

Integral Education:

Swami Vivekananda's Educational Vision

Swami Bhajanananda



Sri Ramakrishna Vidyashala
Mysore 570 020

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367, "Srinivasa Nilaya"

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Phone : 553 15 18 / 552 53 72

e-mail : chc@sochara.org

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SWAMI BHAJANANANDA

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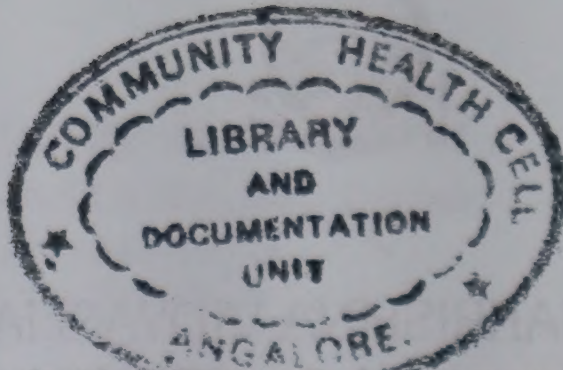
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Publisher's Note

Education is intrinsically a phenomenon of enkindling the potential spark of perfection enshrined in every human being. As a process, education should aim at rousing, nurturing and shaping the sprouting personality to its perfection. One of the primary steps, particularly for teachers, trainers and thinkers of education, needed to bring this about is to have a clear, comprehensive and complete understanding of philosophy and application of education, *per se*.

We are glad to present in the following pages an all-inclusive picture of education, skilfully handling its various shades and hues, by revered Swami Bhajananandaji Maharaj. The author, an erudite scholar, a former editor of Prabuddha Bharata (an English monthly of the Ramakrishna Order), is one of the Assistant Secretaries of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. The respected author is known for his thorough study of various schools of philosophy and methodology of education. His insightful writings are considered as authority in the matter.

This is an enlarged and revised version of the article written by him on the same subject, included in *Swarna Smriti*, the Souvenir published on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna Vidyashala, Mysore.

We are, indeed, grateful to the author for his kind permission to publish it in this form, and are sure that it would fulfill a long-felt vacuum in this matter.

President

9 January 2004

Sri Ramakrishna Vidyashala

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INTEGRAL EDUCATION:

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S EDUCATIONAL VISION

The 4 August 2003 issue of TIME Magazine ran a cover story on meditation. It showed photos of men, women and children practising meditation. According to the author of the article Joel Stein, more than ten million Americans now practise meditation of some sort or other. And these people are not New Age eccentrics, neurotics or mystery-mongers, but mainstream Americans belonging to different walks of life. Says Stein: "And they no longer have to go off to some bearded guru in the woods to do it. In fact, it's becoming increasingly hard to avoid meditation. It's offered in schools, hospitals, law firms, government buildings, corporate offices and prisons. There are specially marked meditation rooms in airports alongside the prayer chapels and internet kiosks."

The old cliché "East is spiritual, West is materialistic", no longer makes sense. In fact, as the British psychologist Erik Erikson pointed out long ago, there is now a "strange reversal of the traditional roles of East and West". Modern methods of transport and communication are annihilating distances, breaking barriers among nations, cultures and races, and are converting the world into a global village. Meditation, Yoga, Zen, Vipassana and other spiritual techniques are no longer the exclusive preserve of certain cultures; they have become truly global. All over the Western world, spirituality is the in-thing now.

And, mind you, all this interest in spirituality is not antagonistic, to or is a reaction to, materialism. Spirituality is now taking in its stride Western science and technology and affluence. Spirituality is now meant not only for monks, nuns and ascetics, but also for the rich and the busy, for tycoons and technocrats. Knowledge is becoming integral, outlook is becoming integral, vision is becoming integral, life is becoming integral. Slowly, silently but surely, a psycho-spiritual tide is spreading across countries all over the world, shaping the contours of the human mind towards integrality and holism.

