

## CHAPTER 1

# *Introduction*

Education in the East and West has always had its foundations in the metaphysical, epistemological and axiological outlook of the philosophers. As metaphysics, epistemology and axiology differed so differed the system of education. In India the philosophical traditions have continued since ancient times to the present day. Therefore, one finds agreement on the broad issues concerning educational practice between the ancient and modern thinkers. This is the foundation of contemporary Indian philosophy of education.

### **Need of Philosophical Basis of Education**

All modern educationists hold the view that not only should the educator be equipped with knowledge of a variety of subjects, but also that he should have his own philosophy of education, without which he cannot efficiently solve the problems that face him in teaching from day to day. Fichte rightly said, "The art of education will never attain complete clearness in itself without philosophy. Hence, there is an interaction between the two, and either without the other is incomplete and unserviceable." Some people are so impressed by the achievements of science that they give a higher place to science than to philosophy in education. Psychologists are of the opinion that education should be based on psychological principles, while sociologists, impressed by the significance of social phenomena, suggest that education should be more influenced by their findings. But all these people forget that even sociologists and psychologists have failed to solve many difficulties that have arisen in connection with the aims of education, curriculum, teaching methods, discipline, etc. They have even failed to provide a satisfactory criterion for determining techniques of evaluation, standards of evaluation,

selection of text books or of teaching methods. In actual fact, there is no rivalry between philosophy and science because philosophy gives adequate importance to the principles enunciated by psychology and sociology. The only real difference is that philosophy is concerned with more fundamental problems, that delves far more deeply than any one science, that its attitude is far more comprehensive and liberal and that it is an attempt at synthesizing most of the viewpoints from which any phenomenon is examined. Hence, the educator cannot do without philosophy.

The educator is often faced with the problems in the sphere of education which can be solved only on the basis of his conception of the universe. Every behaviour or action has its own principle. Hence educational behaviour, too, must have its own principle. This principle underlying all educational behaviour is derived from philosophy of education.

It is only through a philosophy of education that one can determine the curriculum, the text books, the methods of teaching, methods and standards of evaluation, the methods of maintaining discipline, etc. Hence, the educator should study educational philosophy.

Education seeks to reform society. This reformation depends on the philosophy concerning the individual and society. "The educational system which we attempt to set up", said G.D.H. Cole, "must depend on the kind of society we mean to live in, on the qualities in men and women on which we set the highest value, and on the estimates which we make of the educability both of those who are endowed with the higher intellectual or aesthetic capacities and of ordinary people."<sup>1</sup> Philosophy of education is theoretical. The theory, however, aims at the guidance to practice. In the words of John Dewey, "Whenever philosophy has been taken seriously, it has always been assumed that it signified achieving a wisdom that would influence the conduct of life."<sup>2</sup> Idealism

has been the most ancient and the most prominent school in philosophy. In the words of Adams, "Idealism in one form or other permits the whole of the history of philosophy."<sup>3</sup> This idealism again has been the most fundamental theory



underlying educational principles. In the words of Robert R. Rusk, "It bestows dignity and grandeur upon human life by emphasising the distinctiveness of man's nature, attributing to him powers, not possessed by animals, which issue in ideals—logical and aesthetic; it admits the existence of a Supreme Being; by its respect for human personality it provides the basis for democracy."<sup>4</sup>

The most fundamental question in the field of education is concerning its aim. This question raises queries about the nature of man and the possibility of its modification and transformation. Man's nature is very much concerned with his place in the cosmos. Therefore, the question of the aim of education is very much concerned with the question of the nature of the universe. Again, it is intimately concerned with the concept of culture prevalent in a society. This makes for the close relation between philosophy and education. In the

words of Blanshard and others, "The function of philosophy in universities is properly the same as its function in the cultural development of a society to be the intellectual conscience of the community."<sup>5</sup> Education is based upon the distinctions between animal and human nature. It has generally aimed to develop the characteristics peculiar to man. In the words of Robert R. Rusk, "Those powers and their products are peculiar to man, and differentiate him from other animals. They lie beyond the range of the positive science—biological and even psychological; they raise problems which only philosophy can hope to solve and make the only satisfactory basis of education a philosophical one."<sup>6</sup>

Education aims at imparting knowledge. Knowledge, however, requires a global outlook and a synthesis of various types of information and experiences. This is a philosophical activity without which no education is possible. Therefore, the need of philosophical basis of education is rooted in the branch of philosophy known as epistemology. As Aristotle

has said, "Whether we philosophise or not, we must philosophise." This has been expressed by Perry in somewhat different terms when he says, "Philosophy is neither accidental nor supernatural, but inevitable and normal."<sup>7</sup>

