IN QUEST OF REAL EDUCATION

BASIC HUMAN PURSUIT

Education is a basic human pursuit enabling man to realise his true manhood and play his role effectively in life and its progress. It attempts to explore and employ his potentialities for growth along with his native disposition for learning with a view to acquire the knowledge, skills and virtues necessary to serve the goals determined by the conception of man and his destiny. Thus, there is complete correlation of the growth of an educational institution with that of this conception.

It is evident that man is not a creature whose sole function is just to preserve and prolong its life and that of its race. Certainly, there is a period of his existence when the survival or sustenance of life itself is a primary goal and life remains mostly under the influence of hedonistic or utilitarian considerations. It is a long period of human evolution, which even now continues to a considerable extent. However, man becomes truly human when he outgrows this state of existence and enters into the realm of values. Then a mere sustenance of life does not remain his main concern and life becomes a sort of seeking, a quest for its true meaning and significance. Thereafter, it is not merely his feelings of pleasure and pain or some other self-centered consideration or concern for reward and punishment through which the existing socio-political or religious and even educational systems operate, but primarily his notion of right and good that would guide and govern his life.

EMERGENCE OF MAN

It is truly a mystery that although the emergence of man in the course of evolution is a consequence of the working of nature, he in turn interacts with nature and attempts to control and manipulate it to serve his ends. Thus, there are invented a variety of facilities and equipments to satisfy his growing needs, because of which human life acquires a new and better setting for going ahead. It is from these roots that our civilisations and cultures grew. This phenomenon of transmutation of nature, that is a consequence of human action, shows that man is not just a creation of nature. There is in his being something that is not the product of its working. Presumably, it is his self. This self holds the secret of his being and the driving force and power of his future realizations.

It is the basic characteristic of nature that in the course of its evolution it undergoes gradual transformation and acquires certain new features at different stages. Here at some stage, there emerges a being, the human being having consciousness as its central attribute. The emergence of such new features during the evolutionary process shows that there is involved a greater truth in the very existence of nature, which drives it to the course of continuous change. It further shows that this greater truth must be a greater consciousness of which nature is just an initial formation, a formation that is predestined to become a means and medium of the manifestation of that truth, because such consciousness alone could set in motion and carry forward ceaselessly the evolutionary process in specific direction. This is indicative of its progressive and creative trait.
With regard to man since consciousness is his central attribute, he inherits this progressive and creative trait. Moreover, after the emergence of self and its increasing awareness in him, he gradually acquires a sort of independence from nature and the awareness of his destiny and that of the world existence along with that of the necessity of his conscious collaboration with nature to fulfill this destiny. This endows him with a role and mission in life, the raison d’être of his existence.

The man in his present state of existence is a transitional being, a being at an intermediate stage in the process of evolution, which is having besides an ingrained urge to play its role in the scheme of things, has in his being a variety of hidden powers and potentialities that are yet unexplored. He has yet to actualise his potentialities and establish his identity through an effort to find the centre of his being, his real self, and integrate around it his entire life with his powers well developed. It is then that he becomes a self-conscious person, a real individual on his way to become the master of his being and activities and of the creation of the luminous future for himself and for the mankind. For such person his working remains no more a reaction to the impact of the circumstances, but becomes his real action that flows from his self or rather from his highest consciousness. It is in virtue of this distinctive feature of human existence, which is essentially spiritual in nature that ideas and ideologies have acquired an immense importance in his life and for him life becomes gradually a pursuit of ideals, the pursuit that eventually culminates in the realization of its true meaning and significance.

The concept of ideal that has thus emerged in life is not a figment of imagination. If it were so, no ideal would be worth pursuing. However, since the notion of ideal apparently does not correspond to any experiential reality, people often decry its pursuit as a matter of a mere theoretical venture having no practical bearing. It is true that our view of an ideal does not directly delineate any experiential reality, but it is also true that at times certain idealistic considerations initiate some change in this reality, consequently an ideal state, which was previously non-existent, subsequently comes into existence. This is not a miracle but a normal state of affairs, as revealed in experience, in which nothing comes out of nothing. Hence, such subsequent events must have their origin in the prior existence, might be in the form of potentiality, which is not amenable to direct experience, nonetheless is real. If it were not real, it could not have been subsequently realised. This possibility of realisation is evidently a distinctive mark of an ideal. It shows that the ideal worth of its name is invariably rooted in reality and hence is as much real as any experiential reality is. Thus, the purported lack of correspondence of an ideal to experiential reality does not deprive it of its reality.

This analysis of the concept of ideal brings out the difference between the real and the actual and the fact of the real being not limited to the actual and also the fact of the actual being only a partial manifestation of the real, which proceeds towards its fuller manifestation through an inner impulsion. In this process of manifestation certain new features emerge, which differentiate the future states from the present or past ones, but they are certainly the constituents of reality. They already exist, but only imperceptibly in the form of ingrained potentiality. Since this potentiality is at the root of all real ideals, a true ideal represents and reflects the truth of reality.
Hence even during the period when man is required to struggle for his survival and when only hedonistic considerations govern his life, there has always remained at the back of his mind a regard for ideals. He has entertained since time immemorial an aspiration to become good or at least a sort of appreciation for things good. Might be it is there mixed up with many contrary movements and smacks of incoherence and hypocrisy. However, at no stage of existence, the human life existed without an overt or covert affiliation to some ideal. This analysis brings out the spiritual nature of our life.