Now, stand apart from the moving tide, stand above the clashing waves, and survey the world in a historical perspective. If you are free from sectarian bias, and if you are not myopic, you cannot fail to see that the ongoing spiritual tide originated in the latter half of the nineteenth century from two individuals: one the prophet of harmony (*samanvaya*) and the other the prophet of synthesis, integrality.

Harmony and Synthesis

Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda arose at one of the great watersheds in the history of humanity: the old world was coming to an end, the new world was about to dawn; religions were facing powerful challenges from science and new socio-political ideas; spirituality was at a low ebb. It was then that Sri Ramakrishna appeared on the scene. Through superhuman spiritual practices he rejuvenated the spiritual traditions of the past, gave a mighty impetus to spiritual life, and gene-

rated a new force of harmony which is counteracting the forces of division and destruction in several parts of the world.

If Sri Ramakrishna manifested the humanity of God, Swami Vivekananda manifested the divinity of man. Swamiji's main work, apart from spreading his Master's message of spiritual fulfillment and harmony, and awakening the minds of people, was to synthesize the diverse elements of religion, culture and social life and adapt them to the practical needs of the modern world so that all possibilities may be utilized for individual and collective welfare. As Romain Rolland has stated, "In the two words equilibrium and synthesis Vivekananda's constructive genius may be summed up." Swamiji is the prophet of integral vision for the modern world. He envisioned an ideal society having an integral culture which incorporates the best elements of the ancient and the modern, the East and the West, the sacred and the secular, religion and science, the individual and the collective.

For the creation of an integral culture, the first thing needed is a system of *Integral Education*. Vivekananda's life was too short to allow him enough time to build his ideas into a definite system of educational philosophy. Nevertheless, he has given enough ideas and guidelines in his lectures and writings for the development of a system of Integral Education suited to the needs of the modern world, especially India.

Genesis of Vivekananda's Educational Vision

Swamiji developed his main ideas of education in the course of his travels all over India as a mendicant monk soon after his Master's passing away. From his interaction with the people of all strata of society and his keen observation of the social situation in India, he came to the following main conclusions:

1. Centuries of neglect and exploitation by upper classes had not only reduced the masses of India to utter poverty, backwardness and ignorance, but had also destroyed their capacity to think for themselves and take the initiative to strive for their own betterment. And this, along with neglect of women, was the main cause of India's degradation.

2. At the same time, religion was a vital force in the lives of even the poorest and the lowliest. Every culture has a central theme or life-centre, and the life-centre of Indian culture was religion. The only proper way to regenerate India was to vitalize that centre. What the people needed was a message of strength which would infuse faith and confidence in themselves. Swamiji found that message in the spiritual traditions of India. In order to uplift the masses, it was necessary to spread among the downtrodden masses and women the vital principles of the spiritual traditions of the land which had been denied to them for centuries.

3. But the immediate need was to eradicate hunger and the lack of the bare necessities of life. This need can be met only by spreading knowledge of Western scientific

methods of agriculture, health and industries among the masses.

4. So then, the masses of India needed for their uplift spiritual knowledge as well as secular knowledge. How to spread these two types of knowledge among them? Vivekananda believed that this could be done through a scheme of Integral Education carried out on a mass scale with the support of a powerful organization. At a time when the leading lights of Indian society were thinking of a political solution to the problems of India, Vivekananda evolved a scheme of social transformation through Integral Education. Had Swamiji's idea of social transformation through Integral Education been put into practice, the social problems of India would not have assumed such forbidding proportions as they have done now. At any rate, his educational vision is even more relevant to the needs of the present-day society than it ever was before.

