



## THE NEW PARADIGM IN EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

*No great transformation, individuals or collective is possible without a transformation in education. The aims and values of a system of education tend to be closely related to the aims and values of the epoch or the civilisation or culture in which it is rooted. With the advent of modern age, modern education has become increasingly utilitarian, with an emphasis on externalised information, skill, career, job, success and efficiency. Though all these aims are not something to be ignored or despised, when they are pursued exclusively, they prevent the flowering of the deeper, higher and the more essential elements in man, which hold the key to his higher evolution and fulfillment. Here comes the importance of the emerging new paradigm in education which can restore the balance by bringing the higher and inner values of education which the modern age has ignored in its wild pursuit of power, wealth and enjoyment. In this article we present the conclusions of our research on this new paradigm emerging in education.*

**Keywords:** Pioneers; Integral path; Know Thyself; University of Nature; Anthrosophic Education; Common ground.

### The Pioneers

This new paradigm in education is getting slowly diffused through many individuals and institutions who are at present, to use the terminology of historian Arnold Toynbee, only a "creative minority". In our research we have focused on some of the leading and most representative figures of the New Thought.

There are five great thinkers and seers of our modern age who have bequeathed to us a new paradigm of education based on a higher vision of life. They are first, the Noble Laureate poet, Rabindranath Tagore. The second is the "seer who walks alone", J.Krishnamoorthy. The other two are the versatile Austrian educationist Rudolf Steiner and the prophet of Life Divine, Sri Aurobindo.

### University of Nature

The core values of Tagore's approach to education are contact with Nature and Freedom. Tagore believed Nature and Liberty are the greatest teachers. The child has to learn and grow through a free, playful and unfettered contact with the beauty, vastness and diversity of Nature. Tagore constantly refers in his talks and writings to the ancient Indian Ashramas "Forest-Universities" which he considers as the ideal educational institution for nurturing the growth of the Spirit in Man. The contact with the unwallid wideness of Nature has a corresponding salutary impact on the mind and heart of man. It expands and enlarges the consciousness of man and awakens him to the "vision of the Infinite in all forms of creation--- in the air we breathe, in the light in which we open our eyes, in the water in which we bathe and in the earth we lie and die". (Tagore. R, 1999)

Next to Nature, Tagore believed in Liberty. He said, "When mind and life are in full freedom they achieve health" and the growing children have "the natural gift of teaching themselves through work, through their observation". (Tagore. R, 1999)

And finally, Tagore emphasized much on creating the right atmosphere. The physical atmosphere of Nature and the psychological atmosphere of the Teacher who becomes a living embodiment of higher values to the student have a deep and lasting impact on the growth of the student.

### Know Thyself

The educational philosophy of J. Krishnamoorthy, affectionately called as JK by his admirers, rings with the immortal dictum of the Delphic Oracle: Know Thyself. As JK sums up succinctly the essence of his educational credo. "To understand life is to understand ourselves and that is both the beginning and end of education". (J. Krishnamurthy, 1992) So according to JK the first and foremost aim of education is an integrated understanding of the whole of our self which leads to an integrated human being. The second aim which follows the first is an integrated understanding of or insight into the wholeness of life which leads to integrated action. "The function of education" says JK "is to create human beings who are integrated and therefore are intelligent" and "without an integrated understanding of life our individual and collective problems will only deepen and expand". So one of the major aims of education should be to awaken the individual to "an integrated comprehension of life, which will enable him to meet its ever increasing complexity". (J. Krishnamurthy, 1992)

The path to this integrated inner awakening is through "Choice less Awareness" which means a sensitive and

factual observation and awareness of the self within and the world around us without judgement and preference, condemnation, justification and identification, desire and attachment. JK emphasised much on the deconditioning of the mind which means to free the mind from all conditioning of culture and environment, fear, dogma and belief, tradition and authority. Only such an unconditioned mind in a state of Choiceless Awareness can see the truth of life as it is and in its wholeness.

### **Anthrosophic Education**

The educational thought of Steiner is based on his philosophy called as Anthrosophy or "Science of the Spirit". Steiner conceives the human organism or the child as a Spirit within a Body. While the physical body of the child lives on earth, his inner being the spirit-soul entity, which belongs to the spiritual world descend into the physical organism of the child at a certain stage of its growth. So the growth and education of the child has to be treated with great reverence and a sense of sacredness because it is the growth of the divinity in the child. This means teaching is one of the most sacred professions because the teacher is entrusted with living souls and unformed divinities. The teacher's task is to help in shaping and unfolding these divinities and release their potential into life. As Steiner explains:

"We can see something in the teaching profession which might be described as follows. A human being has been given to me out of the spiritual world. I have to share in solving the mysteries that belong to him. I have to show him the path into life by using a true art of the knowledge of human being". (Steiner, R, 1970)

The aim of education is to felicitate the progressive manifestation of this divinity or the spirit-soul entity in the child towards its highest and integral potential. Steiner's thought tends towards a balanced development of the idealistic as well as practical tendencies and an integrated individual who is sensitive to higher values like truth, beauty and goodness but at the same time sufficiently pragmatic to successfully cope with the problems and challenges of life, and manifest these higher values in daily life of work and action. As Paul L. Allen, an exponent of Steiner's thought writes: "bring forth the strength of will to align himself with the good, the beautiful and the true and to bring these into manifestation in all aspect of his life and deed". (Steiner, R, 1970)

### **The Integral Path**

The integral spiritual vision of Sri Aurobindo views a human organism as an eternal and evolving consciousness, progressively unfolding its powers and moving towards the realisation of its highest and integral potential. This consciousness manifests itself as a four-fold being made of body, life, mind and soul. The soul is the eternal and evolving divinity in man and the deepest and the innermost core of his consciousness. The body, life-force, and mind are the instruments of the soul created for self-expression and self-experience of the soul. The main function of education is to trigger and accelerate this

evolution of the human soul and its instrument towards their highest potential. The first major goal of education is to integrate harmoniously the body, life and mind around the fully awakened soul.

