

## **Education for a Socio Economic system that ensures effective livelihood and quality life**

After wandering in India for about five years when Swami Vivekananda visited Western world about a century ago he noticed that it was education that made difference between the riches of the Europeans & poverty of the Indians. While establishing Ramakrishna Mission for the service of mankind he emphasised need of imparting spiritual & secular education for masses and women.

After fifty-eight years of Independence we still have about 30 crores who can't write their own name about 20 crores who don't eat two square meals a day. While the govt. subsidised higher education, which is meant for only 2 - 3 % of population, primary education sector has been severely neglected. I believe it is time to change our priorities and focus on minimum X standard education for all, whatever it may take. While UNESCO report says we can't do it by 2020 our HRD friends may differ. The latest statements by the Finance Minister on budget cuts indicate cut in HRD spending especially on new school projects of Kendriya Vidyalayas and Navodaya Vidyalayas.

The state of affairs in the quality of education imparted is also dismal. Latest report given after extensive 29 month long survey by Maharashtra Govt. education department in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh says that 70 to 82 % students in any class room were illiterate or semi literate. (The Hitavada, 29.12.2005) I may recall my own schooling where we went through the motions of passing exams mugging history, geography without ever feeling we have to develop life skills. I don't hesitate in saying that I learnt Architecture better when I went for Post-graduation in U.S. University and when I worked I found a big hiatus between what I learnt and what I practiced.

I believe we have to use the system of Reverse Engineering in all education. Life sketches, things, gadgets, examples be brought in front of children and creating interest even in simulated life situations various sciences, arts, philosophies can be taught. When you show a gadget like a TV used everyday in home and bring out the art and sciences involved in its invention and manufacturing the message reaches home. I started speaking mother tongue at home with my family and then learnt its grammar and poetry, history etc. in school.

In real life your skill is your security. In modern technologically oriented society unless you have some soft or hard skill you can't survive. Our unemployment rate is high because our masses are unemployable. Vocational training in preliminary and advance stage in primary and secondary education is a must. Let the children know how to use their head and hands together in life like situations. There is no dearth of vocations available in the market but there are no hands available. There is mismatch between demand and supply of skills.

In today's market number of jobs seen to be increasing only in IT section to some extent. In the diminishing job market Entrepreneurship is the only alternative. As a matter of fact our ancestors were entrepreneurs before British brought prestige to desk jobs and writers' building. In the schools self-employment through skills has to be projected. Stand alone system parallel to others but with horizontal and vertical mobility on vocational education may be tried. Also National Certification of various skills for existing artisans can be started. Students' visits to business concerns, making them aware of value of money and materials can be arranged. History books can project lives of great entrepreneurs of the world instead of focussing on politicians and kings. In the colleges "Entrepreneur Engineering" like "Environmental Engineering" as a subject can be introduced where motivational, managerial, financial, marketing and other related inputs can be systematically given so that a graduate is aware of such possibilities when he comes out of the college. We need job creators, not job seekers. Nonformal system like our community polytechnic can take up skill training towards entrepreneurship with at least 400 + trades available. We have a feedback of 60% gainfully employed out of our 10,000 + trained. This will stop migration to urban areas and improve rural living conditions. In his lecture on 28th December 2005 at Fakir Mohan University, Balasore, Dr. Kalam emphasised need for capacities to be built in education on entrepreneurship & moral leadership.

In the age of knowledge society and information explosion, to find what you want to know has become easier with Internet and connectivity. I believe even at school level precious resources need not be spent in the practice of mugging, copying and vomiting what you remember, in exams and then forgetting. After getting fundamentals cleared through life like situations creative, innovative lateral thinking (as Newton found gravity in falling apple) has to be developed in youth and differences of constructive opinion has to be encouraged instead of blind discipline of obeying the superiors. Teachers will have to command respect instead of demanding it.

Presently in higher education precious resources are wasted many times in duplication. Semester system with transferable credits, multipoint entry exit will ensure variety and flexibility.

Education system should empower a person towards self fulfillment through proper value system. In modern India it seems that educated are more corrupt due to misdirected intelligence. The goal has to be to create enlightened citizens where an adult understands that every action has a reaction equal and opposite. A modern citizen while pursuing self interest has to remember - do unto others what you expect them to do unto you. Truth, justice, sacrifice, perfection are values, which are universal. Can the lives of great people be brought in front of children representing a universal value system intrinsic in every human being?