Universal spirituality

India is a multi-religious country with a secular form of government. Religion is a very sensitive matter, and can be used only with great caution in the field of education. In this context a question may be raised: will not Vivekananda's idea of education mean the imposition of Hindu religious beliefs on non-Hindu students? Will it be in consonance with the principles of a secular state? The answer is Swami Vivekananda used religion mostly in the sense of *spirituality*. For the majority of people religion means belief in certain dogma, external

observances and allegiance to certain religious institutions. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, however, showed that these factors constitute only the non-essential aspects of religion. The most essential core of religion consists in the ideal of realization of the Ultimate Reality, and the means of attaining it. It is this essential core that is known as *spirituality*. Sri Ramakrishna followed the spiritual paths of different religions, and through them all attained the same ultimate Goal. In this way Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated the underlying spiritual unity of all religions. It is only this common ground of spirituality that can become a part of Integral Education, and not the non-essential aspects of religion.

Vivekananda called this common ground of spirituality 'Universal Religion'. At the famous Chicago Parliament of Religions he spoke of it as follows: "... if there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will not be Brahminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being..." (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* [CW], 1:19). Perhaps Swamiji's idea may become clearer if we call it "Universal Spirituality"; it has also been called "Secular Spirituality".

This idea of universal spirituality is now spreading all over the world, sometimes under such names as 'search

for meaning' etc. Dissatisfied with the inadequacies, contradictions and controversies of institutional religions, millions of people are now waking to the understanding that religion is primarily a matter of individual need, challenge, struggle and fulfilment, as pointed out many years ago by the British philosopher, A. N. Whitehead, "Religion is what an individual does with his solitariness." To meet this need hundreds of spiritual groups, which offer guidance in Yoga, Zen, Vipassana and other spiritual techniques, have come into existence. Many of these groups do not owe allegiance to any formal religion, and are open to the followers of all religions.

It is not widely known that this modern trend of Universal Spirituality originated with Swami Vivekananda. In fact, it is one of his major contributions to the modern world. This has paved the way for giving education a spiritual orientation, even in a country wedded to secularism as a political creed.

The Sacred and the Secular

The Universal Spirituality that Swami Vivekananda propounded has a unique and important characteristic: it does not have barriers separating the sacred from the secular. Referring to this unique feature of Swamiji's philosophy of life, Sister Nivedita wrote: "No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.... To him (Vivekananda) the workshop, the study, the farmyard, and the field are as true and fit scenes for

the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality." (CW, *Introduction*, XV)

This trenchant statement holds deep significance for the modern world, especially for India which has accepted secularism as one of its political creeds. Since the Indian nation is multi-religious, its founding fathers adopted secularism in order to prevent any religious group from misusing governmental machinery to dominate other religious groups. Secularism has denied legitimacy to religious fanaticism and fundamentalism, no doubt. But it was based on a Western, Judeo-Christian, view of religion. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, God is regarded as a "wholly other" Person (or Persons) who creates the universe just as a potter creates a pot. God remains outside the universe which he rules by his fiat. Everything connected with God is holy and sacred, whereas the universe with all its myriad beings belongs to the secular realm.

In the Indian religious tradition this kind of division of reality into the sacred and the secular does not exist. The term God refers to the Ultimate Reality, known as Brahman, which is not only transcendent but also immanent in everything in the universe. The whole universe is as it were the body of God and, just as life pervades every cell in the human body, so does Brahman pervades everything as consciousness. This is the reason why in India rivers, mountains, trees, herbs etc.

are worshipped as manifestations of God. In this situation the distinction between the sacred and the secular has little relevance.

. This world view or philosophy of life was a living religious tradition in ancient India. The sages of the Upanishads saw Brahman as all-pervading consciousness. So they declared, *Sarvam khalu idam Brahma*, "All this is Brahman." Everything in the universe is a manifestation of Brahman and so has a significance, purpose, meaning. This bracing view of life became clouded to some extent in the Middle Ages with the rise of the Maya theory which, in its popular version, came to mean that the world is illusory. Sri Ramakrishna restored the Vedic vision. Like the great sages of the Upanishads, he saw everything in the universe as a manifestation of the Ultimate Reality. Sri Ramakrishna did not, however, remain satisfied with his realization of the Ultimate Reality through only the path of Hinduism. He followed the spiritual paths of several other religions and attained the same ultimate realization of the same Ultimate Reality. From this experience he declared: "There is only one God known by different names in different religions, and He can be realized through all religions." This is Sri Ramakrishna's famous doctrine of *Harmony of Religions*.

