

Role of Education in Development

I saw "Sita" begging in the street, becoming a labour in her own house, sweeping the floors of the haves, drawing drinking water from miles, being a subject of unnatural lust, being a mother at the age of 14.

I saw "Ram" in every tea stall in the street, in the red lights, in the field of villages, in Shivakashi, in hazardous factories and everywhere.

As a civilization, we are suffering from many extremities — extreme poverty, extreme backwardness (superstitions), extreme inequality (of opportunities), extreme religiousness (fundamentalism), extreme inhumanity (parents killing their own daughters). This reminds of an insightful quote by Einstein—

"We shall require a substantially new way of thinking of humanity is to survive."

Such refinement can only be brought by education. Education is the pursuit of better life, peace, proper fraternity and well being. Purpose of education is to serve humanity and to drastically change the reductionist and minimalistic view of development which only deals with economics. The goal of development aims at freeing human from the bondage of ignorance and lack of choices. It aims at development with a human face, heart and soul. This raises a question, what is education?

Education is not simply learning. It is **wisdom**. It is the power in our hands which can transfer ordinary to extra-ordinary. Each mind is potentially educated. We just need education for manifestation of this latent quality, as also told by Vivekananda—

"Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man."

Education expands human capabilities makes us aware of our innate talent and virtues. Self-awareness and through continuous self evaluations, education helps us to get closer to our own self, thus inducing **self-development**. Awareness of self keeps us away from vices like egoism, arrogance and self centeredness. Realization of our minuteness in the universe makes us humble, developing harmony between our thoughts and deeds. Further, it motivates for "simple living and high thinking," refraining us from vain materialism.

Education builds trusteeship. It brings human being closer to each other by developing strong relationship. Education develops a perception of the whole, rather than a singular individual. This brings values of caring and sharing the limited resources of earth. It builds the

foundation of an egalitarian society that believes in equal distribution of wealth. Trusteeship, as felt by Gandhiji, strives for a non-violent social order based on faith, love and mutual respect.

Education strives for social wellbeing. Education stresses on the Buddhist philosophy of "Desire is the root cause of all evils" and emphasizes on non-accumulation. The value of socialism with humanism reduces the mental differences that we create amongst us. It builds a resilient society that respects diversity, celebrates differences and accepts equality. It dispassionates us from individual aggrandizement, rather motivates us to build a society based on collective growth, driving out insecurities and making the world a better place for everyone.

However, this is possible only when the society is ethical and always strives towards higher good. A nation to rise, not only requires a bloated treasury but also citizens who are physically mentally fit. This can be ensured in a moral fitness. Value based education strives for **moral development**. In the words of F.D. Roosevelt—

"To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society."

For instance, **the case of patent rights is delaying the cure of Ebola**. This instance exemplifies how humanity dies at the altar of indifference. This unnatural lust for materialism even at the vicinity of human catastrophe like Ebola is astounding. This shows the short sightedness of human being as a race. Only consciousness of our humble existence and strong values can ensure our continuance as this planet.

This can be achieved by a strong bond of community which strives on contribution of each individual. Collective ownership of our natural resources can bring a sense of pride and belongingness which will stop us from orchestrating our own demise by continuous depletions of what we have. Education breeds humanity. It makes us aware not just of our right, but also of our duties. This encourages us to go back to our roots when we had a symbiotic relationship with Mother Earth that was sustainable and based on indigenous knowledge. Education connects us to our customs, traditions and festivals which respected nature and the bounty it has bestowed on us, and thus providing **self-sufficiency**.

Education enables participation. True development happens when each member of the society contributes towards a better society. Gandhian philosophy of village reconstruction and local governance encourages participative democracy. Well round development of individuals is a prerequisite to a positive contribution. This requires us to build a society where the knowledge is free and there is no bound to gathering knowledge. Education should touch every child as "child is a father of a man." The child would learn to respect himself and others and become an informed citizen of the nation because without information participation is meaningless. Thus education would build an informed society.

