

CHAPTER – V

SISTER NIVEDITA'S THEORY OF EDUCATION AND INDIAN NATIONALIST DISCOURSE

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I

Education can be, has been, and is used for many different purposes. It is multi-dimensional within the school system, and outside it. According to John Dewey, *"The function of education is to help the growing of a helpless young animal into a happy, moral, and efficient human being."* Daniel Webster asserts that *"The function of education is to discipline feelings, to control emotions, to stimulate motivations, and to develop religious sentiments."* Ralph Borsodi considers the function of education as *"the humanization of mankind."* Education is a process of deliberately planning to train the child to lead a group life and to effectively adjust to the human environment. It refines and culturizes the child. Therefore Redden says, *"Education is deliberate and systematic influence, exerted by a mature person upon the immature, through instruction, discipline, and harmonious development of physical, intellectual, aesthetic, social, and spiritual powers of the human being according to his own needs."* Thus, a child receives education according to his own needs and the needs of the society in which he lives. It is a process of growth in which the individual is helped to develop his talents, powers, interests, and ambitions. This growth is an integrated and harmonious process. It takes place in different directions -- physical, mental, social, moral, and intellectual. All these dimensions of growth are interrelated. Therefore, education should aim at the integrated growth of the child.

Psychologically speaking, each child is born with natural and innate capacities and powers. The environment in which the child lives stimulates him for activities. If the child acts according to the stimulus provided by his physical and social environment, a lot of energy is wasted, and he fails to proceed in right direction. Here education can be used as a device to help the child to proceed in right directions to the objectives in life. Direction helps us to save time and energy of the youth and we reach our goal quicker.

Education creates such abilities and capabilities in the child that as he grows older, ^{he} is able to face all the problems of life courageously.

The educators are of opinion that education should not be book-centred. The nature of the child is to be respected. His needs and interests are to be looked after. His intellectual capabilities are to be borne in mind. The whole education process must revolve around the child. The function of education is to look at the harmonious development of the individual. A balance should be kept between knowing, doing, and feeling. An individual should learn the skill as well as pick up knowledge to appreciate that skill.

The teacher should know how to provide knowledge in synthetic manner. Different subjects should be correlated as far as possible among themselves and also with the life beyond, and the school. Nothing is to be imparted in abstractions, and the school life is not to be isolated from the life outside. The child is not to be taught in fragments but through well-organised experiences. With the help of education, man learns how to adjust himself with environment. Education also helps man in controlling or changing the environment. Man introduces changes in his behaviour by means of education, and thus change is possible by following a policy of give and take. Thus, education helps for individual's adjustment.

II

The history of education is the history of the life and experiments of great educational philosophers. The gems of their ideas continue to inspire educational thought and practice across the world. The last two hundred and fifty years will go down in history as the most formative years of modern education. Education, as we see it today, owes much to the wisdom of the East as well as to the West. Rousseau, Froebel, Dewey, M.K. Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Sister Nivedita -- to count only a few names -- have done much to shape the future

course of educational practice at home and abroad. There is no dearth of literature on the theory and practice of their educational ideas, but in this chapter we shall make an attempt to study the salient features of the educational philosophies of some great master minds, viz. Sister Nivedita, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh.

III

It is now a common phrase that while colonialism derived enormous material benefits for the ruling or colonising nations, as a system it was not confined to purely material life. In order to keep the subject-peoples of colonies in a state of passivity and submission to colonial rule, the colonial powers introduced certain far reaching changes in the educational and cultural spheres of the colonised countries. Educational programmes were so devised as to induce among the colonial peoples a permanent sense of dependence and inferiority. The system also maintained rigidly a separation between material and mental activity, strengthening a separation that has already taken place under native rule.

Further in the name of fighting superstition and prejudices colonial education inspired a spirit of indifference, and neglect towards the native peoples' own heritage and tradition. Since colonial education nurtured a personality that lacked roots in their own traditions, and made it conscious of its own inferiority, it failed to provide sufficient momentum for national revival. Learning became simply memorising certain kinds of knowledge in order to find employment in the colonial government, and other colonial agencies. No doubt it also conferred some benefit and acquainted the Indian minds with revolutionary new scientific and rational attitude.

Therefore perceptive leaders of the national resistance and colonial rule deeply felt a need to reconstruct systems of education in the country in the light of the true needs and aspiration of the people.

When Nivedita was first introduced to Swami Vivekananda, he looked at her as a great teacher who had a philosophy of education. Vivekananda believed that the development and awakening of India depended squarely on the awakening of masses and particularly of the women who had been maintaining a precarious marginalised existence for long. This awakening and resultant development could be realised only through education and so he called upon Nivedita to devote herself to the field of education, in particular female education in India. She started the work of educating the women of India during the life-time of her Master. And when she became involved in other spheres of activities after the premature demise of Swamiji, the work of female education was never out of her mind. What she wrote about education, above all female education in a number of her articles and books are indeed great signifiers. Education of the Indian masses was always in the mind-set of Nivedita. It is a fact that because of the great work of Gokhale and others, many people of India became aware of the necessity of education, but not many among them were aware of what scheme of education was to be followed, keeping in mind the condition of the Indian peoples and their needs. It is the great credit of Nivedita who gave us a well-thought-out scheme of education befitting this soil; we wonder if any body after her gave a better concept of education that India really needed and still needs.

Nivedita was born in the West, spent her life of activity in India, and breathed her last here. It may be said that she enriched both the two hemispheres. She conceptualised womanhood as a blending of the beauty of ancient Indian concept of woman with the modern outlook and also the intellect which came from European tradition. Woman of her conception has the loveliness and softness of ancient Indian tradition and strength of intellect and modern scientific attitude of the European tradition.

It was not merely a sense of duty that made Nivedita give herself in the work of educating the marginalised mass people and the sidelined women kind; she was rather guided by the dictates of her inner self. As Dr. Jadunath Sarkar observed, Nivedita realised that education was the main problem of India. How Indians were to be taught to be complete human

beings, to become the true children of India -- that was the problem. Education must be as much of the head as of the heart and the essential self. That would establish a link between the people and the past, between the people and the modern world. The scheme of education must so prepared as would achieve that goal -- to create true Indian and human beings, not heartless mechanical beings, not just units of man-power.

Nivedita was a social researcher, a social scientist, an analyst of the Indian cultural heritage. This is also to say that she was an historian of rare calibre, who did not recreate the reigns of Kings and Princes, but the ancient India, the people, the time, the culture of the people. It is quite in the fitness of things that she earned in the contemporary times quite wide reputation as an analyst of Indian culture. The great work which drew the attention of such gigantic minds as Balgangadhar Tilak, Surendranath Banerjee, Bipin Chandra Paul et al is 'The Web of Indian Life.' This book has been widely acclaimed as the best analysis of Indian life and thought-current made by an European. It is worth mentioning that Lala Lajpat Rai made a detailed study of another important book of Nivedita, 'Footfalls of Indian History.' In this book of Indian history Nivedita's love and adoration for India, her ability to analyse Indian in the correct perspective find ample expression. What Mr. Srinivas Aiyar said about the multi-dimensional talent of Nivedita help us understand her gigantic and noble mind. Srinivas Aiyar discovered a superhuman mind in the intellect of Nivedita and held that her works put us face to face with a strong and rich mind, full of original ideas and concepts. Her encyclopaedic knowledge and her literary sensibility gave her an attraction which could hardly be resisted.

It is a misrepresentation of Nivedita to hold that she stood for conservative India and supported the various superstitions that captured the minds of most of the Indians of her contemporary times. This view about Nivedita has been strongly refuted by no other than Jadunath Sarkar who categorically held that those who upheld that interpretation of Nivedita did not know her. When we come to know what she told the younger generation of Indians we at once become full convinced that she possessed a scientifically oriented mind. She told the members of the Hindu Students'

Association of Bankipur, Bihar, to devote themselves to scientific research. This is in consonance with what her Master, Swami Vivekananda, also held. It is a great pointer that Vivekananda himself declared that Nivedita had realised that there was no conflict between Hindu spiritualism and scientific study of economies and scientific research. Obviously, it is a useless speculation to hold, as Ramananda Chattopadhyay noted, that Nivedita was merely a conservative Hindu devoid of scientific ideas and attitudes. The truth lies in the opposite speculation that she was a Hindu idealist and spiritualist who also knew that the road to real and lasting nationalism and awakening lies through scientific research and attitudes. What F.R. Alexander said about Sister Nivedita provides us a clue to the understanding of this great soul : Nivedita's demand was that all who stood against progress and all the '*gerontions*' of the world who may stand against progress must be thrown into the rubbish-bin of the world. This refutes completely the charge of conservatism levelled against Nivedita.

Nivedita did not read Indian history especially ancient Indian history in a superfluous manner. By way of inspiring the great historian Radhakumud Mukhopadhyay in his younger days, Nivedita noted that for recreating the history of India, the historian must have proper expertise in sociology, for in it is intimately involved history and economics. To her the Sanchi Stupa with all its architectural novelty was not the main thing; rather the main thing was the still-flowing energy that went to the making of this architectural novelty; thus she observed the modern India, apparently found to foreign yoke, in the architecture of Sanchi. The stone itself was not important to her; rather the energy that gave the stone a meaningful shape was all-important. That is the method of Nivedita's study of history. It needs to be mentioned that this was an integral part of her scheme of education. To her, education is not an end in itself, but a means to create a modern India of her conception. She pondered over the issue of how to proceed to this goal and held that her scheme included co-operation, political science, history, industry, vernacular languages, and physical exercise -- a healthy modern mind in a healthy body. She stated that it was easy to victimise an indisciplined, uneducated man, but it was difficult to victimise a community of conscious and educated

people. It is clear that to Nivedita nothing was more important than proper education. In her speech given on the occasion of the opening of Chaitanya Library, Nivedita submitted a long list of subjects which must be studied. The list included such subjects as ancient and modern history, archaeology, poetry, novels, different branches of science, sociology, art-architecture-sculpture, religion and philosophy. This awe-inspiring list vindicates Nivedita's own vast erudition and learning. She also explained in her speech why all these must be studied with equal attention.

Nivedita understood and learnt that the education of a nation depends upon its ideal of civilization. The Hindu ideal of civilization from prehistoric times was purely moral and spiritual. Consequently, the civilization of ancient India was based, not upon commercial principles of modern times and not upon the selfish ideal of political gain and power over other nations, but upon the eternal spiritual laws which govern our soul. Intellectual culture was not regarded as the highest ideal, but spiritual realization of the relation that exists between the individual soul and the universal spirit was the principal aim of education. *"Education", as Herbert Spencer has said, "is the training of completeness of life."* Education is to bring out the perfection of the man, which is already latent in his soul. Education does not mean that a lot of ideas or informations will be poured into the brain of the individual, and they will run riot. But it means the gradual growth and development of the soul from its infancy to maturity. Education should be based upon the spiritual ideal that each individual soul is potentially divine, that it possesses infinite potentiality and infinite possibility, and that knowledge cannot come from outside into inside, but that all knowledge evolves from inside. No one can teach you, but you teach yourself and the teachers only give suggestions. This should be the principle of education. Today in our universities, we find just the opposite principle. A student is allowed to study and memorise notes of his professors and pass the examination. This is not the ideal of education. Education does not mean intellectual culture, but it means the development and spiritual unfoldment of the soul in all the various branches of learning.

Education should be according to natural inclination of the individual

soul, with the idea that wisdom cannot be drilled into the brain of the individual, and that all the books give mere suggestions, and, in reaction, we get the knowledge of the book. In order to understand a book, our mind must vibrate with the mind of the author. Then we get knowledge by itself, for it is a process of transmission. We will have to raise the vibration of our mind to the level of the vibration of the mind of the author, and then, like wireless telegraphy, the wisdom of our author's mind will be communicated to the student's mind. That is the principle of proper education. That system was there in ancient India -- *the Vidyapith system*. A professor would have a few students around him. He would be their guardian, and he would be of pure character, spotless in his ideals. He would be a moral man. One living example would change the whole character of the student, and it would mould his career according to the ideal which is before him. Therefore, for Nivedita, the present system of education was not a perfect one.