Swami Vivekananda provided a philosophical foundation to his Master's universal vision. Swamiji reinterpreted Maya as "a statement of fact", as the mental frame of reference consisting of Time, Space and Causation. Swamiji also applied the immanent aspect

of Brahman in the social field. Since the human being is the greatest manifestation of Brahman, service to man is in truth service to God. In this service to man there can be no distinctions such as Hindu, Christian, Muslim etc., because the same God dwells in all.

The ancient Indian sages' vision of the immanence of the Ultimate Reality in the universe, Sri Ramakrishna's vision of the harmony of religions, Swami Vivekananda's vision of the unity of humanity—these three visions give a new, enlightened understanding of the concept of secularism. Secularism means, on the one hand, freedom from the sectarian, exclusivistic stranglehold of institutional religions and, on the other hand, the practical application of the knowledge of the immanent spiritual oneness of all humanity as the foundation of the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity in social life, in national life and in international life. It is this understanding that must be the basis of educational planning in India so that the children of India may walk the sunlit path of Integral Education, grow to be enlightened citizens, and build a better, happier world for future generations.

Values and Reality

Nowadays there is a good deal of talk about 'values' and 'value education'. In India the term 'values' is most commonly used in the sense of 'virtues' or 'morals'. Since morals are associated with religion, many people want to avoid the use of the terms morals and virtues and use the word 'values' instead.

What are values? Man has a hierarchy of needs.

Lower needs such as the need for food, clothing and shelter are called 'basic needs'. Higher needs such as the need to pursue Truth, Goodness, Beauty, self-esteem etc., are called values. Values are inner imperatives which make us seek certain goals. That is to say, values point to something that is valued. Take for instance a simple thing as potatoes. When the shopkeeper says that the value (or *price*, as it is more commonly known) of a kilo of potatoes is Rs.5/-, potato is the real thing, for it appeases our hunger; the 'value' (price) is an abstract symbol; it does not appease our hunger. In other words, 'values' by themselves have no value; it is the Reality behind them that is important.

In Western culture Goodness, Truth and Beauty are regarded as the ultimate values. But ultimate values only point to an ultimate Reality. As a rule, Western philosophers (with the exception of a few mystics) never attempted to transcend the values and realize the Ultimate Reality. In fact, Kant even said that the Ultimate Reality can never be known. It was only in ancient India that the Ultimate Reality was discovered by the sages of the Upanishads. They called it Brahman. It is the source of our sense of existence, the source of our consciousness or knowledge, and the source of our happiness. These three aspects of Brahman are known respectively as *sat*, *chit*, and *ānanda*. The ultimate values of Goodness, Truth and Beauty may be regarded as dim intimations of the Ultimate Reality gained through the veil of Maya. In other words, *sat*, *chit*, and *ānanda*, covered by the veil of Maya, appear as Goodness, Truth and Beauty respectively.

Social life, science and art are considered to be the pursuit of the ultimate values, Goodness, Truth and Beauty.

But mere pursuit of values cannot bring us lasting fulfillment. Lasting fulfillment can be obtained only by realizing the Ultimate Reality. And for this one must go beyond values, transcend the mind and the empirical world. The struggle to transcend the mind and realize the Ultimate Reality is the beginning of spiritual life which, according to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, constitutes the essence of religion.

