methods of teaching generally adopted. Example is better than precept and the character and the personality of the teacher directly or indirectly influences the pupils inside and outside the class-room. Community life in the midst of natural surroundings and manual work provide sufficient situations for teaching the right ways to the pupils.

2. Swami Vivekananda's Contributions. - Swami Vivekananda also encouraged teaching by accepting dignity of labour and manual work. Education of hand, heart and head was advocated by him giving it a practical and utilitarian outlook. Schools conducted by the Ramakrishna Mission encourage service to humanity and community which is an accepted principle of modern
progressive education and pragmatism.

3. Dr. Annie Besant's Contributions. - Special attention to manual and technical training, applied sciences, agriculture and manufacture in education was started by Dr. Annie Besant. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya strongly supported it.

4. Rabindra Nath Tagore's Contributions. - About the method of education he says,

To offer instruction on any question before it has really arisen in the mind is like giving food before one is hungry; it spoils the appetite and leads to indigestion.?

The teaching activities of the Vishva-Bharati may be grouped under four heads:

(1) The cultural and academic work in Shantiniketan.

(2) The Rural Reconstruction activities at Sriniketan.

(3) Village industries at Shilpa-Bhavan.

(4) Research work.

Thus we get some idea about his pragmatic methods of teaching in his educational institutions.

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Rabindra Nath Tagore, Gora. London: Macmillan and Co., 1946. p.120.
5. **Mahatma Gandhiji's Contributions.** - Methods of teaching advocated by Mahatma Gandhiji are purely pragmatic in outlook and in practice. His educational philosophy follows experimental method, the problem-solving method or the Project method. It believes in action rather than reflection. It stands for practical work rather than book reading. It believes in laboratory work rather than in library. According to Gandhiji purposeful creative activity gives concrete and realistic experience to the pupils. To create helpful situations to get necessary experience of practical problems in day to day life is the method of teaching. Correlation of the central-craft with all the allied subjects is the right method of teaching. Teaching through craft, community life and natural surroundings with practical experience is the right way of teaching to him. He believes in work rather than in words. The teacher has to direct and guide with personal attention in the experimental work of the pupils.

6. **Conclusion.** - Thus we have tried to see the evolution of the pragmatic teaching methods throughout the period. They started with the beginning of the nineteenth century and have reached their climax in
the educational philosophy of Basic education started by Gandhiji and developed by his followers.

V. Curriculum

1. Introduction. - In the beginning of the nineteenth century there was no pragmatic curriculum followed in India. We have seen that some crafts were introduced by Keshav Chandra Sen in his night schools for the labouring classes. He introduced carpentry, tailoring, watch-repairing, printing, lithography and engraving.

2. Dayananda Saraswati's Contributions. - Dayananda Saraswati introduced subjects like modern sciences and research work in his gurukula system. The whole daily routine of the gurukula life is pragmatic as it teaches by experience various things the pupils are supposed to do as a part of their duty. This system has tried to encourage and enforce the study of English literature and sciences, both theoretical and applied. Thus it has tried to accept the pragmatic curriculum to a certain extent.

3. Pandit Malaviya. - Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Dr. Annie Besant have also accepted scientific, technical and technological subjects in their curriculum.
4. **Dr. Annie Besant's Contributions.** - Dr. Annie Besant lays down a curriculum for the education of women. She says -

Let us then put down in order the essentials of education which is desirable for Indian girls.

1. Religious and moral education.
2. Literary education
3. Scientific education
   (a) Knowledge of sanitary laws.
   (b) The value of food stuffs.
   (c) Simple medicines, first aid in accidents, nursing the sick.
   (d) Cookery of more delicate kind.
   (e) Household management and keeping of accounts.
4. Artistic education.
5. Physical education.

5. **Rabindra Nath Tagore's Contributions.** - The Vishva-Bharati contains -

1. The rural Reconstruction activities in the surroundings villages, having their headquarters at Shriniketan with its farm and dairy.
2. Village Industries with their workshops in carpentry, weaving, leather-craft, pottery, etc. at Shilpa-Bhavan.

Thus we can say that Rabindra Nath Tagore accepted the principle of pragmatic curriculum also.

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6. **Dr. Dhondo Keshav Karve's Contributions.** - Dr. Karve has introduced decorative arts like drawing, painting, sewing, knitting and embroidery for school girls. He also tried to develop their innate capacities by introducing fine arts like singing and music. He is of the opinion that Home science, Social sciences, Science of health and hygiene, study of child nature and Psychology and Sociology have a great educative value for women's education.