Again the ideal of a nation should be the ideal of education. The Indians learnt different branches of science from religion. In Europe, religion was against all science and all improvements. Think of the miserable condition of the Galileo who said that the earth was moving. The Roman church put him into a dungeon under torture, and asked him to retract his statement. But Galileo said : "*No, you can torture me to-day, but the earth still moves. I cannot retract it, for it is the truth.*" That truth is an established fact of modern astronomy. The warfare, between science and religion in Europe was a long-standing one. The fire of inquisition was kindled, and hundreds were burnt alive at the state simply because they did not submit their intellect to the dogmas of the Church. Giordano Bruno was burnt alive in the streets of Rome in 1600 A.D., because he was a believer in one Supreme Spirit, whose body was matter and mind was the cosmic one. So, if religion were powerful in Europe, there would have been ^{^no} scientific culture, and no improvement or discovery, because their religion says about the creation in six days out of nothing, while modern science teaches evolution with scientific facts. Religion tells them that the earth was created six thousand years ago before our sun came into existence. But modern astronomy teaches that the sun was created before the earth; and Galileo

tells us that our earth is millions of years old, and that the first appearance of man was about one hundred thousand years ago. How can the contradictory statements be reconciled? Nivedita understood that if one was accepted, the other had to be rejected.

Nivedita realised the truth that *Sanatana Dharma* never stood against science or free thought. One might believe in God or one might not, but so long as one was a moral and spiritual man, one was worshipped and honoured by the masses as the ideal of the nation. Buddha did not believe in a personal God yet he is regarded as an *Avatara*. Kapila did not believe in a personal God; in his Sankya system he said, "*There is no proof for the existence of a personal God who is Creator of the universe.*" Still Kapila was regarded as the greatest of all sages. Nivedita understood that free-thought was the watch-word of the Hindus in ancient times. They had no bigotry and no sectarianism; they did not mean by the Vedas a set of books which must be accepted as true in every letter, but what they meant by Veda is wisdom. There is only one source of wisdom which occasionally reveals itself to the mortal minds, and through them the world learns something about the eternal Truth. Truth is not confined to any particular individual or nation, but it is for everybody. This conception has made the Hindu mind broad and tolerant. It does not condemn anybody. The Hindu embraces a Mohammedan, because Mohammedanism is a path to the realisation of truth. He accepts Christianity, because Christ revealed the universal Truth among the Jews who had sectarian ideals. Christ said : "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" (St. Joan, VIII, 32). ¹ Nivedita learnt that Vedas also say the same thing; and the essentials of all religions are one and the same, and that is self-mastery, God-consciousness, self-control and purity. He is regarded as a civilised man by the Hindus who lives a pure and unselfish life, who is living, kind and compassionate to all, and he conquers avarice by generosity and hatred by love. "*Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.*" (St. Mathew, V. 8). ² Purity of heart is the *sin qua non* of God-vision. Man must be pure in heart and loving to all, irrespective of caste, creed, and nationality. Any education that separates mortals from mortals, and disunites brothers from brothers, is not uplifting

and should not be the ideal. Nivedita understood that the aim of education should not be mere intellectual culture with commercial ideals, to gain our livelihood in the struggle of competition, but that the ideal of education should be such as would elevate man from his ordinary selfish state into the unselfish universal ideal of Godhood. Anything, that would make man kneel down before that grand ideal, is uplifting.

During the Buddhistic age, the culture of the people was great and improved in various lines. Ten thousand students from different parts of the world used to live in the Nalanda University. Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese traveller, lived there for many years and gave description of the University in his writings. From his writings, it is understood that one hundred pulpits instructions were given everyday to different classes of students, and that no student disobeyed the orders of the University or its rules and regulations during the seven hundred year of its existence. What a discipline the Nalanda University had ! Several thousand students used to live in the Taxila University also. Here the Chinese scholars used to come and study various branches of science and philosophy from the Hindu teachers. The principal of the Nalanda University was Shilabhadra, the teacher of Hiuen Tsang, who was a Bengalee from Gauda, the then capital of Bengal. Dipankar, whose birth place was Vajrayogini in Vikrampur in East Bengal, was a great philosopher who went to Tibet to preach the gospel of Buddha. Buddhist preachers also went to Egypt, China, and Japan. At one time, the inhabitants of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissya were all Buddhists, and Biharies and Bengalees were brothers who had one Magadhi language. The Jagannath Temple in Orissya was a temple of the Buddhists. There was no caste distinction, and all were brothers. Nivedita felt that the brotherliness must be revived once more. At that time, of course, Islam had not risen, and Christianity was not there. But still the idea of universal brotherhood was preached by Buddha; and even Krishna, who ante-dated Buddha, declared in a trumpet voice before the world :

"Vidya-vinayasampanne Brahmane gavi hastini,
Shuni chaiva shvapake cha panditaha Samadarshinaha."

"He is a pundit, a true philosopher and a scholar, who can see the

same universal Spirit in a well-cultured Brahmin, in a cow, in an elephant, in a dog, and in a pariah."

The Sanskrit primer told the Indians :

"Ayam nija paro veti ganana laghuchetasan,
Udarocharitanantu Vasudhaiva kutumvakam."

"This is mine, or this is yours, such distinction is made by low-minded people, but those who are broad and liberal should consider the whole world, as their relative." Did not Christ teach : "Love thy neighbour as thyself ?" If our neighbour be a pariah or a chandala or a Brahmin, or any other religion, Christian or Mohammedan, him we should regard as our own self, and him we should love as our own self. This is Indian religion. Abandoning this ideal of Universal religion, if man simply cultivates his intellect for commercial purpose, will that be the ideal of proper education? It is degrading the humanity to install commercialism in the place of universal religion in educational lines. Therefore, Nivedita understood that Indian national ideal should be brought forward and should be emphasised in every branch of Indian teaching. According to Nivedita, as was also propagated by her Master, education should be based upon universal principles and not upon sectarian religious ideals. It would otherwise be degrading the humanity. The object of education should be attainment of perfection.

Physically man should develop and train his body, so that he can have muscles of iron and nerves of steel, and then he should educate his mind so that he may be able to acquire self-mastery, and not remain slaves of passions, desires, and selfishness. Self-conquest should be his ideal in training his mind. In the West there is psychology without a psyche, which means the soul. There, in the study of psychology, the existence of a psyche is not admitted, but Hindu psychology is far better. Man should educate his intellect, so that he can see the all-pervading spirit, and reason that although there are various manifestations, yet there is an underlying unity of existence. Unity in variety is the plan of nature, and that plan he should discover by training his intellect. Furthermore, he should realise what is eternal and what is non-eternal, what is unchangeable and what is changeable. That should be the function of the intellect which is trained, and

has reached its ideal education.

In the line of Indian school of thought Nivedita understood that proper education should include moral training. The whole ethics depends upon love, which means not a selfish love, but the expression of oneness in spirit. Love means the attracting of two souls which would vibrate in the same degree, and which would be tuned in the same key. Where there is true love, there cannot be any selfishness. Where man loves anyone, he should be ready to give one all that he possesses because he would say : "*O my brother! Thy necessity is greater than mine. Whatever is mine is thine.*" He must learn to merge his small personality into the bigger personality of humanity. That should be the ideal of moral education. And any system of education which is based upon fundamental principle of potential Divinity in the soul of the individual, would be considered as the highest. Nivedita felt that education should not degrade man or woman, and it should not be for money-making only; but it should be the culture of the soul for the good of all, and that soul-culture would bring in perfection as its ideal, and the whole world would be benefited by such education.

IV

Sister Nivedita concerned herself much with education. She had established, under the inspiration of her Master Swami Vivekananda, a school for girls in Calcutta, a school which still survives and flourishes under the protecting wings of the Ramakrishna Order -- an institution which is a fitting tribute to the memory of a great lady who gave her all to the national cause of India.

Be it kept on record that Nivedita did not devote all her attention to the problems of women's education. She spent her best time in India in the hectic days of the national movement in India in the first decade of the twentieth century when the country was astir over the Partition of Bengal. At

the Calcutta Congress of 1906 one of the most important resolutions that was adopted was on National education. Leaders like Aurobindo Ghosh and Rabindranath Tagore were thinking and writing a great deal on education at this time. Sister Nivedita also bestowed much attention on the problem of national education. In this context, we are specially interested in her thoughts.

To begin with, she wrote :

*"We all know that the future of India depends, for us, on education. Not that industry and commerce are unimportant, but because all things are possible to the educated, and nothing whatever to the uneducated man. We know also that this education, to be of any avail, must extend through all degrees, from its lowest and humblest grades. We must have technical education, and we must have also higher research, because technical education, without higher research, is a branch without a tree, a blossom without any root. We must have education of women, as well as education of men. We must have secular education, as well as religious. And almost more important than any of these, we must have education of the people, and for this, we must depend upon ourselves."*³

It is understood that Nivedita attached the greatest possible importance to the '*education of the people*.' Education must reach down to the lowest class of men. It must not be confined to the top layer of the society. This was a most radical idea. But Nivedita knew that for the translation of this ideal into reality it was not possible to depend on the government; we Indians had to depend on our own initiative and enterprise.

Nivedita proceeded to draw attention to the historical background of India. Indian civilization had its distinctive hall-mark. She said :

"Our civilization has never been backward in bringing to the notice of the individual his responsibility to the society. There is none so poor that has never tried to feed the starving. From this time we must recognise the still greater urgency of giving knowledge. There is no other way of making the unity of our country effective. If one class of the people derive all their mental sustenance from one set of ideas, and the bulk of the population from something else, this unity, although certainly present, cannot easily be made

effective. But if all the people talk the same language, learn to express themselves in the same way, to feed their realisation upon the same ideas, if all are trained and equipped to respond in the same way to the same forces, then our unity will stand self-demonstrated, unflinching. We shall have acquired national solidarity, and power of prompt and intelligent action." ⁴

Sister Nivedita expressed novel idea by pointing out that the imparting of education must be given the character of military training. She wrote :

"In most western countries, it is required that every young man, when his education is complete, shall give three, four or five years to military service. He goes into barracks, is regimented, and drilled, makes a unit in the standing army, and passes out, usually, when his term is ended, an efficient soldier, to remain, for the rest of his life, ready at any moment to join in the armed defence of his country.

What we have to do, is in like fashion, to organise the army of education. Why should it be thought impossible that every student, when his own education is over, should be called upon to give three years to the people? It is of course understood that just as the only son of a widow is in the west excused military service, so one whose earnings are absolutely necessary to others must be excused the educational service. The villagers, on the other hand, would easily maintain a single student, living among them as a school-master. And when his own three years were over, it is to be supposed that he could, from his own old school or college, arrange for another to take his place. Some would learn to love the simple village life, and elect to live and die, poor school-masters. Most, however, would serve the years of their vow, and pass on, returning to the city, to bear their part in the life of a more complex community. On the other hand, the duty of teaching, on the other, the duty of maintaining, so teacher and taught make the perfect social unit. And so the great masses of the people might be swept within the circle of articulation. It takes thirty years to make a whole people literate, even supposing that an idea like this were carried out in its fullness." ⁵

Sister Nivedita laid great stress on compulsory primary education. In her paper on 'Primary Education : A Call For Pioneers' she speaks of creating

an army of educationists. She suggests that every student after finishing his education should be called upon to give three years to educating other people. Nivedita suggested this in 1910. While it was only in the Sargent Report published in 1944 that a somewhat similar recommendation was made by the Government, but not put to practice even now to remove illiteracy. ⁶

It becomes evident that Nivedita was keen about making the common masses literate. Mass education, rather than education of the upper classes, was what she aimed at and insisted upon.

