SYNOPSIS

on

EDUCATION AND VALUES IN MODERN INDIAN THOUGHT

(A Study with reference to selected Eminent Thinkers)

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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 practices between the ancient and modern thinkers. This is the foundation of contemporary Indian Philosophy of Education.

MEANING OF EDUCATION IN INDIA AND THE WEST:

When the word is accepted in its more liberal meaning, an individual imbibes education at all times and places. Education is not merely confined to the classroom, it can be obtained from all and even from nature.

Education has been defined differently by idealists, 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.

The work refers to some eminent thinkers of the west and their definitions of Education, which are based on their philosophical positions. Then it refers to some views of Eminent Indian thinkers on Education, which can be considered as integral, value oriented philosophy of Education. This is introductory chapter.

The work is divided into IX chapters. It is formulated as follows.

Chapter I - Introduction
Chapter II - History of Educational Thought in India
Chapter III - Swami Dayananda Saraswathi
Chapter IV - Rabindranath Tagore
Chapter V - Swami Vivekananda
Chapter VI - Sri Aurobindo Ghosh
Chapter VII - Manabendra Nath Roy

Chapter VIII - Jawaharlal Nehru

Chapter IX - Conclusion

The second Chapter deals with ancient Educational thought of India. Contemporary Indian Philosophers of Education have presented ancient wisdom in the form which is suitable to present conditions. They openly swear by the ancient scriptures and develop their ideas on its foundations. Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Dayananda, M.K.Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Radhakrishnan have presented their ideas of Education on the foundation of ancient Indian Educational thought. But the roots of the philosophy of Education of Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N.Roy may be traced to modern Educational thought of the West. To understand Modern Indian Educational thought it is necessary to understand the historical background of Indian Educational System. This chapter is a brief narrative of Indian Educational thought from ancient times to the present day.

Chapter III deals with the Educational thought of Swami Dayananda Saraswathi, who was the founder of Arya Samaj. It is a great, movement which wanted to reform Indian Society on the basis of Vedas and their precepts. He was not only a social, cultural reformer, but also a great educationist. Arya Samaj has started number of schools and colleges, called as Dayananda Anglo-Vedic Schools and Colleges.

We find in Dayananda’s Educational thought a practical and pragmatic approach. Like many Indian Educational thinkers, he also considered that salvation is the main aim of Education. But it is not other worldly. It means the realization of human perfection as an individual as well as a collectivity here on earth.

Dayananda was supporting Vedic philosophy of Education. He considered that Vedic system alone could lead to the creation of perfect men and women. He also showed his humanistic tendency in his unscientific beliefs. In his support of science and the scientific outlook he was more positive than many contemporary positivists.

Chapter IV deals with the philosophical though of Rabindranath Tagore, among the contemporary Indian philosophers of Education Tagore, holds eminent position. He may be called as Humanist in the strict sense of the term. His philosophy is cosmopolitan Humanism and his theory of Education is directly deduced from this philosophy.
Tagore’s philosophy of Education cannot be understood without understanding his Metaphysical theory. In his theory the concept of universal man is very important. Tagore’s approach to education is humanistic and his approach to ultimate. Reality is integral. He believes in an inner harmony between man, nature and god. These three (Man, Nature and God) are in facts aspects of the same reality. In man, again the physical mental and the spiritual aspects are equally important and internally related. Thus like Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath believes in a multi sided education with physical, intellectual, moral and religious aims.

Tagore considers that through education, the student should imbibe his cultural heritage and should be able to use it in his interaction with the environment. He considers that neither the Education of the senses nor the Education of the intellect, but the education of the feeling should receive the place of honour in our schools and thinks that our true education is possible only in the forest, through intimate contact with nature and purifying austere pursuits.

He says that knowledge has two departments, one is pure knowledge, the other utilitarian knowledge, and whatever is worth knowing is knowledge. It should be known equally by man and woman, not from practical utility, but for the sake of knowing and considers that the desire to know is the law of human nature.

Rabindranath was not merely thinker and dreamer. He put into practice, his educational ideas by starting three institutions, Santiniketan, Viswabharati and Sriniketan, through which he endeavoured to develop his educational theme in three different complementary directions.

Through his Education Trinity Tagore aims to develop an ideal educational system in India. The curriculum in Tagore’s educational institutions is not fixed but changes according to the needs of the students. His only emphasis is on life, life of the individual, of the rural masses, of the poor Indians and that of man as a member of an international community.