7. **Mahatma Gandhi's Contributions.** - Almost all these modern Indian educationists have tried to advocate education with arts and crafts of some utility in practical life; but the idea of education through craft was not much developed till then. With the advent of the Gandhian school of educational philosophy we get the idea of education through craft, community life and natural surroundings. This has evolved modern pragmatism in India. This system of education does not believe in subjectwise curriculum. It believes in core-curriculum. It follows a suggested list of craft-activities as projects.

The following items are included in the syllabus of the Basic National Education:
All these subjects are to be taught in correlation with the central-craft, Nature and community life. Dr. Zakir Hussain and Maulana Azad have tried their level best to develop the curriculum on the above lines.

8. Conclusion. - Thus we have seen that the curriculum started by Keshav Chandra Sen with some pragmatic outlook was further developed by his successors one by one and it has reached its climax in the educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.

This curriculum is based on the principle of rural reconstruction. So village and cottage industries like farming, gardening, spinning, weaving and wood-work etc. find their place in this curriculum. The curriculum touches every aspect of human life and tries to solve human problems both individual and collective by
practical and useful methods. Thus pragmatic curriculum has reached its climax of development in the educational philosophy of Basic education in India.

VI. Discipline

1. Introduction. - The beginning of the nineteenth century did not bother much about discipline; because the problem was not so acute as only those who wanted to learn would go to school. The question becomes important as soon as mass education comes in. Residential students have to undergo certain rules of discipline. Let us see the viewpoints of our various educationists on this aspect of education.

2. Swami Dayananda Saraswati's Views. - The gurukula system of Swami Dayananda meant residential schools for the pupils. Here the pupils are supposed to observe certain rules of discipline. Mass prayers are compulsory for the inmates of the gurukula. Brahmacharya or celibacy was the strict rule to be observed by all the pupils. Rites and rituals followed in the gurukula are observed by all of them. Thus we can say that external discipline imposed upon the students is to be observed here which is against the very principle of pragmatism.
3. Swami Vivekananda's Views. - Swami Vivekananda believed in self-discipline in education. It should come from within and should not be imposed from without. He laid great stress on concentration, detachment and character.

4. Rabindra Nath Tagore's views. - Rabindra Nath Tagore has made a good contribution to the problems of discipline. He believes in free discipline. The discipline in Shantiniketan is free and self-imposed. There is no outside force to enforce it. There is co-education and as a rule pupils like to behave properly in the presence of the members of the opposite sex. The residential students of his schools have a great respect for their teachers and the teachers in their turn have great love for their pupils and great devotion for their work. The hunger and thirst for true knowledge brings in self-discipline.

5. Sri Aurobindo's Views. - Sri Aurobindo believes in free discipline. There are only a few rules and regulations to be observed by the residential pupils. No politics is allowed in the ashrama premises and strict Brahmacharya or continence in the ashrama schools
is another strict rule to be observed. Otherwise pupils of both the sexes can meet and talk and mix freely without any restriction. There is co-education throughout in this school of philosophy and no sex differences are accepted for any field in education. Mass drills and gymnastic training for all gives the pupils necessary sense of self-discipline and no strict rules are to be framed for the violation of such conventions and traditions.

The fact is that the great reverence for the Mother at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry is itself enough for any impulse of indiscipline to be controlled. The great influence of the Master - Sri Aurobindo is visible in each and every activity of the pupils. Self-discipline, free discipline is the best discipline as the whole atmosphere here is full of love and devotion for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. And the love of the Mother for her children is equally great and overwhelming. So no artificial rules and regulations are required to impose discipline on the freely moving and playing children who are growing naturally in their own natural course under the loving guidance and supervision of their respected teachers. This is their philosophy of discipline in education.
But the climax of free-discipline according to pragmatism would be found in the Basic educational schools run on Gandhian ideology.

6. Mahatma Gandhiji's Contributions. - Basic educational philosophy believes in discipline by free will and it believes in social discipline, not imposed by an external authority; but the child voluntarily imposes it upon himself. Discipline according to Gandhiji comes naturally from within. Interest in work and the development of the project undertaken is enough to inspire necessary self-discipline. Lively atmosphere in the classroom is not a breach of discipline as it was thought according to the old conception of discipline. Pin-drop silence in the classroom was formerly considered to be the ideal state of discipline; but now in the activity school of thought everyone including the teacher is supposed to be active; so nobody is free to indulge in indiscipline unless he is not interested in his work. Then it is the duty of the teacher to create in the pupil love for work that he likes and try to solve the problem by engaging him in the type of work he is most interested in. Of course, there are limits to all solutions and so there are here also; but
generally it works on sound principles of self-imposed discipline.