Nivedita also considered how this was to be made effective. She wrote:

"No central organisation could arrange a scheme like this. Only by a common impulse of the people and students themselves could it be made a reality. But it is not impossible. The initial thought comes, it is true from the city, but once sent out, all depends upon the number of lives that can be laid upon its altar. All must always in the last resort depend upon this, the quantity and quality of human life that can be sacrificed to it. Without men's lives, no seed of the mind germinates. How many will give up comfort, place, opportunity, ease, even perhaps their whole life for this, the elementary education of the Indian people?" ⁷

The peculiar merits of the Hindu system of education were forcefully emphasised by Nivedita. She wrote :

"Fortunately for the civilization of India, the Hindu has always clearly perceived the mind behind the method, as the thing with which education has fundamentally to deal with. It is this which, inspite of so many catastrophies, has, in the past saved the Indian genius from destruction. And it is this which constitutes its best security for the future. Just so long as the Brahminic system of directly training the minds of the young to concentration persists, will the Indian people remain potentially equal to the conquest of any difficulty that the changing ages may bring them. At present -- owing largely to the peculiar psychological discipline, received by girls as well as boys, along with their devotional training -- the most salient characteristics of the Hindu intellect is its reserve of strength, its

conservation of power. As we read the history of the country, we are amazed at the unforeseenness with which geniuses occur, and the brilliance of their isolated achievements Within the last twenty years, inspite of universal clerkship, we have given to the world men who have enriched humanity in Religion, in Science, and in Art. India has shown herself potent to add to knowledge itself." ⁸

The personalities that Nivedita thought of were evidently the following: in Religion the outstanding figure was Swami Vivekananda; in Science Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose; in Art Abanindra Nath Tagore, and Rabindranath Tagore.

Paying tribute to the intellectual eminence of the Indians Nivedita continued to say :

"These things are some indication of the sleeping power of the Indian mind. They are the chance blossoms that show the living-ness of the whole tree. They tell us that what Indian people have done in the past, that Indian people can do in the future. And if it be so, then we owe this undying vitality to the fact that whatever may have been the characteristic expression most prized, at any given moment, our forefathers never neglected the culture and development of the mind itself. The training of the attention -- rather than the learning of any special subject, or the development of any particular faculty -- has always been, as the Swami Vivekananda claimed for it, the chosen goal of Hindu education." ⁹

This was undoubtedly a very important matter. The development of the mind, the training of attention was a basic requirement in the matter of education. By cultivating and acquiring in a high degree the power of concentration one could master the key what could easily open the gate of any specialised branch of knowledge. This was a matter on which great emphasis was laid by Swami Vivekananda.

Nivedita, however, proceeds to develop another point of view. It is arguable that the individual of every nation should be able to pursue the studies necessary to the earning of a livelihood. This way of approach to education is rather deprecated by Nivedita. She writes :

"There is nothing so belittling to the human soul, as the acquisition of

*knowledge, for the sake of worldly reward. There is nothing so degrading to a nation, as coming to look upon the life of the mind as a means to bread-winning. Unless we strive for truth because we love it, and must at any cost attain, unless we live the life of thought out of our own rejoicing in it, the great things of heart and intellect will close their doors to us."*¹⁰

Education will not be worthy and noble if it is concerned only with the matter of bread-winning; it must value truth and thought for the joy involved in them. Then only education will be worth while.

Nivedita earnestly pleads for broadening the purpose and ideal of education. Why not elevate it to a high goal? She argues :

*"Why should we limit the social motive to a man's own family, or to his own community? Why not alter the focus, till we all stand, aiming each at the good of all-the-others, and willing, if need be, to sacrifice himself, his family, and even his particular social group, for the good of the whole? The will of the hero is even an impulse to self-sacrifice. It is for the good of the people -- not for own good -- that I should strive to become one with the highest, the noblest, and the most truth-loving that I can conceive."*¹¹

In this way, Nivedita insists that education should be motivated by a high purpose. No personal good -- not bread-winning as such -- should be the aim of education. The aim should be more elevated, more exalted. For one thing '*the good of the people*' should be aimed at. But the ideal should be even nobler than that -- there should be an earnest striving towards self-identification with "*the highest, the noblest, and the most truth-loving,*" that is conceivable.

This brings into focus the national ideal -- the ideal of learning and living for India. The idea of concentration of the mind, which is the older idea, will still be there, but it will be harmonised with and fitted into the newer ideal of the service of the nation. Nivedita developed her idea in this regard as follows :

"We have to think, then, of the concentration of the Indian mind on the Indian problem. In order to do this, we are not asked to abandon that older system of training the mind itself, But whereas, at present, the great bulk of our popular mind is preoccupied with schemes of instruction, for

*the purpose or earning individual livelihoods, we now desire to consider the best means for bringing about a conscious unification of that mind, in order that we may be better able to compass thereby the common weal, the good of the whole. This substitution of the common good for the particular good -- with the result that a higher level of individual good is rendered possible!"*¹²

Thus, according to Nivedita a high common good subsumes under it a higher level of individual good, because there is no basic conflict between the common good and the individual good if the relation between the two is viewed in right perspective.

Nivedita proceeds to point out that there are three elements in perfect education. She develops them as follows. Regarding item number one she writes :

*"First, if we would obtain from a human mind the highest possible return, we must recognise in its education the stage of preparing it to learn, of training it to receive impressions, of developing it intensively, as it were, independently to the particular branch of knowledge through which this is done."*¹³

The mind itself must first be trained and developed in a proper and thorough way -- it must be made a fit instrument of receiving ideas and impressions irrespective of the subject it is taught.

There after Nivedita mentions the second point -- *'the second element of perfect education.'* She writes :

*"Secondly, in all historic epochs, but pre-eminently in this modern age, there is a certain characteristic fund of ideas and concepts which is common to society as a whole, and must be imparted to every individual, who is to pass, in his mature life, as efficient. This is the element that is supposed in the common acceptance to be the whole of education. It bulks the largest. It costs the most labour. It is the process that it is most obviously impossible to eliminate. And it is really only one of three elements. And strange to say, it is the very one which is least essential to the manifestation of what we call genius."*¹⁴

What Nivedita actually means is that the second element of education involves the loading of the mind with packets of information bearing on

different subjects. Geography, history, algebra, and arithmetic, etc. are taught with great care, but these do not develop the inner faculties of the human mind. Knowledge of such subjects does not enkindle in the human mind the fire of genius.

Regarding the third element of education, Nivedita says :

"But thirdly, these two elements taken together, in their highest degree will only prepare the mind for real education. They are nothing more than preliminary conditions. They are by no means the essential itself. Having them, the mind has become a fit instrument. But of what? What shall be its message? What is to constitute the burden of its education? What is it that so much preparation has prepared it for? The third element in a perfect human development sweeps away the other two. It takes note of them only by implication, as it were, in the higher or lower fitness of the mind itself. The man meets his Guru ¹⁵, and devotes himself to a perfect passivity. Or he surrenders to some absorbing idea, which becomes the passion of his life. Or he takes up a pursuit, and lives henceforth for it, and it alone. He now stands a chance of contributing to the riches of humanity as a whole." ¹⁶ Nivedita introduces the concept of 'Guru', a peculiarly Indian concept. He is not a task-master so much. He does not load the pupils' mind with packets of information. He is a guide, an inspirer. He enables the student to develop his inner powers which lie dormant in him.

What is the role of 'Guru'?

Nivedita says :

"..... the Guru emancipates : he does not bind. It would be a poor service to him, if we felt compelled in his name to arrest the growth of an idea. Eventually we have to realise that the service to which he has called us is not his own, but that of Truth itself, and that this may take any form. But in the first place, it is essential that we begin where he left off. In the first place, emptied of self, we have to labour to give expression to that idea which has struck root in us through him," ¹⁷

The Guru (the teacher) does not convey so much information to the pupil as he inspires him with an idea. It should be the task and responsibility

of the student to grasp the idea thoroughly and to work it out with earnestness and devotion.

Character-building must also be regarded as a major objective of education. Character-formation on right lines can alone promote high-level culture.

"The growth of character can be much aided by intellectual activity, besides requiring it in its maturity as a means of self-expression. We do not want to identify the mere drill of learning to read and write, and the memorising of a few facts conveyed by that vehicle, with the idea of culture But we do not wish, on the other hand, to forget that it is a duty to develop our intellectual powers. No Hindu, who wishes to fulfil his obligations to the 'jana-desha-dharma', can afford to neglect any opportunity of learning that he can possibly make for himself." ¹⁸

The goal of education is visualised by Nivedita as follows :

"..... that the education of all, the people as well as the classes, woman as well as man, -- is not to be a desire with us, but it lies upon us as a command. Humanity is mind, not body, soul not flesh. Its heritage is in the life of thought and feeling. To close against any the gates of the higher life is a sin far greater than that of murder, for it means responsibility for spiritual death, for inner bondage, and the result is ruin unspeakable. There is but one imperative duty before us to-day. It is to help on Education by our very lives if need be." ¹⁹

To Nivedita, it was essential that education should be brought within the reach of all -- the masses as well as the classes. To deny education to any one is worse than murder -- for murder means only physical death, where as denial of education meant intellectual death -- nay more, spiritual death. To spread broadcast throughout the length and breadth of the country should be the duty of all those who have already reviewed the benefit of education.

Some vital implications of education are elucidated by Nivedita as follows :

"Our conception of education must have a soul. It must form a unity. It must take note of the child as a whole, as heart as well as of the mind, will

as well as mind and heart. Unless we train the feelings and the choice, our man is not educated. He is only decked out in certain intellectual tricks that he has learnt to perform. By these tricks he can earn his bread. He cannot appeal to the heart, or give life. He is not a man at all; he is a clever ape. Learning in order to appear clever, or learning in order to earn a livelihood, -- not in order to become a man, to develop one's own manhood and manliness, -- means running into this danger. Therefore, in every piece of information that is imparted to a child, we must convey an appeal to the heart. At every step in the ascent of knowledge, the child's own will must act. We must never carry the little one upwards and onwards; he must himself struggle to climb. Our care must be to put just so much difficulty in his way as to stimulate his will, just so little as to avoid discouragement. When, within and behind the knowledge gained, there stands a man, there stands a mind, then the task of instruction can be changed into one of self education. The taught is now safe : he will teach himself." ²⁰

In the above description a vital element of Nivedita's theory of education is summed up. The feelings and choice of the child must be trained. An appeal must be made to his heart, not merely information is to be imparted to him to enable him to make a show of knowledge. His will must be stimulated. The child must be given full opportunity to develop himself -- to rise to higher and higher stages by his own effort. He must grow into a man with a distinctive mind of his own. There will be no further need to teach him -- he will teach himself.