Like other Indian thinkers he also felt that mother tongue must be adopted as medium of instruction and then only Universal Education is possible.

Tagore’s Educational philosophy is no less an example of his humanism than his literature and religious writings. He tried to build up an ideal educational system and
experimental in all its branches, such as aims, medium, means, curriculum, administration and extra curricular activities.

   Swami Vivekananda is one of the greatest thinkers and pioneers in Social reform. Indian Renaissance owes much to Swami Vivekananda. He considered that the current system of Education introduced by the British did not conform to India’s culture. He considered it turned men into slaves. He also felt that the educational system is no better than an efficient machine for rapidly turning out clerks.

   According to Vivekananda Education is the process of self development. He considered that we cannot teach a child any more than we can grow a plant. The plant develops on its own nature. He considers that Education should be modified to suit the individual nature of the child. Every child should be given an opportunity to develop according to his own inner nature.

   Swami Vivekananda discussed on all main issues of Education like building character, need for concentration, brahmacharya, meditation, and other spiritual aspects.

   Swami also felt the need of Physical education, Moral and Religious education, like the other modern educational thinkers of India. He also felt the need of synthesis of Religion and Science and stressed the importance of Technology.

   The Chapter V, presents all aspects of Educational thought of Swami Vivekananda in brief and it is well known fact that modern Indian Educational thought owes much to Swami Vivekananda. His stress on Universal Education, Women Education, Man making Education are highly relevant in the present times.

   In the VI chapter, the Educational Philosophy of Aurobindo is discussed. Aurobindo occupies a pre-eminent position among contemporary philosophers of Education in India. His knowledge of Eastern and Western Educational thought is immense. His approach to philosophy of Education is mainly value based and he wanted to look at Education from an integral point of view. His Ashram at Pondicherry has grown in to an important place of learning. Even now, they are conducting experiments with Scientific approach to evolve an ideal system of Education which gives equal importance to all aspects of Education. Aurobindo’s approach to Education may be called as Integral philosophy of Education.
Aurobindo, analyzing human nature goes beyond man to point out the supramental forces working upon him. Man, according to him is in a transitional phase in the Evolution of nature which aims at Super-Man. According to Aurobindo, the aim of Education is not only the all round development of man but also his evolution towards super-man.

Aurobindo says that the true basis of Education is the study of the human mind, infant, adolescent and adult. Thus means of Education should be developed according to human nature. The instrument of Education, according to Sri Aurobindo is the Mind.

Aurobindo gives importance to moral Education. It means the training of moral facility, which means the ability to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. Study of moral text foists can at the most make a mechanical, artificial moral thinking while mans moral nature includes emotions, impressions and temperament. Unless these are transformed the child cannot become moral.

Aurobindo feels that there is need for both Physical and Religious Education also. The physical education aims at the perfection of the body its health and strength and fitness. Man’s Individual and collective life requires certain habits, capacities and qualities which may be developed through sports and games. Physical culture keeps the body fit and strong and helps in the development of such traits as high sense of discipline, morals and high character.

Aurobindo thinks, like moral teaching religious education should also be imparted not through religious books or religious sermons, but by practice of religious life, spiritual self training and exercise and theoretical teaching of religion must be complemented with actual practice.

Some thinkers consider that Sri Aurobindo’s approach to education is to some extent elitist. Sri Aurobindo, they think has not given proper attention to the Education of the backward, economic and other classes of society.

Aurobindo’s philosophy of Education is mainly based on spiritual approach. It is perfectionist in nature. The spiritual idea of the individual and society is an aim cherished by great thinkers from plato to Aurobindo and down to many later Indian thinkers.

Chapter VII deals with the Educational philosophy of Manabendra Nath Roy. He is one of the eminent thinkers of Modern India. M.N.Roy has propounded a philosophy, which
is distinct from other traditional schools of Indian thought. He called it as Radical Humanism. Radical Humanism is neither materialism, nor idealism, but a scientific philosophy, insisting upon the freedom of the individual.

M.N. Roy presents a philosophical view which is based on latest findings of physical and social sciences. The values cannot be derived from facts they are self evident and no less objective than facts. The ultimate reality is nature or matter. Life has evolved from matter and from animal life has evolved man. Therefore man according to Roy is biological product. Man’s Ethics, values etc., are evolutionary in nature.

Man has a peculiar trait called Rationality. Man can make the world better with the help of rationality and science. Real Revolution requires full freedom of the individual. Therefore, Roy rejects the economic interpretation of history propounded by Karl Marx. Man is not an economic being, but a moral being. Intellectual and spiritual life is conditioned by instinct of reason.