SPIRITUAL NATURE OF LIFE

Thus, an inquiry into the nature of human life reveals that man is essentially a spiritual being or self that is gradually manifesting in and through its material embodiment. Besides, as the abovementioned analysis of the evolution of nature reveals, even the world around, which at the first sight appears to be a material entity, is in essence a spiritual reality. Hence, although some scientists and philosophers brand the process of evolution as a mere material or mechanical process, it is spiritual in its essence.

This assertion of spiritual nature of reality does not necessarily discard our mundane life as illusory or as a thing having no significance whatsoever, as contended by some of our sages. Their view that the worldly life is essentially illusory stands contradicted on its own premises, since it is in this very life and through it only and mainly for its right knowledge and eventual fulfillment that this spiritual reality is conceived and pursued. Thus, an assertion of this reality, say of the Divine, the Supreme Being, the Infinite and Absolute does not lead to the denial of the world as is being presumed.

Thus, with regard to the world existence, since it provides the basis and raison de être of our life, its reality and value cannot be denied on any count. Hence, while asserting its reality some thinkers deny the existence of the Divine and consider it a fiction of mind. This view also is contradicted by its own premises, as the very idea of the Divine entails its reality, in absence of which the idea would not have appeared in mind. Even our general feeling of limitation or finitude in respect of mundane life and consequent discontent associated with it and also the desire to overcome the same and make progress presupposes its reality. The two terms, the world and the Divine are not mutually exclusive and the admission of the one does not necessarily entail the denial of the other. The two are inseparably related like cause and effect, wherein the effect is there because of the cause, but not vice versa. Hence, as the cause does not exist because of its effect, so the Divine does not exist because of the world, but the world comes into existence and survives and grows because of the Divine and it undeniably turns its finger towards his existence. We can see his reflection here and know him through it. It is valid knowledge. It is the knowledge from which all knowledge derives its validity.

Further, since we view this reality, and rightly so, as the ultimate ground of all that exists, it is only from this reality that this life could have derived its existence and its meaning and significance as well. Hence, besides this life being real it has to strive for its eventual union with this reality, so that it becomes perfect, as it ought to be. This constitutes the mission of man upon the earth, his adventure. He is born here in order to
play a significant role in this adventure and realize his true destiny and that of the world as well. And this is to be done and would be done through the instrumentality of the world only.

Thus, in the right view of things, the opposition between mundane life and spiritual truth is duly reconciled and the former gets the status of a means of the working out of this truth and a medium of its manifestation. This view besides determining the destiny of mundane life, endows man with a mission. In order to fulfill this mission, the self or spirit in man comes forward and takes the charge of his life.

In order to fulfill this mission in life the spiritual values come to the forefront and gradually gain importance. The further analysis of this matter would reveal that all other values are derivatives of the spiritual values only. In fact, the concept of value itself is spiritual in nature. Hence, the moment one embarks on the pursuit of values, consciously or unconsciously, he enters into the realm of spirituality. It is then that he becomes truly human. This perception of human nature provides foundation to real education and shows that it is truly a spiritual endeavor.

RIGHT APPROACH

Then the life here acquires its true meaning through the promotion of spiritual values and consequent spiritual transformation. In this connection, the pertinent question would be as to how to do this. It is a matter of general belief that observing spiritual or religious practices is a proper means of the realisation of this goal and certain practices like prayers and meditations, worships and sacrifices, listening to spiritual discourses and reading of scriptures and biographies of saints etc are such practices. However, on deeper consideration we find that although these practices do have their own importance and significance in the process of spiritual transformation, it is the consciousness behind that gives them the spiritual potency, in absence of which they remain ineffective and cease to be spiritual.

Once in a seminar on National Integration, there was a proposal to evolve a common language and common dress code for the people in this country, since people believe that the diversity of language and life-style, culture and religion is responsible for the lack of emotional integration that we experience in our society. There was a suggestion of similar panacea for achieving the world unity also. But in this connection it is rightly observed that the people not only always speaking the same language but also sharing a common life under the same roof have strained relationship, whereas some other people are found having mutual love and affection, in spite of their diverse cultural origin and background and their speaking of different language. It is then not their dress or the language they speak, but their aspiration for unity that alone unites them. This aspiration is the true cause of real unity, the rest are auxiliary conditions and not its causes, in the sense of possessing causal efficacy.

If the results expected of these spiritual practices remain far from us, it is because of falsely treating these auxiliary conditions as causes, which they are not. This confusion between auxiliary and causal conditions seems to be responsible for seeking spiritual results
through external means and measures. In doing so, people inadvertently subscribe to the materialistic view, that claims to bring about the necessary change in life through external devices only, which divests the spiritual pursuit of its very ground.

However, the life in general follows the old tradition of external sanctions for promoting a desirable mode of behavior and possesses an ingrained faith in the efficacy of these sanctions. Besides, the society and its customs and traditions, even moral and religious traditions embody these sanctions and play their role as agents of social control. Thus, we find the reflection of this faith in our individual and social life. Educational institutions also are working on these lines only. Hence, the people see nothing wrong in pursuing such course in spiritual matters as well and feel quite satisfied even when there is no significant achievement and they conveniently slip into the make-believe world of pseudo-achievements.