VII. The Role of the Teacher

1. Introduction. - The role of the teacher according to Pragmatism is that of a guide, a co-worker and a participant. Our ancient traditional teacher was considered to be a hard taskmaster. Swami Dayananda and Swami Vivekananda would accept a teacher as a friend, philosopher and guide of the pupils. The same is the case with Dr. Annie Besant and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. But none of them is a pragmatist in the truest sense of the term. Vivekananda believed in the strength of character on the part of the teacher.

2. Rabindra Nath Tagore's Views. - It was Rabindra Nath Tagore who was the first to oppose the traditional and conventional strictness of the school teacher. In his school days he was horrified at the sight of the strictness and rigid discipline of the school which would not allow the pupils to have a happy time and joyful free play. So he established the school where children could play at their will and learn in the most joyful and inspiring atmosphere. The teacher must be a man of strong and pure character who can influence and
inspire his pupils to climb higher summits of mountains of knowledge, character and power. He believes in the ancient Indian culture and civilisation and in the traditional teachers like Vasishtha and Bhishma. So the teacher in his school should not demand but should command respect from the pupils by his own personal strength of character and sincerity of purpose in his daily work. The teacher has to inspire and influence the pupils to open the doors of knowledge for them.

3. Sri Aurobindo’s Views. - The teacher or the role of the teacher according to Sri Aurobindo is really very great. He believes in the traditional greatness of the teacher who helps, guides, inspires and influences the pupils by the strength of his character and deep knowledge of the subjects concerned. The teacher has to be able to create interest in the pupils and then everything will be set aright. He must acquire the powers to mould the character of the pupils.

4. Mahatma Gandhiji’s School of Basic Education. - This is the only full-fledged school of Pragmatism in India. The teacher in a Basic school is not supposed to be a specialist of a subject; but he is supposed to be all-round. He must be an experienced and trained hand so that he may be able to face any problem at any
time in the class-room or in the workshop. He should be able to correlate one subject with the other in a natural way. He must know the crafts fully well himself so that he may be able to guide his pupils whenever they find any difficulty in their practical work. All subjects are to be correlated with the central craft, community life and the nature all around. Thus he must be a man of varied interest and with dynamic personality. He should be able to guide to and work with the pupils whenever necessary. He is one of the participants in the project undertaken or in the craft work that is being carried out.

VIII. Conclusion

Thus we have seen that pragmatic trends found here and there were organised and synthesised by the educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi in a scientific and systematic form. Trends of Pragmatism were visible from the educational philosophy of Keshav Chandra Sen. They were further developed by Swami Dayananda and Swami Vivekananda in their own spiritual background. Dr. Annie Besant and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya have supported it in their own way and Rabindra Nath Tagore has tried to put it into actual practice to a great extent in his
educational institutions. Though he was a spiritual internationalist, he has tried to be practical and realistic in his outlook towards education. Dr. D.K. Karve has tried to help the evolution of Pragmatism by introducing practical arts and crafts for women's education. His practical and utilitarian outlook has helped the evolution of pragmatism to a great extent. Last but not the least Mahatma Gandhi brought it to the climax of its evolution. Indian pragmatism has reached the highest point of its evolution in the Basic educational philosophy initiated by Gandhiji and supported and developed by the band of workers of his school of thought like Dr. Zakir Hussain, Maulana Azad, Vinoba Bhave and others.

Looking to the evolution of important aspects of Pragmatism in India we can say that Basic educational philosophy which rightly represents Indian Pragmatism believes that truth is what works. Its educational aim is better living and democratic ideals. It believes in democratic society, in freedom, justice and progressive individuality. It believes in learning by doing both in group and in individual projects. It follows the experimental activity method leading to integration.
Here craft work serves the purpose of the project method. The teacher is to be a guide, a co-worker and a participant in this system of educational philosophy. It believes in core-curriculum, and not in subject matter curriculum. It follows a suggested list of project activities in craft and in community life. It holds that a belief is to be held if it works. Morality here is considered to be a social necessity. It believes in secular education. It is a dynamic philosophy of life and education. Projects, activities and core-curriculum need greater attention in our primary and secondary education. It believes in discipline by free will and in social discipline, not imposed by an external authority; but the child voluntarily imposes it upon himself.

Thus we can say that Pragmatism in Indian educational philosophy has reached its climax in the Gandhian school of thought. Inspite of all its drawbacks and defects in its present working it has a sound educational philosophy behind it.