According to M. N. Roy, Morality is not directly derived from religion. Even the savage has strong sense of Good and bad. The quest for freedom distinguishes man from animal. Truth is a matter of human experience. According to Roy, the search for truth, therefore, is intimately associated with the quest of freedom as the essence of human nature. This is the fundamental principle in the educational philosophy of M.N.Roy.

According to Roy the aim of Education is Liberty. He said that the purpose of all rational human endeavors, individual as well as collective, is attainment of freedom in ever increasing measure. Freedom is progressive disappearance of all restrictions on the unfolding of the potentialities of individuals, as human beings and not as cogs in the wheels of mechanized social organism.

Humanist Educational values have evolved out of human needs. Besides Liberty, there are other values. He says, the hierarchy of humanist, axiology, thus is freedom, knowledge, truth. They are not autononomous; they are interrelated, logically as well as ontologically.

Manabendra’s in his work “POLITICS, POWER and PRACTICES”, elaborated his educational thought. Like Plato, he insists that no ideal republic can be established in the absence of educated persons. Unless people are able to distinguish between right and wrong, no good society can be established.
Roy is against compulsory Primary Education. Any compulsion is against Liberty. He also considered that state funded and managed education is no true democratic education as it ‘preaches’ State Ideology.

Roy says there are four types of education (1) Education of Citizenship (2) Political Education (3) Education of freedom (4) Education for different sections of Society.

M.N.Roy’s Humanism makes morality the basis of Educational philosophy since moral values are the chief values of human culture. Radical Humanism thinks that real education makes human being free. The new society of free individuals will be not be limited to space and time. It will be relied only when it is realized everywhere. Thus a real social revolution will be a world revolution leading to a new Humane, Rational and social order and for such a transformation Education is the means.

Chapter VIII deals with the Educational philosophy of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India. His educational thought is influenced on the one side by socialist thinkers like Karl Marx and on the other side by the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi.

Nehru is basically a humanist. He is a rationalist, Empiricist and positivist and his theory of knowledge is based on these positions. As a result he had greater faith in science than in religion. As a proponent of secularism he gave importance to the present experiences, present life and present world. He did not bother about other world and after life.

Jawaharlal has accepted Education as the most important means to social change. Political thinkers and Educational philosophers admit that it is not possible to establish a democratic society without an adequate and suitable system of Education.

Nehru liked the Russian approach and aims of Education and its social concerns. He says that the object aimed at is to produce a desire to serve the community as a whole and to apply the knowledge gained not only for personal but for public welfare.

Chacha was an educational thinker brought up in western tradition. His Humanism was based upon naturalism, in contrast to the idealistic humanism of other contemporary Indian Educational thinkers.

Nehru was impressed by the scientific progress of the west. He supported the Western model of Education and as the first Prime Minister of Independent India, he
formulated the Educational policy and thus considered as the architect of modern educational system in India.

Chapter IX is the concluding chapter. In this work an analysis is made about the Educational thought of modern India and how it has absorbed the modern European Educational trends and how it wanted to present it to suit Indian conditions. It has also laid down the broad principles on which a national scheme of education should be formulated.

Among the contemporary Indian philosophers of Education, Jawaharlal Nehru, and M.N.Roy strike a different note giving importance to scientific temper, rationalism and their ideas also must be given due importance in the scheme of Indian Educational Policy.

Indian thinkers like Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Dayananda, M.K.Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnana, on the other hand, followed the traditional Indian Educational thought modifying and adjusting it to contemporary situations.

These thinkers represent the spirit of contemporary Indian Philosophy of Education. My study is confined only to Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Dayananda and Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N.Roy.

M.K.Gandhi and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan hold similar ideas and their contribution to Indian Educational thought is stupendous, but I have limited my study only to the other, excluding Gandhi and Radhakrishnan.

In contemporary Indian philosophy of Education we find mostly trends like Revivalism, Rationalism, Humanism, Neo-Vedanta, Integralism, positivism, Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, eclecticism, Idealism, realism and pragmatism. I have presented those ideas in brief.

The Educational ideals of Dayananda, Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, and certain aspects M.N.Roy and J.L. Nehru’s, thought will be most useful in formulating a scheme of National Education, which is based on Moral principles and Noble values and at the same time stressing on modern scientific education which is suitable to the needs of the twenty first century.