**SPIRITUAL MEANS**

Hence, one has to do a fresh exercise in this matter because the spiritual values would need spiritual means for their realisation. We find a clue for the right spiritual means in aesthetic pursuits. It is evident that one cannot hope to become an artist only by learning the different techniques of art, for that does not necessarily develop in him an aesthetic sensitivity or generate creativity, which are the essential qualities in the making of an artist. However, we do find people cultivating these qualities. It happens while they enjoy the inspired work of a genuine artist, which becomes a channel through which his consciousness flows. Such exposure of people to the works or objects of art facilitates the awakening of their hidden sensitivity and creativity and nourishes the same. Here an artist or his creation becomes a vehicle of aesthetic influence and inspiration.

Similarly there is a spiritual influence and inspiration too which, when transmitted through spiritually awakened persons or through sincere aspirants for higher life, becomes a proper means to spiritual awakening. Besides, there are also literary, musical or artistic creations that have sprung forth in the course of their spiritual pursuit and thus have acquired spiritual potency. There are places, which have absorbed spiritual vibrations generated by genuine spiritual pursuits carried over there by some enlightened persons for a considerable period. All these become vehicles of spiritual presence and influence. However, in this respect we find that their spiritual efficacy remains intact until the characteristic contact with their inner kernel continues. The moment it is lost and they are externalised giving rise to certain mechanical rituals and polluted by the mix-up of the contrary motives or desires, they lose their value.

Thus, the right method for the promotion of spirituality is a living contact with spiritual masters and seekers and with the oral or written revelations of their experiences and with the activities and creations that have sprung forth in the course of their spiritual pursuits. It consists of living with such persons and remaining in their contact, directly or through their creations, and thereby sharing their experiences and aspirations or plunging in the flow of their illumined consciousness or at least getting a glimmer of the same. It is *satsang*. Such *satsang* alone, if it is genuine, evokes a spiritual response, awakens, and nourishes the spirit.
in man. It helps in forging a living relationship with our innermost and highest self and in bringing about the desired change in our life.

The real spirituality is not a matter of entertaining certain beliefs prevalent in society regarding some super-power governing our life and universe or following certain practices or rituals prescribed in the different traditions, which are supposed to be in tune with these beliefs. It primarily and preeminently consists of living in accordance with our highest consciousness, with the truth of our being and that of the universe. It envelops and embraces our entire life and activities, all that we do, feel and know, all that we have and we achieve. Hence, it is necessary that spiritual seekers take care to relate their entire life with all its actions to their inner and higher being and eventually to the highest consciousness. Moreover, it is also necessary that this relationship to higher consciousness remains ever fresh and alive by an act of continuous self-consecration and that we do not make any undue compromises or stop midway in this quest at any stage of achievement and move continuously from heights to greater heights.

It is such pursuit that creates an atmosphere conducive to spiritual good, in the background of which all that is done, whether it is teaching and learning, singing and dancing or painting and playing games, doing some useful productive work or household chores, all that one does would become an occasion for spiritual progress. It becomes an occasion for gradual spiritualisation of our being through which we would get our identity. This is the ultimate goal of true education.

Thus the exposure of a student in an educational institution to an atmosphere and influence vibrating with such higher presence or light is a genuine source of inspiration for him. It prompts him to get fully and sincerely involved in the pursuit of right education through all that he does in different spheres at different times and that too for its intrinsic worth and value only. It facilitates the harmonious development of his different faculties and powers while enhancing his regard for higher values and eventually for the highest truth. This is the path, which leads to his integral growth and development of his personality and character.

Here, it is the example and influence of the enlightened teachers in an educational institution, much more than their instructions, is of great value for education of the students. Therefore, it is necessary to explore and utilise the potentialities of such example and influence, so that the life in the institution itself becomes an occasion for invocation and reception of higher influence, a channel for transmission of such influence enabling the students to realise their human as well as divine potential. This in essence seems to be the basic requirement of real education in context of which alone all that is there and all that is done in educational institutions acquire educative value.

II

THE PRESENT SET-UP

We all know that India, and the world as well, is passing through an unprecedented crisis in which man is gradually losing faith in his own self and in his future and a deep sense
of frustration has overtaken him. It has offered a great challenge before him, which requires that he endeavour to transform this crisis into an opportunity for a new and significant departure in life. In this paramount effort, education is expected to play a key role and become a prime mover towards better life, towards the life of Truth and Perfection, the life of Harmony and Liberty, the life of Beauty and Love, the life that fulfills the best of human aspirations. However, unfortunately education in India has not risen to the occasion.

We are all aware of the prevailing conditions in most of our mainstream Schools and Colleges and Universities, which are extolled as temples of learning. Their task is to produce enlightened citizens and the leaders of our community. However, the outcome of their working does not make us proud. Nonetheless, we come across men with abilities and character, with vision and integrity coming out of the portals of these institutions. In this context, it seems that this happens in spite of the mode of their working and not because of it.

We do find here around us in our society the people and institutions, which have not only kept ablaze but have brightened also the flame and fire of the higher ideals and thereby have influenced directly or indirectly our life in general. Besides, we also find even in the life of the common people in our country an overt or covert regard for good things and activities, a sort of desire to become good and perfect, might be it is a mixed affair involving several contrary interests and at times it might smack of hypocrisy. This phenomenon is indicative of an inherent trait, the trait that survives in the general consciousness of man, even under the most hostile circumstances. It is this trait that imperceptibly influences the course of our life in general. Moreover, we do come across hidden powers and influences, besides and beyond the familiar forces, a hidden working that lifts us up and does not allow things to drift. It is a special feature of existence, something like grace that could change the course of events and provide an explanation of the things happening for our good, in spite of our working, which may not be in tune with this requirement, might be a bit adverse.