The important point to note here is that any scheme for education becomes effective only if it is rooted in reality. Simply introducing some 'values' into the curriculum and making the students learn some virtues like truthfulness, courage, punctuality etc., will not be effective unless the students are shown that these virtues are expressions of the natural order of reality. Without reality orientation, values will remain nothing more than social conventions or codes of conduct in public which the students may not follow in private life. If virtues are to become a reality in a student's life, they should be rooted in reality. It is reality that gives power.

The most obvious example of the power of reality is provided by science. Science has radically altered human life and thought in many ways and has demonstrated its awesome power to destroy and to confer untold benefits on humanity. Where does the power of science come from? Science is based on reality, directly observable reality, not on speculation or imagination. And reality

means truth, directly verifiable truth, universal truth, available to all people all over the globe. It is this truth that gives power to science.

If values are to have similar power and influence on our lives, they are to be based on reality. A celebrated example of this fact is provided by the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Among the virtues, Gandhiji gave prime importance to *satya* (truth) and *ahimsa* (nonviolence). However, for Gandhiji *satya* or truth was not a mere virtue or principle to be followed, but the expression of the *sat* (Being) aspect of the Ultimate Reality known as Brahman (which is triune in nature, *sat-chit-ānanda*). To be truthful is to be in tune with Reality and so is a natural state. It was this rootedness in Reality that gave Gandhiji all the power he needed to move the hearts of men and change the course of history.

In the Indian philosophical tradition, values derive their 'value' from the Ultimate Reality. In the field of education this idea has two implications. In the first place, it means that values or virtues are to be followed not out of fear or compulsion but as the spontaneous expressions of man's true nature. "I am good, truthful and non-violent, not out of fear of the police or parents or teachers but because they are the true expressions of my real nature as the Atman": this is the attitude that a system of education should inculcate in students. When a student links values or virtues to his own true nature, his own true Self, then his moral life becomes authentic, not a mere show or a struggle to be what others expect him to be. As he gains the full support of his whole

personality, he gains tremendous strength to practise virtues.

Secondly, values or virtues are to be treated not as an end in themselves but as a part of man's quest for the ultimate Truth, his struggle to discover the higher dimensions of his soul, his struggle to go beyond sorrow and suffering, his struggle to attain supreme fulfillment and peace. This struggle constitutes the foundation of spiritual life.

Spiritual Orientation Vs. Value Orientation

Attempts are now being made in India by governmental and non-governmental agencies to introduce value education in schools. Here by value education is meant the inculcation of virtues or morals with the aim of making the student an efficient worker and decent citizen. This is apparently a laudable venture but, if it is not to become a self-defeating exercise in academic moralizing or indoctrination, it should be based on a convincing integral worldview and should be geared to the ultimate meaning and purpose of human life. In this context, the experience of Western countries can serve as a warning signal to us. It is well known that in Europe and America the Churches have carried on moral education programmes in a planned and efficiently organized way for centuries. And yet, in spite of all the preaching and Sunday Schools, the moral edifice of Western society seems to have at least partially collapsed in modern times. The signs of the collapse are evident in the alarming increase in crime, violence, immorality, drug

addiction, break up of family life, and disregard for matrimonial sanctity.

By contrast, in India from very ancient times morality has never been forced on people through organized preaching. Moral life has always been regarded as a natural way of living in tune with the eternal, universal moral order of the universe known as *ṛta* or *dharma*. Furthermore, morality has never been regarded as an end in itself; it has always been treated as an adjunct to spiritual life. Spiritual life is the struggle to realize the Ultimate Reality, and morality is the very first step in that struggle. Once the life of a person is oriented towards the Ultimate Reality and, once the soul enters the spiritual path, moral life comes as a matter of course.

This does not, however, mean that moral life is easy. In fact many people avoid leading a strict moral life because it is very difficult, and they can get along in life and attain success even without facing the conflicts and struggles that moral life involves. But when moral life is understood as an unavoidable part of spiritual life, all moral conflicts and sufferings become meaningful and worth undergoing.