Education must also have a definite national aspect. It should aim at nation-making. Nivedita wrote :

"Education in India to-day, has to be not only national, but Nation-making." ²¹

The people must above all things develop a national sense -- a national feeling. What Nivedita understood by national feeling is clear from her own words :

"National feelings is, above all, feeling for others. It is rooted in public spirit, in a strong civic sense. But these are only grandiloquent name for what may be described as organised unselfishness. The best preparation for

nation-making that a child can receive is to see his elders always eager to consider the general good, rather than their own." ²²

Nivedita again gave her own understanding about a nation. She wrote:

"We are a nation, when every man is an organ of the whole, when every part of the whole is precious to us, when the family weighs nothing, in comparison with the people." ²³

Nivedita writes with fervour that the ideal of education must become wedded to the ideal of high patriotism :

"Let love for country and countrymen, for People and Soil, be the mould into which our lives flow hot. If we reach this, every thought we think, every word of knowledge gained, will aid in making clearer and clearer the great picture. With faith in the Mother, and Bhakti for India, the true interpretation of facts will come to us unsought. We shall see the country as united, where we were told that she was fragmentary. Thinking her united, she will actually be so. The universe is the creation of mind, not matter. And can anyone force in the world resist a single thought, held with intensity by three hundred millions of people? Here we have the true course of a nation-making education." ²⁴

Whereas her Master Swami Vivekananda thought of *man-making* as his goal, the whole emphasis of Nivedita was on *nation-making*. She wrote :

"National education is, first and foremost, an education in the national idealism." ²⁵

Nivedita asserted that the reconstitution of the nation is possible only through its ideals. She wrote :

"The ideal presented must always be first clothed in a form evolved by our own past. Our imagination must be first based on our own heroic literature. Our hope must be woven out of our history." ²⁶

Again Nivedita says :

"It must never be forgotten that nationality in culture is the means, not the end. There is a level of achievement where all the educated persons of the world can meet, understand and enjoy each other's association. This level is freedom. Intellectually speaking, it is Mukti. But it can be reached

only by him whose knowledge is firm-rooted in love for mother and motherland" ²⁷

Incidentally Nivedita discusses the place of foreign culture in the education of Indians. Nivedita is firmly of the view that Indian students must be firmly rooted in national culture before they turn their attention to foreign education. To go in for foreign education without getting properly acquainted with indigenous culture is wrong in Nivedita's view. To send out young men to foreign countries for foreign education without grounding them thoroughly in national culture is to put the cart before the horse. This is as much true in literary education as in scientific education. We give some quotations from Nivedita. Nivedita questions :

"Can foreign learning ever be so deeply grafted upon the stem of a man's own development that it forms a real and vital part of his intellectual personality?" ²⁸

Again she says :

"In all learning we should try to give knowledge, only in answer to enquiry. This is the ideal. If we could attain it perfectly, every child would grow up to be a genius. But how can there be curiosity about truth that is not within our world?" ²⁹

This implies that knowledge cannot be forced upon anyone. Knowledge can be imparted only if there is a craving for knowledge on the part of the student. But how can there be such craving or curiosity in respect of surroundings unknown or unfamiliar to the student?

Some distinction, however, is made by Nivedita between knowledge of science and of art. She says :

"In pure knowledge, and therefore in science, there can be neither native nor foreign. Emotion on the other hand, is entirely a matter of locality. All form is purely local. Every man's heart has its own country. Therefore, art, which is form infused with emotion, must always be strongly characteristic of the place, the people and the mental tradition, whence it has sprung." ³⁰ Nevertheless she says :

"Even in science it will only be those men who believe themselves to be inheriting and working out the greatest ideals of the Indian

past, who will be able to lay one stone on the edifice of the national future -- if there is to be such an edifice at all." ³¹

On this matter Nivedita concludes :

"The whole body of foreign knowledge can be assimilated easily by one thus rooted and grounded in his relation to his own country." ³²

In the present context, we consider the writing of Dr. Biman Behari Mazumder on Nivedita to be worth recording :

"..... The Education Commission and Committees which has made voluminous recommendations during the last fifty years have often ignored basic facts and result has been a progressive deterioration of our ethical and educational standard. It is worth noting also that Nivedita emphasised the need of imparting manual training to students long before the formulation of the Wardha plan of education." ³³

V

After eight months of struggle and suffering through the months of November 1899 to June 1900, with her Guru's blessings, Nivedita was able at long last to achieve some measure of success on the financial front. She had success on some other fronts too in the matter of her school for girls in Calcutta. Her long standing desire to have a permanent guild in America for help towards the education of women of India fructified in the shape of the Ramakrishna Guild of Help in America which she was able to establish with Mrs. Francis M. Leggett as the President, Mrs. Ole Bull as the Honorary National Secretary and with representatives in Chicago, New York, Boston and Detroit. Miss Christine Greenstidel, who was later to take over much of the burden of Nivedita's school work in India, became the Secretary of the Detroit Committee. Miss J. Macleod became the Honorary Vice-President of the New York Committee.

The Guild helped Nivedita publish a booklet entitled *The Project of the Ramakrishna School for Girls* with the following appeal to the Americans' sense of charity :

"Let me say, in conclusion, that I trust I am seeking to divert no energy from the near duty to the far. In these days of international commerce and finance, we are surely realising that only World Service is true Home-Service. Already, we seem to be answering Walt Whitman's sublime question in the affirmative -- 'Are all nations communing? Is there going to be but one heart to the globe?'" ³⁴

Nivedita's mission to the West -- representing her work for Indian women, raising funds for their education -- shows her intense suffering in the process of what she set out to do like her Master saying in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in September, 1893, she could have summed up her experience in the United States by saying : *"I came here to seek aid for my impoverished people and I fully realised how difficult it was to get help for heathens from Christians in a Christian land."* ³⁵

Nivedita suffered through most of the time of her work in the United States. She was weary, often disappointed and at times even heart-broken in facing the ridicule, argument and opposition. All the same, she kept going, being sustained by the words of her Master, having known from him that *"suffering is the lot of the world's best and bravest"* ³⁶ and that our sufferings *"come to do us good in the long run, although at the time we feel that we are submerged for ever."* ³⁷ Her *"awful sufferings at Almora made India be born in my heart with this passion of love"* ³⁸ and her intense suffering in the United States made her realise that no great truth can find acceptance without ridicule, argument, and opposition, ³⁹ and having overcome them all in the end, she felt that *"in future I can take my responsibilities on my shoulders, as much as Swami does his. I have got my diploma."* ⁴⁰

Nivedita now knew the uses of suffering : *"How curious is this mystery of pain : I see now as clear as day-light."* ⁴¹ In seeing and realising thus, Nivedita stood like Andre in the great Tolstoy classic, *War and Peace*. She suffered, she showed her wounds and still she stood to proclaim, with fullest reverence to her Guru -- *"I don't want salvation in any form -- I prefer to*

help, to be a sacrifice." ⁴² That was the spirit which animated and sustained Nivedita in her struggles in the United States for the cause of Indian women's education, eventually making her triumphant in her mission.

Having told the story of Nivedita's mission to the West -- a story of struggle and sacrifice to the cause of Indian women's education, we turn now to a discussion of the '*nation-making*' significance of the theory and practice of Nivedita's educational ideas. But before we go into the heart of that discussion, it will be in order, by way of setting the tone of the major discussion, to reflect briefly on the distinction Nivedita drew between formal education and intrinsic '*home*' education of Indian women.

It was Nivedita's firm conviction that the Indian women, contrary to canards spread about by some Western critics, particularly Christian missionaries, were neither uneducated nor ignorant. Nivedita made a distinction between formal education and intrinsic education and asserted that the Indian women had enough of the latter in their homes. To quote Nivedita :

"An Indian woman who has the education of the India's home, the dignity, the gentleness, the cleanliness, thrift, the religious training, the culture of mind and heart, which that home life entails, though she cannot perhaps read a word of her own language, much less sign her name, may be infinitely better educated in every true sense, and in the literary sense also than her glib critic." ⁴³

Are the Indian women ignorant? Nivedita answers this question in the following terms :

"They are ignorant in the modern form, that is to say, few can write, and not very many can read. Are they then illiterate? If so, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and the Puranas and the stories every mother and grand-mother tells to the babies are not literature. But European novels and Strand Magazine by the same token are. Can any of us accept this paradox?" ⁴⁴

In substantiating her point that the Indian women were neither uneducated nor ignorant and in asserting the intrinsic value of education that the Indian women received at home, Nivedita gives the supreme example of

the Holy Mother, Sarada Devi, who had none of the formal education and yet, observes Nivedita :

"To me it has always appeared that she (Sarada Devi) is Sri Ramakrishna's final word as to the ideal of Indian womanhood In her, one sees realised that wisdom and sweetness to which the simplest of women may attain. And yet, to myself the stateliness of her courtesy and her great open mind are almost as wonderful as her sainthood." ⁴⁵

Nivedita gives an instance of the Holy Mother's power of comprehending instantly a new religious idea. She visited Nivedita on the afternoon of a certain Easter day when Nivedita entertained her with Easter music and singing. Nivedita was apprehensive that the Holy Mother would not be able to appreciate a foreign culture, but what she found instead is best described in her words :

"And in the swiftness of her comprehension, and the depth of her sympathy with these resurrection-hymns unimpeded by any foreignness or unfamiliarity in them, we saw revealed for the first time, one of the most impressive aspects of the great religious culture of Sarada Devi. The same power is seen to a certain extent, in all the women about her, who were touched by the hand of Sri Ramakrishna. But in her, it has all the strength and certainty of some high and arduous form of scholarship." ⁴⁶

Can such a lady be called uneducated even if she did not read much beyond the Ramayana and did not know how to write? Nivedita answers that one need not necessarily be versed in the three R's to be educated :

"Reading and writing are not in themselves education. The power to use them well is vastly more important than the things themselves. A woman in whom the great compassion is awakened, a woman who understands the national history, a woman who has made some of the great Tirthas and has a notion of what her country looks like, is much more truly and deeply educated than one who has merely read much." ⁴⁷

Now, the question might be asked as to why it was necessary for Nivedita to make arrangement for the formal education of Indian women at all when they had already possessed through intrinsic education *"of the India's home the dignity, the gentleness, the cleanliness, the thrift, the*

religious training, the culture of the mind and heart" ⁴⁸ and even wisdom? Nivedita would answer that what she wrote of the Indian women was true enough and all that she wanted in her educational scheme for them was to see that the spiritual strength of Indian women find a new application in the modern age. After all, her Guru Swami Vivekananda had a genius for synthesizing the old and the new and as heir to that legacy she had *"to nationalise the modern and modernise the old."* ⁴⁹ Understood in the context of Indian women, this means a task for her to transform the family ideal of Indian women into civic and national ideals. To quote Nivedita :

"The fact is, by education of Indian women we mean to-day her civilization. The problem of the age, for India, as we have constantly insisted, is to supersede the family, as a motive, and even as a form of consciousness, by the civitas, the civic and national unity This cannot be done by men, as men, alone. It is still more necessary that it should be done by women." ⁵⁰

It should be emphatically pointed out here that by '*supersession of the family*', Nivedita never meant that the Indian women should ever give up their family values, the simplicity and sobriety of their domestic lives and imitate instead the Western women in respect of the extravagance and aggressiveness of the latter. She wanted the Indian women to stick to the roots of their family lives but strike, nevertheless, a dynamic balance between their family and national ideals. She believed that such balance between the old and the new, between the traditional and the modern was demanded of the Indian women in the new age in which modern India found herself.

In her way, this is exactly what Nivedita sought to do. Charging the Indian women with national consciousness and training them for their country by elevating their family ideal into the national ideal was the theoretical significance -- indeed, the be-all and end-all of the educational ideas and the educational scheme of Sister Nivedita.

In Nivedita's scheme of things education for Indian women meant, so to say, their development on national lines. At the centre of this development on national lines was the thought of India, love for the country

and the service to its people, which found the best possible expression in the words of her Master : Swami Vivekananda :

"Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim, 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother.' Say 'The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, is my brother.' Thou, too, clad with but a rag round thy lions proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice : 'The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God. India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth the sacred heaven, the Varanashi of my old age.' " ⁵¹

Having imbibed Swamiji's thoughts on Indian women and their education, Nivedita outlined her own concept of the 'great' purpose of education for Indian women as follows :

"To work, to suffer, and to love in the highest sphere; to transcend limits; to be sensitive to the great causes; to stand transfigured by national righteousness; this is the true emancipation of women and this is the key to her efficient education." ⁵²

Since Nivedita wanted to impart a sense of nationality to Indian women and develop their national consciousness, she was never tired of saying that the purpose of the whole educational exercise was to nurture the women's sense of dedication to the country, the people and the national ideal. In words almost similar to those of her Master, she wrote that all Indians must be surrounded with the thought of their nation and their country.