Macaulay designed his system of education to train competent personnel to assist the British to run their government in India and to liberate Indian populace from its obsolete orthodoxy and prepare it to adopt the so-called progressive western life-style. He would not have even imagined that the institutions established for producing an Indian replica of the British gentry to support their government would also produce the patriots, who moved to dethrone it.

It is evident that although the goal of education is integral and total growth and development of our entire being, our system does not fulfill adequately this need and we simply hope to achieve this goal as an accidental by-product or just by miracle. The present system of education ignores the psychology of man, who is in the process of growth and evolution. It ignores his hidden possibilities and potentialities, his native genius or dharma and then just endeavours to load his mind with the available quantum of knowledge and information and by the methods used in this loading process, including a variety of motivational or pressure devices, damages and atrophies the faculties through which all knowledge is acquired and used.
Consequently, at the end of all its labour, there come out the hordes and hordes of incompetent job-hunters, who are intellectually poor and are quite unaware of the dignity and glory of their manhood. Motivated by a distorted and narrow self-interest they entertain a hope for easy going and comfortable life, the life full of a variety of pleasures and excitements, the life fulfilling their unrestrained ambitions. However, the hope thus generated mostly eludes them and hence for their unfortunate lot they curse their fate and blame their parents and the society that has brought them up. At times, they do desire to improve things, but they do not know how to do it. Moreover, they lack in courage and in the spirit of adventure too. Again, some of them rise in revolt against the present order of life, without any idea of the new one that they desire, and they end in creating a chaos. They are ready to destroy everything, and they create nothing, thereby they create vacuum in which devils can have their full play.

PRESCRIBED REMEDY

Now the people have realised the need for making education more purposive, so that it would serve the needs of our country and contribute effectively towards the maintenance and development of our national life, besides fulfilling the highest aspirations of our country and of the humanity at large. However, the practical outcome of such realisation depends upon the changes that are proposed and implemented in the present system and upon their perspective as well.

It is quite gratifying to note that a number of people are quite serious in this matter and several proposals for reforms in education have come forth from different quarters, the foremost of which enjoins us to make education job-oriented. People at large find this proposal quite interesting and they believe that it would serve our purpose if, along with this, certain relevant changes are instituted in the different curriculums and in the techniques of teaching and examining and then an adequate job-placement is ensured.

In the course of the pursuit of job-oriented education, the economic life comes to the forefront, relegating human consciousness to the position akin to the product of nature, an object amenable to adequate moulding by suitable means, so that it becomes an efficient means of material prosperity. Accordingly, people would only desire to enrich their life and circumstances and strive to get adjusted somehow to the current surroundings or bring the same under their control, so that a good career is carved out, which would make a provision of comfortable and prosperous life for their own self and for those who are near and dear to them. Thus, eventually they become components in the system of production, distribution and consumption of material goods that satisfy human needs and desires. This would lead to their transformation into economic men.

It is true that earning one’s livelihood is an important life pursuit, which deserves our serious attention. However, we should also know that it does not form the primary goal of education and possesses an extrinsic and instrumental value only. Besides, this approach leads us to the position in which career, prestige, and money acquire an exclusive importance in life and success therein is determined by these factors only. Hence, we now find that things are judged solely or mainly by their utility. This brings down man in the scale
of values and deprives him of his intrinsic worth, because of which at the end he feels fully frustrated. This frustration has now become a commonplace experience.

**SCOURGE OF AFFLUENCE**

This job-oriented scheme of education envisages a well-managed affluent society moving towards a high degree of sophistication. It seeks to perpetuate the prevailing mode of life and make man happy by the use of scientific gadgets and medicines, tranquilisers and thrillers. However, such life eventually turns out to be a mere surface living, which misses the integrity and depth of his inner being and the delight of his innate creativity. It leads to a type of existence in which he finds himself lonely amidst a system of well-defined relationships and feels an inner vacuum amidst incessant activities. At last, his increasing uneasiness overpowers him. However, he has to strive incessantly to maintain his poise until the inner tension that gradually mounts up completely throws him off the board.

This appears to be the mode of the so-called modern society where people are found making progress at the cost of their selfhood and creativity. It is for this reason that a section of the youth in the western countries had risen in revolt against the established order and had attempted out of sheer disgust or in anger to dethrone all authority. It dissociated itself from everything that was civilised and took shelter in rustic and crude primitive behavior, in sex and drugs and in yoga and ancient religions. Some of them plunged in the wave of violence and in a variety of morbidities, leaving aside all the niceties of life and abandoning all the hopes about its future. The remnants of this development are there to an extent even in the life of the contemporary younger generation in India.

These consequences of our progress towards affluent society are sufficient to disillusion us from our cherished dreams and make us desist from merely imitating the West in our life quest. Besides, there is an additional factor for us in India, which also needs consideration. It consists of the forces of parochialism and of the wide spread corruption, which have endangered the unity and integrity of our national life and sabotaged all our efforts even towards our well-being and prosperity.

The phenomenon of corruption is rooted in narrow selfishness. It refers to the practice of serving one’s own interest in an out of the way mode by violating the established norms, without any concern whatsoever with regard to the interest of the fellow beings and that of the society, and at times in the manner that is quite detrimental to their well-being. The similar attitude has given rise to the wave of parochialism also in our national life.