Besides its synthetic function, another important function of philosophy is the criticism of the postulates and conclusions of different sciences. Whenever a scientist delves deeper in his own particular field, he reaches a depth where the process of his thinking is not scientific but philosophical. This can be seen in the thinking of many a great scientists of the world. The importance of philosophy in the field of knowledge is, therefore, quite clear. From the point of view of different aspects of the individual and social life, and in different fields of knowledge, the discussion of the value of philosophy shows the utility of its study. In the words of J.W. Cunningham, "Philosophy thus grows directly out of life and its needs. Everyone who lives, if he lives at all reflectively, is in some degree a philosopher."<sup>8</sup> In the words of Chesterton, "The most practical and important thing about a man is his view of universe—his philosophy."<sup>9</sup>

*Philosophy is nothing but the framing of one's own world-view*

### Meaning of Philosophy

The above discussion of the need of philosophical basis of education will be more clear by an analysis of the meaning of philosophy. Meaning of a subject means what it stands for. It includes its definition, nature, scope and importance both in historical and literal perspectives. The meaning of philosophy has been a controversial matter since ancient times. Different philosophers defined philosophy from their own view points. A beginner in philosophy is perturbed to find that different philosophers have given different definitions of philosophy. While some philosophers have laid emphasis on psychological facts, others have given more importance to values. According to John Dewey, "Whenever philosophy has been taken seriously, it has always been assumed that it signified achieving a wisdom that would influence the conduct of life."<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, according to Windelband, philosophy is "... the critical science of universal values." While there is much difference in Indian and Western defini-

tions of philosophy, one finds widely different definitions presented by Western philosophers also. Of these definitions some emphasise the critical aspects of philosophy while others



lay emphasis upon its synthetic aspect. Some examples of these two types of definitions of philosophy are as follows :

(a) Philosophy is a critical method of approaching experience. Examples of this type of definitions are as follows:—

1. "Philosophy is essentially a spirit or method of approaching experience rather than a body of conclusions about experience."<sup>11</sup>

2. "It is not the specific content of these conclusions, but the spirit and method by which they are reached, which entitles them to be described as philosophical."<sup>12</sup>

3. "Were I limited to one line for my answer to it, I should say that philosophy is general theory of criticism."<sup>13</sup>

(b) Philosophy is comprehensive synthetic science. The following definitions of philosophy emphasize its synthetic aspect:—

1. "Philosophy, like science, consists of theories of insights arrived at as a result of systematic reflection."<sup>14</sup>

2. "Philosophy is concerned with everything as a universal science."<sup>15</sup>

3. "Our subject is a collection of sciences, such as theory of knowledge, logic, cosmology, ethics and aesthetics, as well as a unified survey."<sup>16</sup>

The above mentioned definitions of philosophy show that while some philosophers have mainly emphasized critical philosophy, others have defined it as a synthetic discipline. In fact both these viewpoints are one-sided because philosophy is both critical as well as synthetic. Literally speaking, the word 'philosophy' involves two Greek words—*Philo* meaning love and *Sophia* meaning knowledge. Thus literally speaking, philosophy means love of wisdom. It should be noted here that this definition of philosophy is different from the sense in which the word *Darsan* has been taken in India. The literal meaning of philosophy shows that the philosopher is

constantly and everywhere engaged in the search for truth. He does not bother so much to arrive at final conclusions and continues with his search for truth throughout his life. His

aim is the pursuit of truth rather than its possession. Those who enjoy journey do not care so much about the destination, neither are they perturbed when the destination is lost in sight in spite of continued long journey.

In an effort to define philosophy, one arrives at the difficulty that there is no genus in this case and also no differentia. In defining a science one points out to the genus science and also to the particular area of the particular science which differentiates it from others. This is, however, not possible in the case of philosophy because philosophy is one and not many. Hence in order to arrive at the meaning of philosophy we will have to discuss its problems, attitude, method, process, conclusions and results. In brief, philosophy is a philosophical process of solving some characteristic problems through characteristic methods, from a characteristic attitude and arriving at characteristic conclusions and

results.<sup>17</sup> Some might find this definition very vague and inadequate. But while defining science, do we not say that science is scienteing or that it is a method? And can we understand this definition of science without understanding scientific method? When science cannot be understood without knowing scientific method, how can we hope to understand philosophy without knowing philosophical method? Again, in understanding the definition of science we are required to understand not only scientific method but also scientific attitude, scientific process, scientific problems and scientific conclusions because all these together form a science. Therefore, what is vague and inadequate if we say that in order to understand philosophy one must understand the attitude, problems, activity, conclusions and results peculiar to it? This will also clarify the distinction between philosophy and science which has been forgotten by many philosophers.