"The centre of gravity must lie, for them, outside the family. We must demand from them sacrifices for India, Bhakti for India, learning for India. This must be as the breath of life to them. We must teach them about India in school and at home. Some lessons must fill out the conception, others must build up the sense of contrast. Burning love, love without a limit. Love that seeks only the good of the beloved, and has no thought of self, this is the passion that we must demand of them." ⁵³

Nivedita took an organic view of the relation between the individual and society. As an organic part of the whole, the individual must try to lift

the whole. She pointed out that this was in line with the thinking of our forefathers. In bidding us worship the waters of the seven sacred rivers or the earth of the holy place, the feet of one's Guru or one's mother, our forefathers taught us to dedicate ourselves to the *Jana-desha-dharma*, the ethos of our people. Swami Vivekananda said, "*They alone live who live for others.*" "*In proportion as we realise this,*" observed Nivedita, "*can be the greatness of our living. In proportion as it is our motive, will be the reality of our education.*" ⁵⁴

Nivedita believed that education in India had to be not only national, but also nation-making. By national education she meant that education which had a strong colour of its own and, being rooted in the culture and traditions of the home and the country, enabled one to feel intensely for one's country and to work sincerely for the good of one's country :

"Hunger for the good of others, as an end in itself, the infinite pity that wakes in the heart of an Avatara, at the sight of the suffering of humanity, these are the seed and root of nation-making. We are a nation, when every man is an organ of the whole, when every part of the whole is precious to us; when the family weighs nothing, in comparison with the people." ⁵⁵

A national education, by its very definition, must be made up of indigenous elements. It must be based on our own heroic literature and our history. Geographical identity and sense of historic sequence must be inculcated through the ideals of India. Once the knowledge of the trainee is firmly rooted in the love for mother and motherland, for the people and culture of the country, it will not be difficult for him to move from all that is known and familiar to all that is true, cosmopolitan and universal. ⁵⁶

In other words, girls, as others, must begin with a loyal acceptance of the standards of society. As they advance in achievement, they would learn to understand both the imperatives and opportunities of national life. Finally, by fulfilling these demands, and availing themselves to the full of their opportunities, they would grow more than Indian ever before. ⁵⁷

Nivedita held that only when the womanhood of India knew about and was able to worship the altar fire of nationality would the temple of Mother India be lit up. In order to impart the sense of nationality to Indian women,

she would turn to Indian history and literature which abounded in examples of exalted womanhood. If one was looking for the strong, resourceful, inspired and crisis-fighting type, one had her in Padmini of Chitor, Chand Bibi and the Rani of Jhansi. Meera Bai represented the saintly, mystic and poetic type. Rani Bhawani, Ahalya Bai, Janhabai of Mymensingh were great in administration. Sati Savitri and Sita were the best examples of marital fidelity, while Uma was that of maidenhood. Among the women of the world it was difficult to find another who could rival Gandhari in her sense of righteousness. What these women presented were not so much fame and glory as holiness, simplicity, sincerity, in a word, their character. Their ideals were, therefore, constructive. Indian women must be trained in these ideals. As Nivedita succinctly observes : *"There can never be any sound education of the Indian women, which does not begin and end in exaltation of the national ideals of womanhood, and embodied in her own history and heroic literature."* ⁵⁸

Nivedita fervently hoped that the national ideals of womanhood and historical awareness *"would indeed stir effectively in the minds and hearts of those who are called of the Mother's voice to make themselves once more a mighty nation. For in order that nationality may become a reality it is essential that the history of the country should become a direct mode of consciousness with all her children."* ⁵⁹

In a word, education guided by the prime impulse of national reconstruction was the educational vision that Nivedita had for Indian women, may, for all Indians. She wanted to awaken the Indians' national consciousness and develop their sense of national identity. To quote the beautiful words in which she expressed her aim of education :

"The Samaj is the strength of the family; home behind the civic life; and the civic life sustains the nationality. This is the formula of human combination. The essentials of all four elements we have amongst us. We have inherited all that India needs, in our ancient Dharma. But we have allowed much of their consciousness to sleep. We have again to realise the meaning of our own treasure." ⁶⁰

The only means of such realisation that she suggested was the

awakening of a sense of service to the country. *'How can I serve my country?'*, -- should be the cry of every educated woman's and man's heart, and her or his central concern. In the inimitable words of Sister Nivedita, *"The meaning of the word India and the place of India in the world together with a burning desire to serve India, the soil and the people, are the things that are to be recognised as EDUCATION for women. These things are the centre"* ⁶¹ These words contain the essence of the educational ideas of Sister Nivedita which she sought to translate into practice by opening a school for girls and women in the Baghbazar area of Calcutta.

What was the need and rationale for establishing such a school? The rationale lay in the fact that the system of education as it was prevalent at that time was a discipline rather than a development. Taking into account the three R's at the primary stage and higher education at the university stage, the prevalent system covered only a handful of Bengali girls -- a mere six and half percent of the total population of Bengal. There was, therefore, a great need for further diffusion of education along meaningful lines. Having established the rationale, Nivedita pointed out that education in her school should mean development adopted to the actual needs of lives. *"It is undeniable that if we could add to the present lives of Indian women, larger scope for individuality, a larger social potentiality and some power of economic redress, without adverse criticism, direct or indirect, of present institutions, we should achieve something of which there is dire necessity."* ⁶²

Nivedita was asked in the West about the purpose in establishing her school in India. The answer that she gave deserves to be quoted in view of the clarity with which she articulated her purpose :

"To give education (not instruction merely) to orthodox Hindu girls in a form that is suited to the needs of the country. I recognise that if any Indian institutions are faulty it is the right of the Indian people themselves to change them. We may only aim to produce ripe judgement and power of action. Also, I consider that we should confer a direct benefit on any Indian woman whom we could enable to earn her own living, without loss of social honour." ⁶³

Implicit in the above statement is the educational philosophy of Sister

Nivedita on two counts. First, like her Master, she believed in natural growth. Education must have the standpoint of the learner and help him / her to develop in his / her own way. This philosophy of natural growth found explicit statement in a letter she wrote to Alberta Sturges (Lady Sandwich) on September, 1908.

"The fact is, Education, like growth, must be always from within. Only the inner struggle, only the will of the taught is of avail. Those who think otherwise do so only because they are ignorant of education as a science by itself. We know that it is true of ourselves as individuals, that only the effort we make ourselves advances us. All the hammering in the world from outside, would be useless -- if indeed it did not repel, and destroy our will to climb. The same is true of societies as of individuals -- education must be from within." ⁶⁴

Secondly, she would do nothing to disturb the existing social, religious, or economic order. She would offer no criticism of the existing institutions with which the Indians were familiar, believing that every country had a right to lay down its own etiquette and was entitled to have respect for it. This was where the Christian missionaries had gone wrong -- in seeking not the furtherance of Indian social life but its disintegration. *"The missionaries are mistaken because, whether right or wrong in their assertion of the present need of education, they are not in a position to discriminate rightly the elements of value in the existing training of Oriental girls for life."* ⁶⁵ The Christian educationists disregarded the value of education that a girl received from her grandmother at home. Far from neglecting such education, Nivedita put a premium on it :

"There ought to be interaction between school and home. But the home is the chief of these factors. To it, the school should be subordinated, and not the reverse. That is to say, the education of an Indian girl should be directed towards making of her a more truly Indian woman. She must be enabled by it to recognise for herself what are the Indian ideals, and how to achieve them; not made contemptuous of those ideals, and left to gather her own from the moral and social chaos of novels by Ouida.

..... Indian ideals of family-cohesion, of charity, of frugality and of

*honour; the admiration of the national heroes; the fund of poetic legends, must be daily and hourly discussed and commented on. All that makes India India, must flow through the Indian home to make it Indian."*⁶⁶

What courses would Nivedita offer in the school to drive this sense of Indianness to the very bone of Indians? Founded on the kindergarten system, the school would offer, (a) Bengali Language and Literature, (b) English Language and Literature, (c) Elementary Mathematics, (d) Elementary Science, and (e) Manual Training. By Manual Training, Nivedita meant the use of hands for the making of handicrafts. The immediate objective of the last subject was to enable every pupil to earn her own living, without leaving her home. Its ultimate objective was to bring about a revival of old Indian industries and arts. It should not go unmentioned here that in including manual training in the curriculum, Sister Nivedita anticipated one of the basic foundations of Gandhiji's *Nai Talim* and what goes by the name of vocational education at the present time. Worthy of mention in this connection is the fact that Nivedita proposed to take the help of the Hindu widows in her school. She had a women's section added to the girls section in her school in 1903 *"to organise two or three industries for which promising markets can be opened up in England, India and America. Amongst these, making of native jams, pickles, and chutneys is to be included."*⁶⁷ It should be noted here that a great advocate of industrial education and economic emancipation of women, Swami Vivekananda talked of setting up cottage industries at Belur Math and he was the first to moot the idea of Sister Nivedita that the girls at her school could make jam etc. Greatly elated over ideas, Nivedita wrote in her letter to Miss Macleod dated 7.6.1899 : *"It strikes me as excellent. You have no idea of the deliciousness of green mango jam. And of course, you know Bengali Chutney. I am sure we can do this, and it would be widening the scope of our work educationally. To be managed entirely by women, think of that! Of course, we would make a very small beginning. Oh, I am dying to really earn what we want."*⁶⁸ This sort of thinking in terms of making women stand on their own legs economically should be considered revolutionary in view of rigid orthodoxy of the Hindu society of that time.

Since Nivedita's school was modelled on the kindergarten, it is necessary to note what exactly she meant by this system. She despised imitation and all things foreign, and how is it that she followed a system which was of foreign origin? Is there any apparent contradiction? No, there is no contradiction if the real import of what she meant by its use in the Indian context is understood. The system was, no doubt, of foreign origin; in that the Swiss educationist Pestalozzi laid down its broad principles and the German educationist Froebel made the first application of these principles in certain directions. Nivedita made it clear from the very outset that the kindergarten in Europe and kindergarten in India were two different things. She *Indianised* the kindergarten, making that system an '*efflorescence of Indian life itself*'.⁶⁹

As Nivedita insightfully observed in her letter to Swami Akhandananda, "*India cannot swallow the kindergarten as practised in Germany. But she can learn to understand that, and then make one of her own, different in details, but concordant in intention.*"⁷⁰ Nivedita suggests the development in schools of home art such as clay modelling, paper cutting, and drawing in the form of *alpana*. She writes, "*The right course is not to introduce a foreign process, but to take home art and develop its own lines, carrying it to greater ends, by growth from within.*"⁷¹ Nivedita also found great virtue in the image-worship of the Hindus, in *cow-puja* ("*I was informed by so authoritative a body as the professors in the Minnesota College of Agriculture, U.S.A., that this procedure of the Hindu women is strictly scientific.*" "*The cow is only able to yield her full possibility of milk to a milker whom she regards as her own child.*"⁷²) and in the traditional religious vows or *vratas* observed by Indian girls. Nivedita writes :

"The religious education of Hinduism is a complete development not only of the religious, but also of the domestic and social mind. But the Department does not understand this. This image is a means of basing the idea of divine mercy on concrete sensation. The girls' vratas, the cow-puja, and fifty other things, are a complete inclusion of this theory in Hinduism itself, and the right way would be to start from them, and go further if possible. Meanwhile, the beginning of education may be in the concrete, but

its end lies in the trained attention, and power of concentrating the mind -- and that India understands, as Europe never can." ⁷³

The discourse on Nivedita's educational ideas will remain incomplete without mentioning how she sought to give her pupils national consciousness in her own school at Baghbazar. Unselfish love and dedicated service characterised the development of the school. Nivedita had to beg money in foreign countries such as U.S.A. and money in aid from foreign well-wishers for running the school. The privations she had to suffer going to the extent of cutting down her personal expenses on rice and milk has been noted even by Rabindranath Tagore. Nivedita was assisted in running the school by Sister Christine, an American disciple of Swami Vivekananda, about whom Nivedita wrote : *"All the things that Swami dreamt for me, she is fulfilling."* ⁷⁴ Another person who assisted greatly these two in their work for the school was Sudhira Devi. She read upto class VIII in Brahmo Girls' School and was inspired to offer her honorary service to Nivedita's school by her brother, Debabrata Basu, a revolutionary who subsequently became a Sannyasin at the Belur Math.