Now the philosophy of job-oriented education, directly or indirectly promotes such self-centered attitude while subscribing to the ideal of successful career involving material prosperity and prestigious position along with a yearning for the enjoyment of the fruits of five star or seven star cultures. It inadvertently moves towards exteriorising fully our consciousness and makes us to concentrate on the success or on the so-called development and progress, without any concern for its manner and means. This state of affairs does not only connive at but also encourages the forces of disintegration.
In this situation, it is only a special higher influence operating in the upbringing of a person in his family or a special effort made by educational institutions alone that would succeed in countering effectively these forces by cultivating in us a regard for higher values. However, the prescription of job-oriented working meant to cure our present educational ailments does not help us in this matter. Actually, it is counter-productive. It unconsciously alienates people from higher values.

The efficiency in handling different jobs aimed at by the job-oriented education is an important virtue. However, besides this we also need the virtues like honesty and fairness in our dealings and readiness for cooperation. These virtues are essential for the stability and well-being of the society, without which even the proper job management becomes difficult.

The protagonists of this reform believe that we can achieve these results by evolving an effective system with its detailed code of conduct and a variety of lucrative rewards and deterrent punishments, which might control the egoistic tendencies and make the involvement of man in undesirable practices somewhat difficult, if not impossible. However, our faith in the effectiveness of such external regulations does not stand the test of experience, and we find that even the strongest regimes have not succeeded in preventing the criminal tendencies in man or in making dishonest persons honest. On the contrary, it becomes counter-productive and promotes morbid or abnormal developments in the life of individuals and society. Besides, even if we get some good results, it would not be a matter of normal occurrence but only an appearance, meant to last until the end of the pressure or control thereon.

However, we are in love with the faith in the efficacy of such external measures, which subscribe to the faith that man is not good or honest intrinsically. Still we endeavour to infuse unto him these virtues because of their value for achieving success in life and career. It presumes an irreconcilable opposition between the innate human nature and the requirements of civilisation and culture, which man in his reason has adopted in order to develop a desirable mode of life. It also presumes that human values or ideals and ideologies are not rooted in his nature, but are just superimposed.

If so, the good life would inevitably be a life of tension. In order to get rid of this tension man prefers to submit to his lower nature, in his moments of relaxation, for its supposed refreshing influence. Hence, submission to lower nature becomes an essential part of recreation, which relieves man from the stress of the routine life, the life in which he is required to exhaust himself and repress his native tendencies. It is for this reason that some psychologists advise for making provision of intermittent relaxation in the course of our busy schedule.

This is the reason because of which people love and enjoy the uninhibited exhibition of lower nature even in art and at times in certain religious celebrations as well. It is a sort of concession found necessary for the maintenance of balance in life, a holiday from normal living, when reason has not to intervene. This is how man strives to keep up the show, until the increasing tension overpowers him and throws him off the board.
If this view were true, there remains a very little scope for real education and even for morality and spirituality, since it regards all higher values and ideals as unnatural, if not abnormal. They are just the attributes superimposed upon human nature by suppressing his native tendencies, in order to serve the requirements of the so-called normal living in a so-called civilized set-up. Thus, man has only to appear good without being so. Real goodness for him is merely a figment of imagination.

Some contemporary psychologists also have endorsed this view regarding human nature. However, it is not well founded, since it is the effect of illicit generalisation arrived at by unduly emphasising and exaggerating certain abnormalities of human behavior observed in a section of our society. It ignores that aspect of his being, which induces man to aspire for the sublime and arouses him to transcend his limitations. It ignores his higher nature, which is rather an inseparable part of his real and total being. It is this part that keeps ablaze the flame and fire of ideals, ideologies, and attempts to make life truly human and worth living. Left to the lower nature it would have degenerated long since. It is this higher nature that brings in integration and harmony, so essential to normal living and endeavours to reclaim life from the forces of division and disintegration.

Therefore, the genuine process of education has to endeavour to awaken this higher nature, which would gradually embrace his entire being and finally transform it. When this is accomplished, the real individual emerges from the material that the nature has provided. This individual would really command the life forces and become the creator of new life and new society, the things that man rightly needs and deserves. True education has to help man in this task.

III

NEED FOR TOTAL CHANGE

Thus, true education demands a basic change in our attitude and approach towards man and his destiny. It aims at the change in consciousness and endeavours to provide an atmosphere and influence along with the necessary guidance to awaken and uplift the consciousness of the students and develop harmoniously their faculties, personality and character.

In order to serve the ideal of true education, people have remodelled our curriculums in different subjects, keeping in view the requirements of life and the advancement in knowledge. They have also designed new and better material for and sophisticated techniques of teaching and learning. Finally, they have instituted examination reforms, with standardised techniques and foolproof systems of checks and counter-checks to ensure reliability and objectivity of examination procedures. However, all these efforts have failed miserably in realising their objective.

These reforms employ some sort of external mechanism and hope that under its pressure things would change. However, they do not touch the core of the problem. Hence, the anticipated result is still very far from us. It is quite evident that nothing really changes until the spirit that is behind all our activities, the spirit reflected in our character and
attitude changes. Thus in education it is not its structure alone, but this spirit that is also important. Therefore, it is necessary for us to concentrate on the work at the level of this inner reality.

It is because we did not realise the importance the work pertaining to this inner dimension and its pursuit remained out of our scope, that our democracies and systems of free enterprise have degenerated into a type of capitalism, which thrives on exploitation and injustice, social inequalities and corruption. It is for this reason only that in the socialistic pattern of society, which claims to deal with these evils and ensure co-operation among men, a totalitarian regime took the control of life. In both these developments, the common person became a victim either of capitalistic or of totalitarian stakes and of the fallouts of their conflicts.

