

EDUCATION BEYOND LEXICAL SEMANTICS

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The word "Education" has been derived from the Latin term "Educatum" which means the act of teaching or training. It can also be traced in another Latin word "Educare" which means "to bring up" or "to raise". "Education" has also its roots in a Latin term "Educere" which means "to lead forth" or "to come out". All these meanings indicate that education seeks to nourish the qualities present in man and draw out the best in every individual. Thus education seeks to develop the inherent potentials of man.

The Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary defines education as the acts or processes of imparting or acquiring knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment and preparing oneself or others intellectually for a mature life. Educating an individual in present context means to inculcate in him knowledge, understanding, skills, interests, attitudes and critical thinking. That is, he acquires knowledge of world. He also develops deeper understanding of things and meanings in life, the complex human relations, and the cause and effect relationship and so on. He acquires skills in writing, speaking, calculating, drawing, thinking and other mental and manual skills essential for his survival and comforts in life. He develops some interests in and attitudes towards self, society and the world at large with a pragmatic approach for his existence.

The Hindi word 'Shiksha' has been etymologically derived from the Sanskrit verb 'Shiksh' which means 'to learn'. Thus, education means both learning and teaching. In Indian languages, the terms 'Vidya' and 'Jnana' have been used as synonyms to the term 'Shiksha'. The term 'Vidya' has been derived from the verb 'Vid' which means 'to' know, to find out, to learn' and includes both teaching and learning.

The term 'Jnana' (gyaan) meant the same as education in its wider sense in Indian philosophy. In Indian philosophies, the term 'Jnana' does not mean only information or facts but in the west this version is widely accepted. In Indian philosophy, the term 'Jnana' is taken in a wide perspective, though in the west, it is taken only as information or facts. In the Amarkosha, the terms 'Jnana' and 'Vijnana' (Vigyaan) have been distinguished saying that Jnana is related to emancipation while 'Vijnana' is related to crafts. In other words, Jnana or knowledge is that which develops man and illuminates his path to emancipation. Whatever we learn and know in our practical lives is termed as Vijnana or science using various crafts and

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materials.

Education as defined in Indian Philosophies:

The Concepts of Education in Indian perspectives are as follows.

- Rigveda: "Education is something which makes man self-reliant and selfless".
- Upanishad: "Education is for liberation".
- Bhagavad Gita: "Nothing is more purifying on earth than wisdom."
- Shankaracharya: "Education is the realization of self".
- Kautilya: "Education means training of the country and love of the nation".
- Panini: "Human education means the training which one gets from nature".
- Vivekananda: "Education is the manifestation of the divine perfection, already existing in man".
- Tagore: "The widest road leading to the solution of all our problems is education".
- Sri Aurobindo: "Education which will offer the tools whereby one can live for the divine, for the country, for oneself and for others".
- Gandhi: "By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in Child and man-body, mind and spirit".

Education as defined by Western philosophers

- Socrates: "Education means the bringing out of the ideas of universal validity which are latent in the mind of every man".
- Plato: "Education is the capacity to feel pleasure and pain at the right moment. It develops in the body and in the soul of the pupil all the beauty and all the perfection which he is capable of".
- Aristotle: "Education is the creation of a sound mind in a sound body. It develops man's faculty, especially his mind so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth, goodness and beauty of which perfect happiness essentially consists.
- Rousseau: "Education of man commences at his birth; before he can speak, before he can understand he is already instructed. Experience is the forerunner of the perfect".
- Herbert Spencer: "Education is complete living".

- Heinrich Pestalozzi: "Education is natural, harmonious and progressive development of man's innate powers".
- Friedrich William Froebel: "Education is an unfoldment of what is already enfolded in the germ. It is the process through which the child makes internal external".

Herbert Spencer defines education as the 'training for completeness of life' and the molding of character of men and women for the battle of life. Thus the prime aim of education is the manifestation of the divinity in men; it imbibes in man the realization of knowledge of the highest order.