In view of the great purpose Nivedita sought to realise, her school may unhesitatingly be called the first national school for girls on modern lines. She taught her pupils geography, history, needle-work, and drawing. Most interesting were her classes on Indian history. She had a passion for it. She believed that *"a national consciousness expresses itself through history, even as a man realises himself by the memories and associations of his own life."* ⁷⁵ While talking about historical personages in the class, she would even forget that she was in the class-room. This happened one day when she was talking in the class about her visit to Chitor : *"I went up the hill and sat down on my knee. I closed my eyes and thought of Padmini. I saw Padmini Debi standing near the pyre and tried to think of the last thought that might have crossed Padmini's mind."* ⁷⁶ She would relate the stories with gestures and manners so lively that it would seem as if she were in Chitor at that moment in time. Her objective in bringing back alive to her pupils the history of India was to excite their imagination and emotions and thus nurture in them the idea of India as an absorbing passion. ⁷⁷

Having told her girls stories about the Rajput women, she would exhort them : *"You must all be like them. Oh Daughters of Bharata : You all vow to be like the Kshatriya women."* ⁷⁸ It is worth quoting Pravrajika Atmaprana, the biographer of Sister Nivedita, on how Sister Nivedita always reminded the girls that they were the daughters of Bharata-Varsha :

"During the Swadeshi Movement, she took the girls to the Brahmo Girls' School so that they might listen lectures given in the adjoining park. In the Swadeshi Exhibition organised by the Congress in 1906, Nivedita sent the handicraft of her students for display. She introduced spinning in her school and appointed an old lady for the task whom the girls called Charka-Ma. At a time when the singing of Bande-Mataram was prohibited by the government, she introduced it daily in her school prayers." ⁷⁹

Elsewhere Atmaprana writes :

"When the Swadeshi Movement started she (Nivedita) came forward to boycott foreign goods and encouraged her pupils to do the same The idea of a national flag came to Nivedita's mind in 1906 during the Calcutta session of the Congress. She chose the design of the Vajra, the thunderbolt, had it embroidered by her pupils, and displayed it in the Congress Exhibition. By such activities she instilled into her students the spirit of patriotism and love for their own historical and cultural ideals." ⁸⁰

Nivedita was greatly fond of education by public spirit, and by travel -- not purposeless travel, but travel for India. *"To prepare one's daughters to understand their country when they see her, would not be a bad way of summing up the object of childhood schooling,"* ⁸¹ she wrote. Lack of funds did not allow her to take her girls to historic places like Puri and Bhubaneswar, Chitor and Banares, Ujjain and Rajgir, Elephanta and Conjeevaram. But she made up that deficiency to some extent by taking them on short trips to places such as the Calcutta zoo, museum, and Dakshineswar. The educational value of such trips would be obvious from what she told her pupils during a moment of crisis on one of such trips. They were all going by boat which rolled on one side as the river was rough. The girls were very much afraid when Nivedita said : *"Why are you afraid? Don't fear the big waves. Good boatmen remain firm at the helm and go over the*

waves safely. If in our lives we too learn to remain steadfast, then we will have no fear in life never." ⁸² It is this Upanishadic message of fearlessness, strength, courage and steadfastness in gaol that her Master preached all his life and it is this message that Nivedita was seeking to make true to the life of her pupils.

"*Straighten up your back*" was the advice she would give her students. "*Don't indulge in over-exuberance or be exhibitivite but be creative by all means.*" Anybody visiting her small room in the school could see Nivedita's room decorated with toys and painting made by her girls under her creative advice. She displayed them very proudly to all her visitors. On one such visit, Anandacoomaraswamy, the great art connoisseur, praised a small alpna design drawn by one of Nivedita's pupils. At this, Nivedita was beside herself with joy. This shows the great emphasis Nivedita gave on developing the artistic talents of the students, her ultimate objective in this regard being the revival of ancient Indian art. She exclaimed : "*How happy will be that day when Sanskrit written on palm leaves by my girls will decorate my room.*"

It was undiluted pure love of a mother that Nivedita extended to the whole of India. It was the fullest extension of a woman's family ideal to the national ideal. The whole India was Nivedita's family. It was only in the fitness of his poetic vision that Rabindranath Tagore called Nivedita '*Lokamata.*' Can India ever repay the all-embracing love and selfless giving of this noble lady who was more Indian than any Indian could ever be and whose life was one long message on the urgent necessity of national unity and national integration of India? The content of the last sentence represents the fundamental idea behind all her thoughts including thoughts on national education. "*Be a nation. Think great of yourselves. Believe in your organic relatedness. Imagine a life in which all have common interests, common needs and mutually complementary duties*" ⁸³ : this was the message Sister Nivedita left behind -- a message which is even more relevant for India of today than it was for India of the time she lived and worked for.

VI

Rabindranath Tagore was a great son of India. His unique achievements and contribution in the field of literature, art and education won him *"universal fame and have equally raised the status of our country in eyes of the world."*

Tagore was born on 6th May, 1861, in a family of Brahmo Samajists in Calcutta. Maharishi Devendranath Tagore, his father, was a great leader of this organisation. Rabindranath received his education mostly at home through tutors and private readings. He showed his resentment against the then prevalent system of education, and was unhappy when admitted in some academy and school for learning English. He considered himself fortunate for having escaped the then existing process of learning. Tagore records his own impression regarding his early education : *"The masters and Pandits who were charged with my education soon abandoned the thankless task (his teacher) realised that this boy could never be driven along the beaten track of learning."* When sent to London to study law, there too he could not pull on, and came back to India after one year.

Tagore developed much understanding of human nature, and had the experience and insight of educational problems. His interest in education developed to such an extent that he started his school in 1901 at Bolpur in West Bengal. In this school, as Prof. V.R. Taneja maintains, *"he gave a name and local habitation to his dynamic idealism."* In 1921, that school became a world famous university known as Visva Bharati University, initially known as 'Santiniketan Ashram.' Having rendered extra-ordinary service in the fields like art, literature, drama, music, and education, Tagore died on August 7, 1941. On his death the syndicate of the University of Calcutta placed on record his services to India :

"Through him India has given her message to mankind and his unique achievements in the fields of literature, philosophy, education, and art have won imperishable fame for himself and have raised the status of India in the estimation of the world."

To Tagore, real education is that which makes one's life in 'harmony

with all existence.' He wants to harmonise the extreme and follow the policy of the '*Golden mean.*' He interprets harmony in three contexts -- harmony with nature, with human surroundings, with international relations. And Tagore's educational philosophy is based on four fundamentals : Naturalism, Humanism, Internationalism, and Idealism. On the basis of these concepts, Tagore accounts the function of education to enable us to realise that "*to live as man is great, requiring profound philosophy for its ideal, poetry for its expression and heroism for its conduct.*"

According to Tagore, "*Education has its only meaning and object in freedom; from ignorance about the laws of universe, and freedom from passion and prejudice in our communication with the human world.*" He wanted freedom of mind, freedom of heart, and freedom of will which lead to spontaneous self-expression, to display their emotional outbursts, feelings, impulses and instincts. This is possible through various activities and in a natural atmosphere charged with freedom. Education in this sense should be natural in context and quality.

Like Gandhi and other progressive educationists, Tagore discarded mere intellectual development. According to Tagore education should take place through some activities and direct experiences, promoting creative self-expression through craft, music, drawing, and dramatics. He laid stress on learning by doing and manual work. He said, "*Hard work, music, and arts are the spontaneous overflow of our deeper nature and spiritual significance.*" Tagore also suggested leather work, dancing, and painting for creative self-expression.

Tagore suggested that the children should be brought into direct contact with nature. Education should take place through natural manifestation in natural environment. This will help in the realisation of the immediate relationship with nature. To him, there is a spiritual relationship between nature and God, nature and man, and hence between man and God. His naturalism was different from Rousseau's naturalism. It was essentially based on humanism. Tagore wanted that the child should be taught amidst natural surroundings so that he may clearly understand nature and its relation with the facts of human life. His concept of naturalism stands for

love and harmony with all that exists in nature.

As stated above, Tagore was an internationalist to the core. He translated his passion for the unity of man in Visva Bharati which still remains the symbol of world culture and international understanding. According to Tagore, *"Visva Bharati acknowledges India's obligation to offer to others the hospitality of her best culture and India's right to accept from others their best."* The main ideals of Visva Bharati are to *"establish intimate relationship between the East and the West, to promote inter-cultural, inter-social understanding and to strive for the unification of mankind."*

On the basis of Tagore's principles of Educational philosophy, he described education as a means to develop the personality of the child to its fullest so as to enable man to live in harmony with all existence. It is to live life as a whole and live life in abundance. Tagore believed that *"education is reformatory and expansive process which seeks to unfold all that is good and noble to individual. True knowledge brings enlightenment and self-realisation."*

Tagore expressed his views in the following words, *"Education is a permanent part of the venture of life. It is not like a painful hospital treatment of curing students of the malady, their ignorance, but it is a function of the health, the natural expression of their minds."* Tagore conceived education as *"dynamic, living, and closely associated with life."* As Tagore said, *"The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but make our life in harmony with all existence."*

Tagore attached much importance to the healthy physical development of the children in early years. He severely criticised the system of education which partially exercised the intellect only to the entire neglect of the body.

Tagore laid equal stress on the development of the power of thinking and power of imagination of the mind. He believed that the emancipation of the intellect from inertia and dead habits should constitute a real element in the intellectual make up of an individual.

Tagore was also a great moral teacher. He attached the importance of inner discipline, attainment of ideal of peace and tranquillity, a simple way of life, and naturalness. He emphasised power of self-determination, attainment

of inner freedom, an inner power and enlightenment. This ideal aims at emancipation of the self from moral and spiritual slavery in its struggle against blind superstitions and prejudices, outmoded customs and traditions.

Tagore was equally alive to the great importance of sociability and human feeling as an indispensable equipment of a truly educated person. According to Tagore, education must lead to harmonious development of all human faculties, and the attainment of full manhood. He established a synthesis between the individual development and the development of the society.

Tagore stood for international knowledge, universal brotherhood of man and international harmony. He said, "*Mankind must realise a unity, wider in range, deeper in sentiment, stronger in power than ever before.*" The aim of Visva Bharati was to achieve this aim, i.e. synthesis of the East and the West.

"*Fullness of experience*" is the central theme of Tagore's educational philosophy. According to him, education must be a part of life. It should in no case be detached from it and be made into something abstract. Tagore said, "*Our education should be in full touch with our complete life, economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual, and our educational institutions should be in the very heart of our society, connected with it by the living bonds of varied co-operation.*"

Tagore did not want education to be "*shut off from the daily life of the people.*" So, he interpreted the curriculum not in terms of certain subjects to be learnt but in terms of '*certain activities to be undertaken.*' His concept of curriculum was '*broad based*'. It consists of subjects, activities, and actual living. Among the subjects Tagore recommended are Language, Literature, History, Geography, Nature Study, Science, Music, Art, etc. Like Rousseau, Tagore also emphasised activities and occupations. Activities like Dancing, Drawing, Painting, Handwork, Excursions, Gardening, Dramatics, Music, Art, etc. find a remarkable place in the curriculum of his scheme of education. Life at Santiniketan is practical, full of vigour, and sense of service. Everyone is an active member of the community, and has to render service, and manual labour. Department of Rural Reconstruction is a centre of

attraction in this regard.

Tagore did not approve of the class-room teaching. He urged upon the teachers to impart education in the natural setting and natural surrounding. Like Rousseau, Tagore also recommended 'Robinson Crusoe', frequent excursions, and tours, during which the pupils, with their senses alert, might observe and learn numerous facts of interest. Education must be given in geographical, historical, and economic perspective.

For Tagore, there are three sources of knowledge -- nature, life, and the teacher. There should be a close co-ordination and harmony among these three sources. Nature, according to him, is unseen educator, and, therefore, should be given a free hand in educating children according her own principle; what she alone can do can never be done by anybody else. *"Education in nature is knowledge through direct experience. Bookish knowledge is second hand."* So, Tagore says that the highest education is that which does not merely give information but makes our life in harmony with all experience.