This happened because man attempted to change the order of life without changing himself, his consciousness, and he just imposed externally the changes he desired. Thus, what he accomplished remained a matter of surface appearance only. This created an illusion of progress and ultimately aggravated the crisis rather than resolving it. It has brought man on the brink of disaster. Herein there lies a challenge for us. We shall have to meet this challenge and transform it for a significant departure in education and in our life at large.

However, while doing so, we have to take care not to use the ways and means that led to the present crisis. Moreover, we would certainly not expect to solve our problems by mere good intentions and half-hearted measures, all the while clinging to the old habit of working and lingering on the surface consciousness only, or by some arbitrary divine intervention. Hence, for evolving a right mode of working we shall have to explore sincerely the deeper recesses of our inner being and find out therein the source and spirit of better life.

REORIENTATION

If we try to understand the nature of institutionalised formal education in our country, we would find that it has been a social agency to perpetuate the past, or at least to continue our link with it. Consequently, for all practical purposes, it has turned out to be an endeavour of shaping the future in the image of the past. It has become an instrument of social adjustment that bears the seal and sanction of the social or political authority. Such education subscribes to the static view of life, because of which it becomes more and more stagnant. In order to overcome this stagnancy, education shall have to liberate itself from its avowed commitment to the past or even to the present and in a sincere attempt at reorientation, it shall have to turn towards the future and draw the inspiration and force it needs from the truth that is yet to manifest.

Moreover what is generally done in the field of education at present is to organise and develop a system and structure to mould man in a desired shape and guard him against all the possible lapses and eventualities by controlling the worst in his being. Instead, we shall have to provide the opportunities and necessary influence to awaken and express his best. The old forms endeavoured to control the lower nature. Now some new forms are to be
designed and employed that would provide the means of realisation and medium of manifestation of the higher and dynamic spirit.

Thus, there would be a significant departure in the mode of education. In this context, the value of its contents needs consideration. Ordinarily we think of the quantum of knowledge acquired by students with reference to which their level of achievement is determined. Since for all practical purpose the academic perfection is our goal. This might appear to be quite a reasonable course, but the term academic perfection is a bit misleading, since it delimits educational pursuit to the acquisition of detailed information regarding the different subjects.

This approach is likely to relegate, may be unconsciously, the instrument of study and also the qualities and virtues which are so essential in the making of our personality and character to a secondary position, which is likely to affect adversely even the intellectual growth. Hence, what is required in the field of education is the training and cultivation of the instruments of knowledge and progressive transformation of the faculties and powers of the students. Thereafter the students on their own would acquire the necessary knowledge and utilise the same to serve the end that would be in consonance with their innermost and highest truth and with their final destiny.

Besides, the result of any educational work depends upon the perspective and attitude of the students and the type of the effort that they put in, the work they do in classrooms, in libraries and laboratories, in workshops and playfields and in all other spheres of life activities. It is the nature and spirit of this actual working that enlivens and gives meaning to any structure. Moreover, it is only because while attempting to change the structure of education, we did not take sufficient care of this basic aspect that the movements of educational reforms have not succeeded in producing the expected results.

It is a good sign that we are, to an extent, disillusioned of our faith in the good structures and techniques that we employ to mould man into a desired shape. Such external discipline imposed upon him through the medium of law or social ethics or religious pontification or even through education cannot be helpful in realising his true form. Instead, we should treat man as an infinitely subtle and sensitive organism, which grows and develops by its own inner force in the manner a huge tree grows out of a tiny seed. Thus, education has only to endeavour to provide man a suitable atmosphere and influence along with necessary guidance, so that he grows and develops integrally and harmoniously. As the Mother puts it, it must bring to bear the legitimate authority of the spirit over the matter fully developed and utilised.

Thus, the main function of education is to awaken the inner being of the students. Therefore, external processes and equipments acquire their significance in a good scheme of education only when they reflect the right spirit and are associated with this central objective. It is for this reason that the work of a teacher is so essential in its process. His importance does not depend only upon the fund of knowledge at his command and the skill of imparting such knowledge, but primarily upon his being a source of living influence and genuine inspiration to his students. Therefore, the living relationship of teachers and
students, a sort of interaction between their consciousnesses is of central importance in education.

According to this view, the students are required to participate actively in the process of acquiring knowledge, instead of remaining its passive recipients as the case is now. Then the teachers, instead of being mere instructors or taskmasters, would become their guides and helpers initiating the students into the mysteries of knowledge and awakening their innate and inborn creativity. They would put them in living contact with the source of knowledge and guide them in its exploration.

Then, a teacher would treat each student as a self-developing soul, and put him upon the right road to his perfection by means of watching, suggesting and helping and not by preaching or scolding or by imposing and interfering. He would see that his noble example and influence plays its role in his relationship with them. For in real education what is expected is a change of consciousness and that would change only through the influence of higher consciousness. The teacher has to become a channel through which it would flow and bring about the desired change.

Thus, the life of the students in a good scheme of education would be organised not through certain predetermined rules and a set of methods or techniques, but through the invocation and activation of inner consciousness. It would mean for teachers a transparent and unpretentious good-will and genuine love and also respect for their students and for students the way of living, growing and progressing under the shelter of their teachers.

However, for carrying out this principle in a collective life and for the sake of smooth working of an educational institution, it becomes necessary to construct a framework and devise certain minimum regulations with a provision for necessary changes in the same to suit the varying requirements. The principle aim of these regulations would be to coordinate the activities of the numerous teachers and students and safeguard not only the continuity of education throughout their working, but also the real interest of education.