Modern knowledge society demands analytical mind, scientific temper while ground reality states 50% of children who enroll in schools dropout before V standard and 30% of the remaining before X standard. The number is higher in Rural areas than urban. Communication in general & science communication in particular is difficult to a large population due to the heavy dropout rate in this complex society. Problem is further compounded by different languages and scripts prevalent in different states. It is very difficult for a rural person from say Bengal to go to Tamilnadu and stay intelligently. Why can't we replace all vernacular numerals by Indo Arabic (1,2,3,4 etc.) while keeping phonetics ( , d, nɦz fru, pkj etc.) intact in school curriculum. At least all Indians will be able to understand what currency they are handling. Secondly, why can't we introduce Roman alphabet (a,b,c,d) in the primary school if we have problem with English as such due to social reasons. Let the child write his/her own name in Roman script while keeping the phonetics like rām jk€ (and not Ram which is harsh) side by side with the vernacular script. The present international standards of transliteration may be simplified for use of common man. This will allow people to read any instructions on gadgets and otherwise. Nowadays there is a trend to advertise in Roman script a message in vernacular.

Quality of life depends on employable skills, steady income generation through gainful employment, easy communication, holistic health, pollution free environment and socio economic conditions. Our education does not seem to make the child aware of its assets the Body-mind complex and its maintenance.

Every cell in body has intelligence and every thought in the mind is powerful if harnessed properly. Our ancient methods of Yoga and Ayurveda emphasise holistic health through daily routine of prayers, meditation, exercises and regular healthy food habits. Your food could be your medicine. Pranayama done with understanding helps biorhythms in the body mind complex. Where is the awareness in our schooling on what you possess and how to harness? Quality of life also depends on socio-economic conditions prevailing in the Society. What we find is corruption, black money, concentration of wealth in the hands of a few while 20 crores can't eat two square meals a day. We find an economy based on fossil fuel, consumption of non-replenishable resources annual growth rates, interests and compound interests, inflation and environmental pollution. For a layman like me it is beyond comprehension how a good businessman can eat into his own capital and that is what we are doing. Are we heading for another economic crash like that in 1987 or environmental breakdown, it is hard to tell.

I believe time has come to rethink our economic system based on exploitation of nature and change it more to ecology friendly channels. What if we remove income tax and put a heavier tax on products and services which will also have an environment component. What if the community owns all the land and rents

it to individuals. The communist countries were right in saying land like air and water belongs to everyone but failed due to lack of interest of individuals in tending due to community ownership. But if it is rented it may work. And what if we change the monetary system from that of interest accumulation to circulation feels like it was tried in 1933 in Austria and was successful (Ref. "Interest and Inflation free money" by Margrit Kennedy publ. Seva International Okemos Michigan, USA) as directed in the book "The Natural Economic Order" by Mr. Silvio Gesell. Our education system should bring out the relation of individual well being and ecological balance with alternative economic system to create awareness and political will to change, before it is too late.

Quality of life depends on self-control and sharing. Population control and effective distribution of wealth will ensure at least basic need being fulfilled like food, shelter and clothing. There is a limit to the bearing capacity of the earth as also to its fertility and over population increases load on its natural cycle and recycling process. Chemicals used in Fertilizers pesticides pollute water in turn disturbing aqua life. Haven't we converted the Ganges Into the biggest gutter in Kolkata? Artificial food production and long haul distribution need extra energy consumption, deforestation and other negative effects on nature's cycle. Self control of an informed individual and well informed adoration of natures processes vis-a-vis individual happiness will go along way.

Macaulay introduced European education system in 1835 to make us Babus. Do we have to continue legacy in administration, economics, lifestyle and education? Do we have to be slaves to whatever comes from the developed countries and consume what is readymade thrown to us? Aren't we producing mediocre youth bereft of creative thinking and under-prepared to take new challenges of the Modern World ?

If we want to be a superpower by 2020 our immediate endeavor should be to remove illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, ill health and sheepish mentality and changes in educational field as stated above can only accomplish it.

*Presented at the Seminar on Sustainable Development  
on 8th January 2006 by Swami Tattwajnanananda, Principal  
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