Learning or education in India through the ages had been the main constituent of religion. It was sought as the means of self-realization, as the means to the highest ends of life viz. emancipation from all worldly bondages. Ancient Indian education is the outcome of the Indian theory of knowledge as part of the values instilled in life. These values account for the fact that human life with values is based on the education one receives during his lifetime. This is the vision of Indian perspectives of life- education linkage forming values through religion by understanding the real essence of material and the moral, the physical and spiritual, the perishable and permanent nature of the worldly affairs within the contexts of divine commandments.

Education in terms of Vidya and Avidya in Upanishads

The word Avidyā means “to see” or “to know” which connotes that what we see and know may not be the real truth whereas Vidya refers to knowledge and learning of different sciences – ancient and modern. So Avidya means the opposite to Vidya i.e. ignorance and absence of learning

The Mundakopanishad says:

“Tasmai sa huvacha 1

Dve vidye veditavye eti ha asma yad brahmavido vadanti, para chaivapara cha”.11

There are two kinds of knowledge worthy to be known, namely, the higher (para) and the lower (Apara).” Further it explains that the lower knowledge consists of the Vedas, phonetics, grammar, astronomy etc. and the higher knowledge is that by which the imperishable is known. The Sanskrit words Vidya is a shortened form of Para Vidya. The root Vid means to know. Para Vidya is knowledge of the absolute or spiritual knowledge. Apara Vidya or its shortened form Avidya is knowledge of any sector or worldly knowledge in the wider sense. Etymologically avidya is the antithesis of knowledge, i.e., the absence of knowledge. But the word is not used in the negative concept. All knowledge or Apara Vidya which envelopes the phenomenal world is termed as Avidya.

Isavashyopanishad explains this idea in the following verse:

“Vidyam Chavidyam cha yash tad vedovayam saha 1
Avidyaya mrutyum tirtva Vidyayamritamasnute” 11

It is through Avidya that one crosses the mighty stream of death while through Vidya one attains immortality. Thus the Upanishad makes it clear that the worldly knowledge (Avidya) which though ephemeral due to its perishable nature, is also of importance to the seeker to realize the real essence of the world and the truth, absolute knowledge (Vidya) is of the higher order which helps him attain his goal of self realization and emancipation.

Avidya is the outer layer which hides the real nature of things and presents the surface knowledge without its real essence, understanding and reflections which can be attained only by breaking the outer layer to reach the truth in the form of Vidya. In its essence Avidya is not different from Maya. Avidya relates to the finite Self (Sanskrit: atman) while Maya is an adjunct of the cosmic Self. In both cases it connotes the principle of differentiation which is implicit in human thinking. It stands for that delusion which breaks up the original unity of what is real and presents it as subject and object and as doer and result of the deed. What keeps humanity captive in this world is Avidya. This ignorance is not lack of erudition; it is ignorance about the nature of 'Being' (Sat). It is a limitation that is natural to human sensory or intellectual apparatus. This is responsible for all the misery of humanity. Advaita Vedanta holds that the eradication of it should be humanity's only goal and that will automatically mean Realisation of the Self (Atma Darshan).

Adi Shankaracharya says, “Owing to an absence of discrimination, there continues a natural human behaviour in the form of 'I am' or 'This is mine'; this is avidya. It is a superimposition of the attributes of one thing on another. The ascertainment of the nature of the real entity by separating the superimposed thing from it is Vidya (knowledge, illumination)”. In this philosophy Avidya exists under all circumstances even when we reach to Vidya. Avidya is the medium we have to pass through.

Education as we perceive today is the empowerment through the acquirement of knowledge and skills or in material sense increasing one's earning capacity but beyond these super imposed traits, education is broadening of vision and building of character for enlightened citizens so as to make a shift from utility to values in a world where the concept of utility has marred the basis of man to become a human being with divinity as contemplated in our ancient thoughts and philosophies.

In context of the lexical meanings and the interpretations of education as contemplated in various epics of the past, it is conceived that education evolves in man an ideal form of human life incorporating all virtues including supreme truth,

goodness, beauty and perfect happiness as essential components and ends of education leading to the manifestation of the divinity in men touching the highest point of knowledge which in turn liberates man from material ends and grants heavenly bliss of emancipation through self realization which can be termed as education or vidya or shiksha in its wider meaning beyond the lexical semantics.

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