Contemporary Indian philosophers have used the term philosophy almost in the same sense as it is used in the

---

West. Thus, according to Sri Aurobindo, "the work of philosophy is to arrange the data given by the various means of knowledge, excluding none, and put them into synthetic



relation to the one truth, the one supreme and universal Reality."<sup>18</sup> Philosophy should be all comprehensive, affirmative, synthetic and spiritual. Philosophy, as the Indians conceived it, is the knowledge of that by knowing which everything else can be known. Thus philosophy is the knowledge of Ultimate Reality. But Ultimate Reality, as Indian philosophy truly maintains, is not only Existence but also Consciousness and Bliss. Hence, philosophy as the quest after ultimate truth, is science of value par excellence.<sup>19</sup> It should not only criticise facts but also satisfy human aspirations. It should synthesis value and existence, religion and science. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "It should be a discovery of the real reality of things by which human existence can learn its law and aim and the principle of its perfection."<sup>20</sup>

### Meaning of Education in India and West

The word education has its origin in the Latin word '*educatum*', itself composed of two terms, '*E*' and '*Duco*'. '*E*' implies a progress from inward to outward while '*Duco*' means developing or progressing. In its most literal sense, therefore, education means becoming developed or progressing from inside to outside. Education, thus, is the process of developing the inner abilities and powers of an individual. The term is also often connected with the Latin '*educere*', meaning a propulsion from the internal to the external. This Latin term means to educate through a change brought about by practice or usage. In this manner, education implies some kind of change for the better in person.

In general usage, the term education is used either in its narrow sense or in its more liberal connotation. A slight elaboration of these two senses is given here.

A large majority of people use the term to mean the training or studies undertaken for a few years in some educational institutions. This is the restricted meaning of the term. It implies education provided according to a fixed curriculum by a particular set of people in a specific place. It does not necessarily provide any real knowledge,

of personality, the differentiating feature of which is the embodiment of universal values.”<sup>25</sup> The western educational philosophers have generally agreed that free growth of the human child is the essence of education. In the words of A.G. Hughes, “The essence of discipline is, thus not forced subordination to the will of hated tyrants, but submission to the example of admired superiors.”<sup>26</sup> In the middle ages Comenius declared education to be a process whereby an individual developed qualities relating to religion, knowledge and morality, and thereby established his claim to be called a human being. “The fundamental principles of education”, according to Froebel, “instruction and teaching should be passive and protective not directive and interfering.”<sup>27</sup> The principles of liberty has found most eloquent expression in the definition of education given by Rousseau when he said, “Let us obey the call of Nature. We shall see that her yoke is

easy and that when we give heed to her voice we find the joy in the answer of a good conscience.”<sup>28</sup> Others have laid emphasis upon the social meaning of education whereby it aims at making an individual fit in the society. It was in this sense that Aldous Huxley said, “A perfect education is one which trains up every human being to fit into the place he or she is to occupy in the social hierarchy, but without, in the process, destroying his or her individuality.”<sup>29</sup>

All the foregoing definitions have stated that education is the process of development. It, therefore, becomes necessary to discover what is implied in this development. Although the ability to learn depends upon development, but development is not synonymous with education. Development means the gradual and continuous progress of mind and body. Through this development the child acquires the following elements :

- ✓ 1. Knowledge of the environment by which he is surrounded.
- ✓ 2. The necessary motor control to fulfil his individual needs.
- ✓ 3. Some knowledge of individual and collective relationships.



#### ✓4. Linguistic abilities to enable him to converse.

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

In fact this process of development continues right through an individual's lifetime. Consequently, it is accepted that education in its general sense continues throughout a man's natural span of life. Even the successful teacher or educator himself remains a student through his life. On the one hand he teaches certain things to some people but at the same time he learns something from them. All successful educators experience that the development undergone by this thoughts, personalities and abilities would have been impossible otherwise. In much the same way, people other than the educators, teach and learn simultaneously.