The main purpose of the above discussion is to stress the importance of giving education proper *spiritual orientation*. Spiritual orientation automatically includes *value orientation*, and there is no need to give separate value orientation to education. Spiritual orientation makes the practice of values or virtues more natural and meaningful. Vivekananda did not use the terms values or value education. He wanted that religion (that is,

spirituality) should form the core of education and that the idea of Atman as the real nature of man should be taught even in childhood. In other words, Swamiji wanted spiritual orientation to be the basic orientation of all branches of education.

Epistemology of Integral Education

We have seen that in Swamiji's scheme of Integral Education, spiritual knowledge and secular knowledge are treated as complementary. It is important to know that, although there is something common between these two types of knowledge, there are also basic epistemological differences between them. Swamiji has given two famous definitions: one for religion and the other for education. A proper understanding of these two definitions is necessary to understand the epistemological differences between spiritual knowledge and secular knowledge.

What is knowledge? In Western philosophy the theory of knowledge is based on Aristotle's view that knowledge is an impression (*species impressa*) created on the mind by a stimulus coming from outside. By contrast, according to Vedanta, the source of all knowledge is neither in the body nor in the mind but in the Spirit which is the true Self of man and is known as the Ātman. The Ātman is of the nature of pure awareness, as if it were self-luminous. Everything else is covered by ignorance known as Māya, Avidyā or Ajñāna. When this veil is removed, even partially, the Ātman manifests itself as knowledge. This is how every kind of knowledge—from

the lowest form of sense-experience to the highest spiritual experience—takes place. Regarding this, Swami Vivekananda says, “Knowledge is inherent in man; no knowledge comes from outside; it is all inside. What we say a man knows, should in strict psychological language, be what he *discovers* or *unveils*. What a man *learns* is really what he *discovers*, by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge.” (CW, 1:28)

Furthermore, Vedanta holds that ignorance is of three kinds :

- (a) *kāraṇa-ajñāna*: this covers the Atman and gives rise to the false self known as the ego.
- (b) *kārya-ajñāna*: this is the cause of delusion, attachment, fear and other problems.
- (c) *avastha-ajñāna*: this covers all objects and prevents us from seeing them.

For the sake of simplicity, we may call the first type of ignorance ‘transcendental ignorance’ and call the other two types of ignorance by the common term ‘empirical ignorance’. Removal of ‘empirical ignorance’ gives rise to empirical knowledge; this is the fundamental process involved in education. This idea has been expressed by Swamiji through his famous definition of education: “EDUCATION is the manifestation of the *perfection* already in man.” All the qualities, talents and capacities remain hidden within by ignorance. As the light of the Atman removes the ignorance, these powers begin to manifest more and more.

Removal of 'transcendental ignorance' gives rise to spiritual knowledge, that is, knowledge of the true nature of the Atman and Brahman. This idea has been expressed by Swamiji through his definition of religion: "RELIGION is the manifestation of the *divinity* already in man."

Thus according to Swami Vivekananda, Education and Religion are two phases of a single process of Self-revelation or Self-realization. Such a view transforms education into a spiritual discipline, a Yoga, and spiritualizes the lives of both the teacher and the student. Furthermore, such a view removes the difference between the sacred and the secular, and thus eliminates the bogey of 'secularism' which has been preventing the teaching of religion in our schools and colleges.

What we have discussed above is based on the traditional Advaitic theory of knowledge. This theory, however, does not explain how words convey knowledge. As everybody knows, education is *communication of knowledge through words* either by a teacher or from a book. All thinking is done through words. Even in spiritual life, the Guru communicates spiritual knowledge through a Mantra. The problem how words communicate knowledge engaged the attention of Western scholars only in the 20th century, but in India it was dealt with exhaustively by Bhartrihari in the 4th century B.C. and by the Tantras in the 14th century A.D. Although this is an important topic connected with education, it is beyond the scope of the present article to discuss it further here.