Tagore believed in wholeness in learning, and, so, he prescribed Direct Experience, Activity method, Heuristic techniques of teaching. He did not approve of the theory of harsh and strict discipline. He had great sympathy for the child, and did not want that the child should be suppressed by an authority. He advocated self-imposed discipline giving maximum freedom to the child as it is the very nature of the child. Tagore says, *"The object of education is the freedom of mind which can only be achieved through the path of freedom though freedom has its risk and responsibility as life has."* The entire educational effort of the school, therefore, is to lead children towards the freedom. *"The teacher is present only to stimulate and guide the child who is to choose and react according to his natural inclination."*

Tagore gives a very prominent place to the teacher. He assigns an important role to him in the education of the child. He has to be considerate, and he must know the child thoroughly. Tagore says, *"He who has the child in himself is absolutely unfit for the great work of educating the children."* A teacher must have a receptive mind and learning attitude, and has to inspire others. For this Tagore says, *"A teacher can never truly teach unless he is*

still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame."

Tagore was a philosopher, poet, novelist, dramatist, actor, composer, educator, and a prophet, and gave new message to mankind. His theme of education as harmony with all existence is a clear indication towards individuals and social adjustment and adjustment with the environment. For the first time, Tagore visualised a great truth that the synthesis between East and West would help in solving the problems of the world. Tagore practised what he preached, and was an embodiment of all the essential virtues and qualities he propagated, and applied them to the environment and other realities and conditions of Indian life in general, and education in particular.

VII

M.K. Gandhi was a great leader, practical philosopher, and socio-political reformer of modern India. He was apostle of peace and non-violence and champion of freedom movement. He devoted his life for the mission and worked ceaselessly for the upliftment of the millions of down-trodden, poverty-stricken, half-naked, and semi-starved masses of India.

Gandhi was born on 2nd October, 1869. His father was the Prime Minister of the state of Porbandar and Rajkot. Completing his studies upto Matric, he went to England on September 4, 1881, for studying law. He passed his Law Examination, and was called to bar in 1891. Shortly after this, he came back to India, and set up practice in Rajkot. In 1914, he threw himself actively into the work of the Indian National Congress. The period 1919 to 1947 was a period of struggle, imprisonment, sacrifice, and suffering. During this period, he organised the freedom movement, strikes, and satyagraha, and various other movements against the '*reign of terror*',

and victimisation. Gandhi died on January 30, 1948, at the hands of Nathuram Godse who shot him dead.

Gandhiji wanted to establish casteless society with no exploitation and racial discrimination. He was after an ideal society -- Ram Rajya. With this view in end, he devised a potential means, and that was education. He considered education as a means of removing ignorance, darkness, and superstitions of the people. His philosophy and scheme of education was the outcome of his long experience of political, social and economic life of the people of the country and world.

To Gandhiji, education is an important force for social reconstruction. It is an activity which is necessary not only for social progress but also for moral, political and economic development. It may be pointed out here that Basic Education does not include the total philosophy of the type of education as envisaged by Gandhiji, as this scheme is concerned only with the education of children during the years 6 to 14. However, we may say that he evolved a philosophy of education as a dynamic side of his philosophy of life. And the system bears the stamp of his practical life -- a virtuous, pious, and ideal life.

Gandhiji was an idealist, a pragmatist, and a naturalist. In his own words, *"By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man -- body, mind, and spirit. Literacy is not whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education."* Gandhiji's conception of education stands for harmonious development of all the aspects of human personality -- intellectual, physical, spiritual, and so on.

Gandhiji attached great importance to physical development, and indirectly believed that a sound mind always lives in a sound body. This aspect of human personality must be attended to from the very beginning. In his scheme of education, he made very sound provisions for promoting physical development of children through work, play, creative and productive activities and through social participation. A good physique is an essential prerequisite of sound personality development, Gandhiji asserted.

Gandhiji considered educational experiences and activities as the most appropriate means of intellectual development of an individual. As envisaged

by Gandhiji, the scheme of Basic Education is certainly meant for a balanced development of human personality which also includes intellectual aspect along with other aspects. However, this personality development is closely linked with education through work-experience, productivity and the process of socialisation. Gandhiji also regarded education as a vital means of spiritual development of the child. For him, spirit was as much important as body, and mind. Training of the spirit does not mean religious training although Gandhiji gave much importance to religious and spiritual and moral education. According to Gandhiji, *"True education is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of the children."*

Gandhiji emphasised that education should help one to become self-supporting in later life. Education must enable each individual to earn his living independently, and stand on his own feet. He said, *"You impart education, and simultaneously cut at the root of unemployment."*

Gandhiji emphasised on the preservation and enhancement of culture. To him, culture is the foundation. Inner culture must be reflected in our speech, and it should be the quality of one's soul, pervading all aspects of human behaviour. This is a very important aim of education.

Gandhiji emphasised character-building as an important aim of education. On being asked, *"What is your goal of education ?"*, Gandhiji replied, *"Character-building. I would try to develop courage, strength, virtue, the ability to forget oneself in working towards great aims. This is more important than literacy."* The aim of all knowledge should be building up of character, according to Gandhiji.

Through education, Gandhiji wanted to develop the whole man, and to train the hand, heart, and head of the child. This aim of education commands the support of all the modern progressive educationist like Pestalozzi, Dewey, Tagore, and others. *"By an all round education he means the education of heart, head, body, and spirit."*

Gandhiji laid greater stress on the cultivation of higher values of life like moral, spiritual, social, ethical, and aesthetic values. Very much in the line of an idealist, Gandhiji emphasised self-restraint, self-realisation,

self-insight, and self-analysis, and thus established a balance between individual development, and social harmony, spiritual, and material outlook, and physical, and intellectual development.

In order to achieve the objectives of education, Gandhiji prescribed productive craft as the medium of education. It is based upon the concept of *'learning by doing'*, and *'learning while earning.'* Moreover, Gandhiji's emphasis on natural and physical environment of the child made the whole educative process effective. He also introduced certain other distinctive features like mother tongue as the medium of instruction, knowledge through activities and some basic subjects like social studies, mathematics, general science, and so on. Through such balanced curriculum, he dreamt of bringing a silent social revolution. The technique of correlation is another outstanding characteristic of the scheme. This will encourage self-activity. Correlation is based upon the concept of integration, co-ordination, and synthesis. Curriculum also includes basic craft which makes it unique and work-oriented.

For some time, Gandhiji taught his own children, and thus experienced that the essence of good teaching is stimulating the energies of children so that learning may take place in natural way leading them towards harmonious development. In fact, Basic Education is a technique of teaching in itself. As observed by Zakir Hussain Committee, Gandhiji advocated that *"stress should be laid on the principle of co-operation activity, planning, accuracy, initiative and individual responsibility in learning."* He believed in the discipline of mind, thought, feeling and action in the minutest details of our living. His discipline was based on self-control which implies inner discipline and self discipline. His concept of discipline was however in tune with social discipline. Every individual is a productive citizen, a worker and a parent. Education was recognised as a potent means for generating the we-feelings among the individuals so as to make them useful and responsible citizens of their country.

Gandhiji was a great teacher himself -- a world teacher. He wanted right type of teachers dedicated to their profession, and ready to serve the illiterate masses. Teachers must be well trained, proficient, men of

knowledge and faith, zeal, enthusiasm, men of action and devotion, character and nationalistic feelings. According to Gandhiji, a school is a place to live by making enquiries, experimentations, and discoveries. It is a community centre, cradle for future citizenship, and place for physical, intellectual, social, moral, and spiritual development.

Gandhiji successfully synthesised different philosophies of education and emerged as a naturalist, idealist, and a pragmatist. As a true Indian, a practical philosopher and a man of the masses, he stood for freedom, self-realisation, spiritual development, learning by doing, education through life experiences, and activities. Dr. M.S. Patel very aptly remarks that Gandhiji's philosophy of education is naturalistic in its setting, idealistic in its aims, and pragmatic in its methods and programme of work. With all these philosophical assumptions, Gandhiji envisaged his scheme of education known as Wardha Scheme, Nai Talim or Basic Education. His educational philosophy has been described as original. In the words of Acharya Vinoba Bhave, *"It may not be a new thing but it has been presented in a new light."*

In fact, Gandhian approach to education is quite sound and very practical. He stands as a modern educationist, and advocated a progressive view point in education. His educational philosophy combines the essentials of the three philosophical tendencies such as naturalism, idealism, and pragmatism. We must make a thorough study of the educational philosophy of Gandhiji, and assess his scheme of education, i.e. Basic Education scientifically, and in the light of essential values of Indian culture and civilization which has been described as 'New', 'Epoch-making', 'Original', and 'Revolutionary.'

VIII

Aurobindo Ghosh was born in Calcutta in 1872. Having completed a brilliant academic career at Cambridge, he worked as Professor of English at

the Boroda College. Before long, he was irresistibly drawn towards politics. But when politics did not hold him too long, he shifted to Pondicherry, established an Ashram, and became a Yogi devoting his time to meditation. While leading the life of a mystic, he continued reflecting over the most perplexing problems of human life, particularly in the field of philosophy, education, literature, and mysticism. Between 1914 to 1921, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh wrote his major philosophy and published in '*Arya*', a new journal in English. Hence onward Aurobindo became a philosopher. In his words, "*I had no urge to spirituality in me, I developed spirituality. I was incapable of understanding metaphysics, I developed into a philosopher. I had no eye for painting, I developed it by yoga. I transformed my nature from what it was to what it was not. I did it by a special manner not by a miracle and I did it to show what could be done and how it could be done.*" Aurobindo died on 5th December, 1950, and with his death ended a glorious chapter in the spiritual, and educational history of India.

Aurobindo is one of the greatest educators whose educational philosophy swayed the masses of India as never before or since. He dedicated his life for the society, and education to provide conditions for all men to "*travel towards divine perfection and to express the power, the harmony, the beauty and joy of self realisation.*"

By education, Aurobindo means that which will offer the tools whereby one can live "*for the divine, for the country, for oneself and for others, and this must be the ideal in every school which calls itself national.*"⁸⁴ He is of pure life, and the beautiful union of the human soul with the individual. The guiding principles of the philosophy of education of Sri Aurobindo was awakening of man as a spiritual being. According to him neither education nor religion in the past changed man. Now, it is high time to give a total spiritual orientation to the whole education and the life of the nation.

Aurobindian theory of education are similar and frequently the same as the system of yoga. Self-development is an integral growth of the individual personality. The chief instrument of knowledge is the mind. In the words of Aurobindo, "*The time basis of education is the study of mind, infant, adolescent, and adult.*"⁸⁵ Therefore, it is the function of education to study

the mind of the individual, people, the nation and the universe. Through the study of human mind, we can change the man and the society. In Aurobindian schools emphasis is given on the study of human mind. The human mind, consists of four layers -- '*chitta*', the storehouse of memory; '*manas*', the sixth sense i.e. sight, sound, taste, smell, touch, and mind that are to be trained; '*budhi*', the intellect which is the real instrument of thought; and the fourth layer being the intuitive perfection of truth which makes man, '*Prophet of truth*.' The chief instrument of the teacher is the mind (*Antahkaran*). An ideal teacher is one who studies human mind. In integral education attempts are given on the integral development of physical being, vital being, psychic being, and mental being to bring about a transformation of man into a spiritual being. The ultimate aim of Aurobindo's theory of education is to produce a transformed and spiritualised '*new man*.'

According to Aurobindo, man has various parts of being. Education to be effective must cover all these aspects. In his words, "*The truth we seek is made of four major aspects; Love, Knowledge, Power and Beauty. These four attributes of truth will spontaneously express themselves in our being. The psychic will be the vehicle of true and pure love, the mind that of infallible knowledge, the vital will manifest an invincible power and strength and the body will be the expression of a perfect beauty and a perfect harmony.*" ⁸⁶

According to Aurobindo, beauty is the ideal of physical life. The Mother therefore says, "*You must hold within yourself the living ideal of beauty that is to be recognised.*" It is a *tapasya* (Yoga) of beauty. When beauty grows, the liberation gradually takes place. His theory of education gives emphasis on physical and spiritual mastery.