#### Meaning of Education in India

(Turning to the Indian approach, it becomes necessary to include the spiritual aspect also because it is accepted as a part of the development by education. In fact, Indian thinkers have special emphasis upon this.) (Yajnavalkya opined that only that is education which gives a sterling character to an individual and renders him useful for the world. Sankaracarya maintained that education is that which leads to salvation. Even the more recent educationists, some of whose ideas are expressed below, have stressed the importance of the spiritual aspect. In the words of A.S. Altekar, "Education has always been regarded in India as a source of illumination and power which transforms and ennobles our nature by the progressive and harmonious development of our physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual powers and faculties."<sup>30</sup>

This spiritual tradition has been carried on by contemporary Indian philosophers of education in their integral approach, synthesis of idealism and pragmatism, rationalism and

humanism, diversity in unity and harmony of the individual and society. It was due to this emphasis on the spiritual meaning of education that Swami Vivekananda said, "Religion is the inner most core of education."<sup>31</sup> In the words of Sri

*The traditional concept of Edu. in India*

Aurobindo, "The child's education ought to be an outbringing of all that is best, most powerful, most intimate and living in his nature, the mould into which the man's action and development ought to run is that of his innate quality and power. He must acquire new things but he will acquire them best, most wholly on the basis of his own developed type and inborn force."<sup>32</sup> M.K. Gandhi expressed the same idea when he defined education by saying, "By education I mean an all round drawing out of the best in child and man, body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education not even the beginning. It is one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education."<sup>33</sup>

### Synthetic Definition

It is clear from the above discussion of the meaning of education in West and India, ancient and modern that they may be synthesised since all these accept some common characteristics of education. The following points concerning the meaning of education emerge from a review of the meaning of education in the West and in India :

✓1. *A life long process* : Education according to most of the philosophers continues from birth to death. As Madan Paul Richard pointed out, the education of man, "should begin at his very birth and it is to continue the whole of life."<sup>34</sup>

✓2. *Unfolding* : Education is a gradual unfolding. In his allegory of the cave, Plato observes, "that the power and capacity of learning exists in the soul already, and just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light, without the whole body, so too, the instrument of knowledge can only, by the movement of the whole soul, be turned from the world of becoming into that of being and learn by degrees to endure the sight of being and of the brightest and best of being or in other words of the good."<sup>35</sup> It is in the same sense that Sri Aurobindo said, "The chief aim of education should be to help the growing

soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use."<sup>36</sup>

✓3. *Based on child psychology* : Western thinkers unanimously agreed that true education should be based on child psychology.



This again has been accepted by Indian philosophers of education. According to Sri Aurobindo, "Nothing can be taught to the mind which is not already concealed as potential knowledge in the unfolding soul of the creature."<sup>37</sup> Educational theory must be based on sound psychology. As Sri Aurobindo points out, "The true basis of education is the study of the human mind, infant, adolescent and adult."<sup>38</sup>

✓4. *Individual as well as social* : True education is individual as well as social. Plato brought out a scheme of education according to each individual's capacities to serve the society. Philosophers in the West have everywhere laid emphasis upon individual as well as social aims of education. Contemporary Indian philosophers also exhibit this tendency. M.K. Gandhi said, "I value individual freedom, but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to his present status by learning to adjust his individuality to the requirements of social progress."<sup>39</sup>

✓5. *Total development* : Thus education by general agreement is a total development, physical, mental and spiritual, individual as well as social. This total development is the meaning of self-realisation. As J.M. Baldwin commented, "The real self is the bipolar self." This synthesis of the different aspects of man's development is characteristic of not only idealism but also naturalism, pragmatism and realism. It is again the meaning of perfection, acclaimed as the aim of education by so many thinkers. It is also what is known as complete education. It is again the humanist meaning of education since man is a complex being having several aspects of his personality all of which require full development. According to Sri Aurobindo education should help the individual to grow, "into a fulness of physical and vital energy and utmost breath, depth and height of his emotional, his intellectual and his spiritual being."<sup>40</sup> The total development lays equal emphasis upon physical as well as spiritual growth. Without physical culture

mental training has been considered as one sided. In the words of Aldous Huxley, "Where the body is maladjusted and under strain, the mind's relations, sensory, emotional, intellectual, conative, with external reality are likely to be unsatisfactory."<sup>41</sup>

Education aims at an all round and total perfection of the individual and society. Hence, physical culture should form an important part of the educational process. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, 'If seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside, for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use.'<sup>42</sup> Similar quotations may be hunted from other philosophers of education in West and East. The total development involves character development, development of social virtues and individual skills. It includes all the various aims of education. It involves all the functions of education in human life such as development of natural abilities, character building, personality integration, preparation for adult life, control and sublimation of basic instincts, education for useful citizenship, development of a sense of community, progress of culture and civilization, social welfare, use of leisure and the synthesis of national as well as international consciousness.