Vivekananda's Conception of Integral Education

The system of Integral Education that Swami Vivekananda conceived has theoretical, practical and social aspects.

At the theoretical level, Swamiji wanted that both religion and science should be taught. In the course of a conversation he stated: "What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta, Brahmacharya as the guiding motto, and also Shraddha or faith in one's own self." (CW, 5:366) Swamiji looked upon religion and science as mutually complementary, for they deal with two different planes of reality—the transcendental and the empirical. (However, as already mentioned, by religion Swamiji meant spirituality, not institutional religions.) Both represent man's quest for the Ultimate Truth or Reality: science seeks Truth in the external world, whereas religion seeks Truth in the depths of consciousness. (CW, 3:330)

At the practical level also there should be complementarity between religion and science. On the one hand, education should help a person to transcend the senses and gain spiritual knowledge and apply this knowledge in practical life to solve the problems of life. Swamiji called this function "Practical Vedanta". On the other hand, education should enable a person to acquire vocational skills and efficiency, and master Western technology and business enterprise.

At the social level, education should help a person to

lead a perfectly moral life, on the one hand, and serve suffering humanity, on the other hand.

We now take up for discussion some of the main concepts of Vivekananda's vision of Integral Education.

1. Reality Orientation

One of the first things every child wants to know is about himself or herself and about the world in which they live. Giving children correct knowledge about their real nature and about the real nature of the world is known as reality orientation in education.

Reality is of two kinds : empirical reality or the visible universe which is experienced through the five senses, and the transcendent reality or the invisible realm beyond the senses. The first one is the subject matter of science and is not dealt with here. The second one is the subject matter of religion.

Enquiry into the nature of the transcendent reality began very early—at least by 1000 BC—in India. It was indeed a kind of national passion. Many illumined teachers like Uddālaka Āruṇi, Pippalāda, Yājñavalkya, Varuṇa, Angīrasa and others arose; their hermitages became centers of education and students flocked to them from different parts. One of the main questions the students put to the teachers was, “Venerable sir, what is that knowing which everything is known?” In their quest for the Ultimate Reality, the sages had earlier arrived at the oneness of Life in a cosmic dynamic principle which they called Prāṇa. They did not stop with this knowledge but enquired further, “Where does this

Prāṇa originate from?” “What is its root?” They finally discovered that Prāṇa itself originated from the Ultimate Reality known as Brahman which is of the nature of an infinitude of consciousness and bliss. Another line of enquiry led to the discovery that the true nature of man is neither the body nor the mind but the Ātman which is one with Brahman. This unity of the individual Self with the Supreme Self was expressed in the form of certain equations known as mahavākyas such as, “Thou art That”, “This Ātman is Brahman”, etc. Vivekananda reformulated these in a modern mahavākya, “Potential divinity of the soul.”

The discoveries of Ātman, Brahman and their oneness is one of the great events in the history of humanity which can be compared only with Einstein’s discovery of Relativity, Planck’s discovery of Quantum, and other events in modern physics. This knowledge is now the heritage of the whole of humanity, no doubt. But the children of India have a special claim on it, and to deprive them of their national heritage is indeed a crime.

To make the student know that his real nature is the effulgent divine center in him; and that, apart from the visible universe, there is the invisible realm of infinite consciousness, power and bliss—this is what is meant by reality orientation of education. How to do this is the real question. Merely prescribing some textbooks will not be of much help, although good books are necessary. What is really needed is to rekindle the spirit of enquiry, the all-consuming quest for the ultimate Truth, which characterized the Indian mind in ancient India, and

which we lost during the Middle Ages.