As Sri Aurobindo says, a child is a self-developing soul and is in need of help in refining and developing his intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities fully and in accordance with his native genius or dharma. A child only needs help to bring out to the full advantage and make ready for the full purpose and scope of human life, all that is in him. This at the same time will help him to enter into right relationship with the life, mind and soul of the society and of the humanity at large, of which he is a unit and his society a separate and yet an inseparable member.

The formal indoctrination, which is only a subtle form of coercion, is to be minimised and finally to be eliminated. Instead, a yearning for self-development is to be aroused in him at a subtle level of his being. This would evoke an adequate response in terms of self-regulative discipline that would organise his behavior as an individual and as a member of society and would lead him to the awareness, which is sublime and to which narrow, selfish and self-regarding mundane pursuits would appear to be too low and gross, too tasteless, meaningless and futile to cherish.
The real purpose of education is to help the soul to come forward and assert its mastery over its instruments and also to grow through experience and eventually manifest the powers that it has to set forth in life. Once the soul comes forward, it would take over the business of education out of our hands. This seems to be the right approach to real education.

**INTEGRAL EDUCATION**

The programme of real education must be integral in nature and must deal with all the aspects of our being, including the physical, vital and emotional as well as the psychic and spiritual, besides the mental one. Hence, its schedule should include in addition to academic exercises an adequate provision for physical culture, creative, recreational and useful activities along with the activities pertaining to the spiritual growth and for the participation in community life. It must become a well-integrated programme embracing all these activities.

With regard to the academic aspect of education, it is necessary to adopt an interdisciplinary approach with an emphasis on general education along with some degree of specialisation in the selected disciplines to suit the individual requirements of the students in consonance with their aptitudes. Here it is necessary to maintain balance between analytical and synthetic approaches to knowledge. In this matter, our main goal would be to develop the mental faculties, especially those of concentration, intuition and imagination along with that of expression to the fullest and in harmony with the total being of the students.

In this schedule although formal teaching too would have its due place, the emphasis there would be primarily on the direct learning by the students under the guidance of their teachers. In addition, this learning would be not merely an act of memorisation, but an act of exploration. Knowledge would not be easily available to them in ready packets. They will have to find it out on their own. This would cultivate their interest in learning and transform it into a delightful activity, which would replace the mechanical and lifeless rote learning geared to the requirements of examinations. This effort, besides enabling them to acquire real knowledge about things, instead of mere information, would become an occasion for the systematic training of their mental faculties, which is the real goal of academic education.

Another aspect of education which has not received its due is the physical education. It should find an important place in this scheme. The rectification of the defects and deformities of body, if any, and the control and discipline of its functions and total, methodical and harmonious development of all its parts and movements are its real aim. The body must become supple and agile, strong and healthy, harmonious and beautiful. It is the base and even the highest values have to find expression in and through the life embodied in it. Finally, it should awaken the inner consciousness of the body and make it receptive to the higher consciousness that is waiting to find expression and manifestation in and through it.
Besides, it is necessary to make provision for the training of the students in different fine arts like music, dancing, dramatics, paintings etc in accordance with their aptitudes, which would help them in developing aesthetic sensitivity and in refining taste while expanding the horizon of their experience and providing opportunities for creative expression to their genius. They should also be encouraged to develop different hobbies to suit their varied interests. All these activities would help in bringing enrichment and delight in their life and in the life around and replace the monotony of their daily routine, while cultivating their finer faculties.

The students should also be encouraged to participate in useful activities and in community life, according to their interest and convenience. This might help them in developing some of their practical skills, organising abilities and qualities of leadership and above all in enhancing their regard for manual work and cultivate sense of responsibility and resourcefulness along with strengthening their interpersonal relationships and forging therein the bond of fraternity. They should get opportunities to understand people around and be useful to them, wherever possible.

Moreover since all spontaneous turning to love, truth, beauty, nobility and heroism are sure signs of spiritual influence the students must get opportunities for embodying such deeper and nobler virtues. They should also be encouraged to pursue the practice of concentration and meditation. This would create the conditions in which they could go deep within themselves and dwell in the inner dimension of their being. It would eventually lead to the communion with their true self and facilitate the opening of their entire being towards its light and force, so that this spiritual principle would directly work in and through their life and activities.

Moreover, real education being an agent of social change and progress, would not aim at creating egocentric elite. The students have not to be unaware of their social obligation and insensitive to human sufferings and indifferent to the injustice and exploitation, whether apparent or hidden, that prevails in the contemporary society, which has rendered miserable the life of a considerably large section of our people. Our students should provide leadership to the society as its enlightened citizens and endeavour to be helpful to the people in distress, wherever they can. Besides this relief work, which too has its importance, they would be much more interested in bringing about the desired change in the society itself and in the mind-set or consciousness of people so that there remains not much of scope for injustice and exploitation, which is the root cause of human suffering.

The society is not a static unit. It does undergo change like individual human beings. It also evolves. The course of its evolution follows the pattern of general biological evolution in which increasingly complex patterns of life emerge, which widen and enhance their spectrum through simultaneous operation of the contrary forces of division and integration. This play of forces would establish eventually the unity in life without abolishing its diversities and dissolve the angularities and antagonism appearing in the different units of life during the course of their interaction, so that it would manifest their underlying harmony. It is because of this underlying harmony only that there arises a need for establishing a variety of relationships between them, which gradually proceeds to unite them harmoniously in the greater complexity of life. This course of development finds its
fulfillment in the emergence of the bond of unity among people and culminates in the drive for globalization.