### Value of Indigenous Philosophy of Education

The synthetic definition of education will be, however, put into practice according to indigenous philosophy of education. That is the requirement for a scheme of rational system of education. Though philosophy is universal, each society in the world has developed a national philosophy characteristic of the thinking of a particular society through the ages. Thus, one finds significant and developmental differences not only in the philosophy of East and the philosophy of West but also in the philosophical systems of India, China, Japan, Iran and all other Asian countries. This is so since philosophical reflection does not act in a vacuum but is very much influenced by ecology, natural as well as social. Philosophy influences not only the world view but also the political, social, economic, religious, cultural and spiritual life of a nation. For example, the political history in India is very much different from the political history of U.S.A. Therefore, it will not be wise to apply results of experiments in American political life to Indian situation

without any distinction. It is hence that indigenous philosophy of education is the only sound basis for educational reconstruction in a country. In the words of Blanshard and others, "The

*National  
Education*



function of philosophy in universities is properly the same as its function in the cultural development of a society, to be the intellectual conscience of the community."<sup>43</sup>

Indian philosophy of education is rooted in Indian culture. The basic characteristic of Indian culture is an integral approach to life. Therefore, only an integral philosophy of education can suit Indian society. Indian philosophers have interpreted human nature as essentially good and divine. They have considered liberation as the goal of life. To them spiritual level is the highest level of development. The microcosm and macrocosm have been interpreted identically. In human nature itself the Indian psychologist has always kept his eye on totality including physical, vital, mental, physical and spiritual aspects. He has always aimed at integral personality. Indian philosophy of education is a happy synthesis of idealism and pragmatism. While laying emphasis upon the cosmic, the universal and the

total truth and reality, Indian thinkers have recognised the value of plurality, multiplicity and individuality as equally important expressions of the ultimate reality. Therefore, a philosophy of education integral in aims, curriculum, psychology, practice, teaching methods and means of education will alone suit Indian society. Such a philosophy of education has been advanced in contemporary times by Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Dayananda, M.K. Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, J.L. Nehru and M.N. Roy. Of these the first six belong to ancient Indian tradition and the next two are impressed by modern Western thinking. However, all these are humanist nationalists and aim at educational regeneration of Indian society. Therefore, the fundamental characteristics of educational thinking of contemporary philosophers of education will be the only proper basis for a national system.

### References

1. Cole, G.D.H., *Essays in Social Theory* (London : Macmillan & Co., 1950), p. 47.
2. Dewey, J., *Democracy and Education* (New York : The Macmillan Co., 1916), p. 378.

3. Adams, Sir John, *The Evolution of Educational Theory* (Macmillan & Co., 1912), p. 28.
4. Rusk, R.R., *The Philosophical Bases of Education* (London : University of London Press, 1956), p. 154.
5. Blanshard and others, *Philosophy in American Education* (New York : Harper & Bros., 1945), p. 80.
6. Rusk, R.R., *op. cit.*, p. 154.
7. Perry, *The Approach to Philosophy*, p. 22.
8. Cunningham, J.W., *Problems of Philosophy* (Calcutta: Chakarvaritty, Chatterjee & Co., 1957), p. 5.
9. Quoted by Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, p. 4.
10. Dewey, J., *Democracy and Education* (New York : The Macmillan Co., 1916), p. 378.
11. Brightman, E.S., *Introduction to Philosophy* (New York : Henry Holt & Co., 1925), p. 9.
12. Barret, C., *Philosophy* (New York : The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 5.
13. Ducasse, C.J., *Philosophy of Art* (New York : Dial Press, 1926), p. 3.
14. Leighton, J.A., *The Field of Philosophy* (New York : Appleton Century Crofts, 1910), p. 4.
15. Quoted by R.N. Sharma, *Problems of Philosophy* (Meerut : Kedar Nath Ram Nath, 1982), p. 5.
16. Sellers, R.W., *The Principles and Problems of Philosophy* (New York : The Macmillan Co., 1926), p. 3.
17. Sharma, R.N., *Problems of Philosophy*, p. 6.
18. Aurobindo, S., *The Renaissance in India* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1951), p. 72.
19. Maitra, S.K., *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, Vol. II, p. 61.
20. Aurobindo, S., *The Human Cycle* (New York : The Sri Aurobindo Ashram Library, Inc., (1950), p. 93.
21. Plato, *Protagoras*, Jowett, 325.
22. Plato, *Laws*, Jowett, 644.
23. Plato, *Republic*, Jowett, 416.
24. Plato, *Laws*, Jowett, 653.
25. Rusk, R.R., *The Philosophical Bases of Education* (London : University of London Press, 1956), p. 154.
26. Hughes, A.G., *Education and the Democratic Ideal* (London : Longman's Green & Co., 1951), p. 92.
27. Froebel's *Chief Educational Writings on Education* Translated by Dr. Fletcher, p. 32.
28. Rousseau, J.J., *Emile* (London : J.M. Dent & Sons, 1950), p. 251.