The other important principle of Integral Education is the Free Progress System. Free progress means, as the Mother spiritual collaborator of Sri Aurobindo, explains, "Freedom to follow the Soul's will and not that of the mental and vital whims and fancies" (Mother, 1972) or in other words an inner liberty of the soul to follow its intrinsic higher law and will and progress towards self-discovery. A similar freedom of the body, life and mind is also essential for the growth of the soul because soul grows through the experiences of its physical, vital and mental instruments. But the blind instincts of the body, wild fancies and desires of the vital and the ignorant ideas and preferences of the mind should not be allowed to hamper the growth of the soul. The other aspect of free progress is what Sri Aurobindo describes as "Mind should be consulted in its own growth". (Sri Aurobindo, 1972) The process of education has to be in harmony with the unique and natural inclination of the growing mind and soul of the child. The aim of education is to trigger a process of self-education in the student by which he can by his own initiative and effort bring out the knowledge within and around him.

### **The Common Ground**

The first and the most striking feature of this new thought in education is the underlying universality and the constantly recurring common themes. This shows that the truth is not the prerogative of a single prophet. Whoever thought deeply on the subject have come to more or less similar conclusions because the more we plunge into the depths, the more we come into contact with the universal truth and the common law of things. This doesn't mean that there are no differences of opinion among these thinkers. All might not have perceived the truth in its all-embracing totality or wholeness. Any one aspect of the whole may be emphasised more than the other. But there is a broad agreement on fundamentals like for example, freedom, wholeness, balance and integration.

The second important factor, which we found in our research, is the complementing nature of the four streams of thought. They do not so much contradict each other, — though there may be differences of opinion in some aspects,—but mostly provide complementing view points, which when coordinated can provide an integral vision of education. We will not enter into any further discussion on the common, differing and complementing points among the four schools thought. What is of more practical relevance for the future of education is to know what are their suggestions for making the present systems of education better and more complete. We identify nine factors which the present system of education is lacking, and when they are incorporated into it, will bring about a radical change in education. They are listed below:

1. **Free Progress:** Education should be a movement in freedom, a process of self-education from within outwards, without any imposition from an external source or authority. The student must be taught more about how to learn than what to learn, with the utmost possible freedom to choose the path, process and areas of learning with the Teacher acting as an inspiring catalyst and guide.
2. **Balance and Integration:** The aim of education is not merely to stuff information into the mind of the student nor is it exclusively the development of the thinking and pragmatic mind. Its aim is a balanced and integral development of the four-fold being of man, his body, life, mind and soul or in other words, to nurture fully blossomed flowers of humanity.
3. **Self-knowledge:** Self-knowledge is the foundation of all other forms of knowledge. A mere endless extension of externalised information or knowledge will not lead to any lasting fulfillment without self-awareness. Self-knowledge means becoming more and more conscious of the various parts and layers of our own being, our body, life, mind and soul, and their powers, qualities, faculties, potentialities and the laws of their functioning.
4. **Development of Faculties:**  
Development of the inner faculties of knowledge is more important than accumulating external bits of knowledge. Similarly development of the inner faculties of will and action, execution and organisation is more important than acquiring an external skill for fitting into a job or a profession. Faculties of knowledge and will in the mind, faculties of sensation, feeling, action and execution in the vital, instinctive intelligence in the body, ethical and aesthetic faculties, and finally spiritual faculties of the soul, all these faculties have to be developed to their utmost limits and integrated around the soul. In this perspective, "Value Education" means development of the emotional, ethical and aesthetic faculties which leads to a sensitive openness and receptivity to higher values like truth, beauty and goodness and the strengthening of the will and vital force which lead to an effective manifestation of these values in the outer life.
5. **Development of Intuition:** Reason is not the highest faculty of knowledge in man. There are higher intuitive faculties of knowledge which can know by a more direct and intimate contact with the truth of things and reveal new vistas of knowledge which are inaccessible to reason. Development of these higher faculties of knowledge has to be one of the aims of education.
6. **Life-Orientation:** Education should be life-oriented and not merely information or job oriented. It must teach the student how to learn and grow from the experience of life and prepare him not merely for a job or vocation, but for the fullness of life, to lead a balanced, healthy, enlightened, and creative life or in other words education should teach the Science of Living.
7. **Contact with Nature:** Living contact with Nature, an experiential awakening to the beauty, harmony and vastness of Nature has a tremendous educational value. It leads to the refinement of the personality and can open the human mind to the spiritual consciousness.
8. **The Psychological Environment:** In moral and spiritual education the most important factor is the psychological atmosphere saturated with higher values, not merely taught through books or lectures, but lived in thought, feeling, will and action. The centre of this environment is the living example of the Teacher.
9. **Spiritual Awakening:** The highest aim of education is to awaken the spiritual self in man and to the highest spiritual aims of life and to integrate the physical, vital and mental dimensions of the personality around this fourth, spiritual dimension.

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