Their system does not give emphasis on a particular type of exercise because it helps for yogic achievements. Physical education is not a single-aimed activity. It has plurality of aims. Different aims represent different ways to look at the same thing. Mainly they have four important goals :

- (i) To discipline and control the physical functions.
- (ii) Harmonious development of the body and physical movements.
- (iii) Rectification of defects and overcoming physical limitations.
- (vi) To awaken the body

consciousness. To achieve the first three aims, one has to undertake physical exercise; to achieve the fourth goal, one has to draw upon multiple faculties. Physical education is not obligatory. Aurobindo felt that spiritual, discipline, service, bhakti, and yoga are the essentials of physical education. Asanas (physical exercises) and pranayama (breathing techniques) were considered to be most important to control the restlessness of the body, and to achieve concentration.

Physical education is also essential for controlling the sex drives. According to Aurobindo's philosophy of education, a seeker of truth should have control over the sex-impulses. Emphasis on games and sports were given to renew physical and higher forms of energy, and to develop tolerance, self-control, friendliness, self-mastery of ego etc. This scheme of physical education was not confined to class-room period like our formal system. In '*Ashram School*' a definite portion of the time-table is allotted for physical education. Along with this, a ten minute period is allotted for concentration. Thus, through this physical education programme, attempts are made to express the inner consciousness.

Education of the Vital Being (Tapasya of Power) enable the educators to save, through observation of the character, to be developed and transformed. Vital education emphasises on the vital being of man. As a result, the student gets an opportunity to understand both the inner world, and the world outside of himself. For self-observation, two things are essential. When we do a particular thing, first we should know what we do. Then we should know why we do. Thus, we can become conscious of ourselves, and start controlling, directing ourselves. Lastly, we can have mastery over ourselves. Thus, we can educate the vital being.

The second aspect of the vital being is the utilisation of the sense organs. Sense organs help the individual to receive knowledge. The sense like sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste, and mind should be trained. Aurobindo advises "*that their training should be the first care of the teacher.*"⁸⁷ Sense must be accurate and sensitive. It can be purified by the purification of the nerve system. Vital education according to Aurobindo is also a training of the aesthetic personality. To get this training one should

give up bad habits. He should give up human habits, emotions and their associations. He develops observation, and self-knowledge which will lead to concentration of vital energies. It is the first step in the growth and mastery of one's character.

For the education of the Mental Being (Tapasya of Knowledge) emphasis is given on mental silence and concentration "*The mind has to be silent and attentive in order to receive knowledge from above and manifest it.*" ⁸⁸ To silence the mind one has to take the help of '*Classical Yoga.*' By yoga one acquires mastery of the mind and reaches a region higher than the mind which we call knowledge. This '*tapasya*' of knowledge is the education of the mental being. This helps for the gradual liberation from ignorance. The mental education has three-fold function -- (i) to gather old knowledge, (ii) to discover new knowledge, and (iii) to develop the capacity to use and apply the knowledge acquired. Through the application of knowledge the pupil develops cognition, ideas, intelligence and mental perceptions. As a result of this, men himself becomes the source of knowledge. It is a level of intuition, inspiration and vision in extra-ordinary personality.

The important aspect of Aurobindo's thought is the continuous organisation of ideas around a central idea. Therefore, in integral schools they never give importance on teaching of so many subjects but enable the student to find many approaches to the same subject.

The most important contribution of Aurobindo to educational theory is Education of the Psychic Being (Tapasya of Love). Psychic being '*is the psychological centre of mind.*' The function of education is to enable man to become conscious of the psychological centre. This consciousness is the key to an integral personality. It is independent of the body, and life situations. Psychic education is to see his soul to grow in freedom according to its inner nature. It supports the vital, the physical, and the mental being. When an individual develops psychic consciousness, he understands life and himself. In the words of Aurobindo, "*The psychic being is a spiritual personality put forward by the soul in its evolution. Its growth marks the stage which the spiritual evolution of the individual is reached and its possibilities for the future.*" ⁸⁹ Emphasising on the education of the psychic being Aurobindo

again says, *"The true secret whether with child, or man is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give at a chance, to come forward, and still more, if we call it into the foreground as 'leader of the march set in our front,' will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hand and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realisation of potentialities."*⁹⁰

The system of education should give an opportunity to the psychic being to grow, to express itself, and to exercise. Discovery of the psychic being is the beginning of this education. To discover this, one has to take the help of desire, purpose, direction, and will. The process of education has two aspects -- to surrender to that which is beyond ego, and identification with one's psychic being. It will be possible through yoga or '*Tapasya*' of love. As a result of this yoga, one can attain liberation from suffering.

The four-fold approach to education advocated by Sri Aurobindo, like the vital, the physical, the mental, and the psychic, develop power, beauty, knowledge, and love in the individual student. As a result, man gets liberation from the material world of desires, ignorance, and suffering. A total spiritual education is the goal of education. The '*external world*' does not determine spiritual education; rather it is determined within the world. Spiritual transformation of man is the goal of this education.

The psychic being is independent of the external reality and the physical body. It brings spiritual transformation. With this transformation, supra-mental education begins. This education was the personal experience of Sri Aurobindo, and the Mother. This experience affects one's consciousness, nature, and environment. The aim of this education is the creation of a twenty first century man. Therefore, the Mother says, *"We want to show to the world what must be the new man of tomorrow."*⁹¹ Thus, education is an evolution of consciousness. This aim can be achieved through the development of the psychic being.

Teaching in integral system of education is considered as a '*Sacred Trust*.' The teacher occupies a very important place in this system. So, he should have a high level of personality, and should develop virtues like self-control, absence of superiority, and spiritual equality of man, and be free

from egoism. About the quality of the teacher, Aurobindo says, "*He is a man helping his brothers, a child leading children, a light kindling other lights, an awaken soul awakening other souls, at highest a power, of presence of the divine calling to him other powers of the divine.*" ⁹² The Guru (teacher) should have three instruments -- teaching, examples, and influence to make his teaching lively and effective. A good company or '*Satsanga*' is another important quality for a teacher. The Mother on teacher says, "*One must be a saint, and a hero to be a good teacher. One must become a great 'Yogi' to be a good teacher.*" ⁹³ The teacher should have close contact with the students. Knowledge of psychology is also recommended for the teacher in Aurobindo's school. He assumed the role of the teacher as friend, philosopher, guide, and helper.

The educational methodology of Aurobindo combines all the principles of integral yoga. The three basic principles of teachings are -- first, nothing can be taught, secondly, the mind has to be continually consulted, and, thirdly, work from the near to the far. ⁹⁴ The yoga of Aurobindo is neither fixed nor rigid. It acts freely and widely. In this yoga the divine power in man gathers all human life into the yogic process. Through methods of teaching a balance between meditation and action, and between silent mind and practical learning is to be maintained. The child should have freedom to develop this education. When a child reaches fourteen he should be asked whether he wanted to study or not. Once the child decides ^{to} study, his education should begin honestly, with discipline, regularity, and method. ⁹⁵ This new method is not at all an imposition on the teacher. He is to apply multiple methods like free progress, and montessori. Free choice in education helps an individual student to discover knowledge within himself, and motivates the child to learn. In this way, free progress is emphasised in integral education. The teacher is not guided by a rigid and prescribed syllabi, and is to prepare a course to act as guide to discover the talent of the child, and to develop, and integrate various experiences. Lastly, learning is to be co-ordinated with one's hereditary and previous experience, and the teacher is to work hard to find out method suitable for the students.

Curriculum in this system includes the four basic elements of being –

the physical, the vital, the mental, and the psychic. It is to be developed and perfected by appropriate curriculum in order that an individual achieves the utmost possible perfection of himself, and contributes his maximum to humanity as a whole. The child in this system is not moulded to the desire of parents or teacher. He is to be free to achieve this goal. Therefore, this system emphasises on flexible interest based, and environment based curriculum. For Aurobindo and the Mother, the aim of educating the child was to invite the student for transformation and learning, and not impose the educative process on him. The teacher is to create environment for self-discovery. Therefore, curriculum should have a scope for a well-organised environment, wherein the adoption of new methods comes very easily. The curriculum should give more importance on example than on introduction. It should be evolutionary rather than revolutionary and should grow gradually to meet the needs of the students and changing needs of the students and changing needs of the society.

Aurobindo believed that education can progress on the right line through greatest liberty. In his words, "*Liberty is at once the condition of vigorous variation and the condition for self finding.*"⁹⁶ The child being a self-developing being should grow freely, and it is the responsibility of the parents and educators to see that the child develops freely as an organic person. An individual is competent enough to develop his psychic being. Therefore, maximum liberty should be given to the child for the development of psychic being. The students should be allowed to choose their own subjects, and develop areas of interests; compulsion should be totally avoided. In Aurobindo school, the classes are limited to four or five students. They do not aim at preparing students for vocation or career, but to know the world. In the words of the Mother, "*we study to learn, to know, to understand the world and for joy what it gives.*"⁹⁷

The students should "*elect to take examination or not.*" The mechanical examination which does not have any inner contact with the child is totally avoided in this system. The child who is the superman in the making enrich his power of joy and should believe in harmony. He should believe in the power of truth, not in a mechanical education, which is

examination oriented. The four important vehicles in Aurobindo's system -- the physical, the vital, the mental, and the psychic respectively cultivate power, beauty, knowledge, and love. This helps the child to liberate from the material thing. The mechanical examination can not help to evaluate the progress of the child in these lines. The examination which is spontaneous and caters to the needs of the child is recommended.

The educational idea of Aurobindo were put into experiment in Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, in 1943 with twenty students. It is an ever-expanding community life with activities spread all over the life of the people. It aims at divining human life in light of the teaching of Aurobindo and the Mother. Here is a natural expression in action of the ideas of Aurobindo and his life long collaborator, the Mother. The centre is a continuity of education from the kindergarten till the end of studies. A student is required to stay for a period of ten to fifteen years. If he so likes, he may continue to live after completion of his studies. The institution provides all the requirements for the growth of the child according to nature. There is no compulsion for any activity, and a child is not to be brain-washed, way laid through false propaganda for indoctrination. The institution developed into such a complex organism with so many departments and services, workshops, farms and industrial undertakings. This centre provides unity in diversity. The students and the teachers are from different parts of India, and other countries of the world. They all live and work together forgetting their race, caste, creed, colour, sex, and religion. Most of the Indian languages are taught there, and the culture of different countries is accepted here to promote the unity of all human race, and to develop a synthetic organisation of all nations. In the domain of art, all forms of painting, sculpture, music, dance, architecture, and decoration are made accessible. The dress, games, and sport exhibitions, and films are used extensively for the purpose of encouraging unity in diversity. The aim of this institution as described by the Mother is to help individuals to become conscious of the fundamental genius of the nation to which they belong; and at the same time to put them in contact with the modes of living of other nations so that they may know and respect equally the true spirit of all the

countries upon each. For all world organisation to be real and to be able to live must be based on mutual respect and understanding between nation and nation as well as between individual and individual.⁹⁸

In the history of Aurobindian education, the year 1968 is a landmark. Five miles away from Pondicherry, Auroville, '*the city of Dawn*' was inaugurated by the Mother, and the charter of Auroville was signed by children from 120 countries. Auroville aimed at searching for a new education in a new society. It was "*the city of twenty-first century man.*"⁹⁹ The town itself was the University of Auroville where a synthesis of nations' ideologies, knowledge, culture, etc. will be made. The environment of the town was organised with the aim of humanising the people living there. The city has four zones -- cultural, industrial, residential, and educational. These four zones represent the four important activities of human life. Life at Auroville was already started. In the words of the Mother, "*It is a beginning; a universal beginning.*"¹⁰⁰

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