It is heart breaking to see us living in steel frames without a soul. Growing Crimes, unrest, poverty shows our lack of compassion. The kind crimes we commit against innocent voiceless animals is the name of fashion (fur, leather) and is the name of modernity (ivory works) is disheartening. In this context, education breeds empathy. It teaches us the Jain Philosophy of animal rights and 'Ahimsa' and brings culture to our existence. As Vivekananda rightly said—

"Service of Jeeva is worship of Shiva".

Development without a human face is soulless development is where a lead runner shows way to latecomers, rather than indefinite oppression of the weak and marginalized. Inequality is weeded out with education that builds a resilient society. As aspired by Gandhiji, in his INDIA OF DREAMS, where the poorest shall feel at home, all communities shall live in perfect harmony, there shall be no room for untouchability and there would be same rights for men & women. This humane way of life can be brought by educating human as basic social ethics and human attitudes.

Only adoption of **scientific temperament** can make us self reliant and self sufficient. Adaptation consistent with our value systems and development from within are the goals of education.

True knowledge builds a durable human civilization. Feeling of brotherhood and sense of fraternity is the essence of **internationalism**. With growing challenges of environmental degradations, terrorism, humanity stands at crossroad where he has to make a choice. Only decision based on consensus and shared understanding of the future that is in the store for us can lead us to sustainable and inclusive development. As Gandhiji once said—

"The future depends on what we do at present."

Having reflected on the value of education towards development of human, it is important to ponder over how to realize the above? Historically speaking, it was freedom of thought, but led to **renaissance**, that uplifted humanity from the clutches of dark ages. This brought enlightenment and eventually led to scientific and technological progress culminating into Industrial Revolutions.

In the context of India, inquisitiveness and curiosity led to questioning of various superstitions, belief and cultural dogmas prevalent in Indian society. **Indian renaissance** was led by enlightened scholars like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar who appealed to the reasoning and humanism in the people to trigger changes in issues like girl education, women remarriage. Practices like sati, untouchability erodes the faith on humanity was severely reprimanded.

Education is the fountain of hope and lighthouse of humanity. Thus, it must be assured to all, irrespective of one's economic status, gender, caste, etc. Universality of education is not just an entitlement, but rather a right of every individual. Thus right has been aptly recognized in India.

With the present youth bulge, India has a scope to convert its people to **human resource** with right kind of education and ensuring overall health of the population with industry related expertise, the resource can be further converted into **human capital** and realize the dream of India becoming a great power by increasing our national worth both in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GNP) and Human Development Index (HDI).

Presently, with globalisation and information and communication technologies, India is facing many challenges as well as opportunities. The opportunities are to ensure "information for all" that might result is **knowledge revolution**. But, the challenge is to ensure everyone's access to information. A "Digital India" can educate farmers on the right kind of agricultural practices and bring new and appropriate technology to them. Similarly, it can provide opportunities as well as choices to the youth as per their capabilities. It can develop as informed citizenry who are empowered to demand services, transparency and accountability from the government which is essential prerequisite for good governance and hence, development in the words of Tagore—

*"When the mind is without fear,
and the head is held high,
when the knowledge is free,
where the world is not broken up into narrow domestic walls,
Where the words come out from the depth of truth ...
Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake."*

We need to collectively understand that it is the 'I' in "**we the people of India**" (as enumerated in our Preamble) who has solemnly resolved to constitute India as a sovereign secular, democratic, republic. It is 'I' who has promised to secure justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. The power of 'I' can only be unleashed with right education that is value based, humane and that teaches right conduct. Thus the goal of each one of us is to ensure that every child of ours gets education, to safeguard a prosperous future for mankind.

"Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached".

—Vivekananda.

You might recall the story I started with. These Sitas and Ram(u)s are the wonders created by the almighty. These are my children. I saw the beauty of childhood being sacrificed

at the altar of poverty, ignorance and indifference. This is not their destiny. What am I upto? I tried and have been trying to show them light. I want them to see the beautiful world through education. Some of my schemes failed and some succeeded. But in the process, I have learnt to pursue my goal with the help of everyone. Who am I? **I AM INDIA.**

*"The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep..."*

—Robert Frost.