It is really a happy augury that the movement for the change in the nature of society has presently gathered momentum on account of the increasing concern among people and communities and nations for their rights along with the desire to find and maintain their identity and to reap the maximum benefits that this life could provide. The unprecedented scientific and technological advancement including that in the information and communication technology along with the tremendous progress achieved in the conveyance and transport facilities has easily made available to us the abundant wealth and power while curtailing the distances of time and space and thereby has further accelerated the momentum of the process of change. Thus, the very developments of the contemporary life in unison has facilitated, and rightly so, the turning of it towards globalisation and has brought down several dividing walls that existed between different stakes and mellowed the separatist prejudices of people.

However, certain obvious constraints have vitiated this development in the present transitional stage of our country. The people here are yet not mature enough to rise above the narrowness of their self-centered egoistic outlook that induces them to exploit the natural and human resources for their personal benefit. The fast growing consumerism has further escalated their native hedonistic passion. Besides, there are discords that have arisen in the multicultural composition of our society, which is still under the impact of traditionalism and at places even under that of the worst forms of fundamentalism, at places associated with terroristic acts. The contemporary political milieu, which is at its lowest ebb, has further vitiated this development.

Thus we still cling to the vestiges of the old world order before we get rid of them, for which we shall have to wait till our mind-set or rather our consciousness changes, might be through the process of education or that of spiritual regeneration, or under the impact of some catastrophe. The choice would be ours.

Our students when they find their placement in society after completion of formal education would be required to seek and establish harmony in their relationship with their natural and human surroundings and thereby endeavour to restore ecological and social balance and regain the dignity of the nature as well as that of the society. They would also be required to secure their personal dignity and that of the others who constitute this society. This could be done effectively by associating themselves in the pursuit for eventual transformation of the present mode of life through its unification with the higher consciousness or rather through the invocation of the direct action of that consciousness in the life here and thereby fulfill the innermost and highest aspirations of humanity. This is the basic need of our contemporary life and our obligation. Education in order to be true to its real nature has to fulfill this obligation.

This entire program of education in all its aspects must form an organic unit and must be spiritual in its core, in as much as it would endeavour to awaken and bring out the best and highest in the students and widen and uplift their consciousness. It would be an
endeavour to awaken their soul and put their life and activities in its charge and to make life perfect with the divine perfection.

The changes however radical in the system and programme of education alone would not carry us very far. The viewpoints and perspectives of the society, which nourishes and stimulates the students, provide the substance of their growth. Hence, educational institutions should make an effort to create and establish there an atmosphere, richer and truer, which might lead to the integral progress of the students. This effort would involve the integration of (1) their different faculties, (2) their life in the School and that outside, (3) their individual and social life and finally (4) their inner and outer life. It would also involve the growth of their self-awareness and the awareness of the goal of their life and the commitment to pursue the path of its realisation.

A residential set-up of educational institutions is better suited to serve this purpose, since it provides a better scope for intimacy between the teachers and students and wider exposure to the students to a variety of experiences. It also provides opportunities for the exploration of the educational potential of their life beyond the classrooms, which is presently much disorganized and is open to a variety of contrary influences. It is the course of this life that helps imperceptibly the growth of their personality and character, which in turn influences their classroom activities also and makes the same more effective in order to integrate the same with their total life pursuit. Such places become sanctuaries, where students get protection from inertia and ignorance as well as from the superstitions and narrow understanding of an average person and all concur to liberate them from everything that might burden their progress. It would be an atmosphere quite conducive to their rapid growth.

IV

ACTION PROGRAMME

We, in our country, have formed a habit of expecting others and especially the government to do things for us. However, as things stand, governmental undertakings turn everything into a lifeless framework, which only becomes an impediment to all progress. The pioneering work done by enterprising individuals and institutions on an experimental basis or taken up in the spirit of adventure that leads to progress. Hence, the people and institutions with vision, abilities should dedicate themselves to the cause of good education.

There are teachers and administrators of educational institutions in our country, and men with sufficient resources also, who are open to these ideas and are ready to associate themselves with this task. Besides, there are institutions in the different parts of our country, which are already working more or less on these lines in their distinct set-ups and thereby have demonstrated the worth of this mode of working and its practicality. There is everywhere a growing dissatisfaction with the present order of things and an urge for its complete transformation. This has created a congenial climate for the significant departure in the field of education.
In this connection, it is desirable to adopt a multi-pronged strategy and a well-planned action programme. Firstly, there should be an effort to provide necessary encouragement to the institutions and educators, who are inclined to come out of the rut and do some significant work. In this task, the enlightened educationists can contribute their mite and provide adequate assistance and guidance through interactive seminars and workshops and training programmes, so that the work of these educators and institutions proceeds in right direction and is well supported. These efforts in course of time would facilitate the formation of regular forums, which would provide a common platform for interaction between the concerned parties and for the coordination of their working. It would also help in creating a favorable climate for the implementation of this new mode of working by putting the relevant ideas in the consciousness of people. Secondly, there should be an effort to pull up our present material and non-material resources and launch new institutions, which would gradually manifest the new spirit. Finally, it would be necessary to procure financial support for these activities, such support that would promote their activities without compelling them to deviate from their chosen path.

As the Mother has said, the ideal of education is to open the way of the future to the children who belong to the future. It should help them to grow up into straightforward and frank, upright and honorable human beings, ready to develop into the divine nature.

- GOVARDHAN DAVE