In the 13th and 14th centuries the European mind underwent an *intellectual awakening* (you can read about it in H.G. Wells's *A Short History of the World*). All the subsequent achievements, success and prosperity of Western people resulted from that awakening. Ironically, just around that time the Indian mind went into deep slumber. All the subsequent failures, slavery, poverty, backwardness of the people of India resulted from that slumber. Vivekananda was one of the first great leaders in India to understand this, and he wanted to awaken the minds of Indians. So he went about exhorting the people, "Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached." The tragedy of India is that the Indian people have not adequately responded to that call. Anyone who has dealt with Indian youths in the educational field cannot fail to notice that the real problem with our youths is not communication of knowledge or skills, for our youths are among the most brilliant in the world. The real problem is to awaken in their minds the spirit of enquiry, hunger for knowledge, and all-consuming quest for the ultimate Truth.

But the awakening can happen. There are several ways of achieving it. As a matter of fact, a kind of general awakening of the Indian mind has already begun. What we now need most are teachers who can awaken, enkindle, ignite, young minds.

2. Morality based on Divinity of the Soul

Conventional ethics is based on do's and don'ts, on

compulsion and fear. If you ask a Christian, Jew or Muslim why he should be moral, the most likely answer will be that we have to be moral because that is God's commandment and, should we disobey Him, He would punish us. If you ask a Hindu, Buddhist or Jain why he should be moral, the most likely answer will be that if we do anything immoral, the bad *karmaphala* will come back to us and we will have to suffer. Morality based on compulsion and fear is against the dignity of man, and this is what modern youths are rejecting.

Swami Vivekananda has given a new approach to ethics and morality. According to him, morality is not something to be imposed from outside. Morality is the spontaneous expression of the divinity, purity and goodness of the true Self of man, the Atman. When a person does something immoral, he has fallen from his true nature, and got into an unnatural state; it takes effort to do this. But morality does not need any effort or compulsion; all that is necessary is to assert one's true nature, manifest one's inherent divinity. Swamiji said: "Teach yourself, teach everyone, his real nature. Call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakens. Power will come, glory will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity." (CW, 3:193)

Swamiji wanted that the knowledge of the inherent purity and divinity of the soul should be given even in childhood. He was fond of the Puraṇic story of queen Madālasā. While rocking her baby in the cradle, the queen would sing: "Thou art the Pure One, the Stainless,

the Sinless, the Mighty One, the Great One.”

Among virtues (or ‘values’ as they are known now) Swamiji gave prime importance to inner strength. Without inner strength, all other virtues and values will remain mere ideas. What most people need is not a sermon on morals or a lecture on values, but inner strength to be virtuous and good. And true inner strength comes, says the Upanishad, from the knowledge of the Ātman (Ātmanā vindate vīryam—*Kena Upanishad*, 2.4). Explaining this, Swami Vivekananda says: “Men are taught from childhood that they are weak and sinners. Teach them that they are all glorious children of immortality, even those who are the weakest in manifestation. Let positive, strong, helpful thought enter into their brains from very childhood.... Say to your minds, I am He, I am He.” (CW, 2:87)

In order to have inner strength one must have faith in oneself, in one’s true Self or Ātman. Since God dwells in the soul as the Supreme Self, to have faith in one’s true Self is the same as to have faith in God. Swamiji said, “Loosing faith in one’s self means losing faith in God. Do you believe in that Infinite, good Providence working in and through you? If you believe... how can you lose heart?” (CW, 3:376) Swamiji’s doctrine of faith in oneself reconciles the contradictions between self-dependence and dependence on God, between self-knowledge and devotion, etc.

3. Training of Mind through Meditation and Yoga

One of the major drawbacks of educational systems in the West as well as in the East is that in them education is treated merely as transmission of knowledge; no attempt is made to give proper training to the mind. In the system of Integral Education envisaged by Swami Vivekananda, training of the mind plays a pivotal role. Training of the mind is necessary for three purposes: (a) to increase the power of attention (concentration), (b) to have work efficiency and perfection in workmanship, and (c) to increase the capacity to deal with the problems of life.

(a) *Training in concentration*: Concentration is of two kinds : Unconscious and conscious. In *unconscious concentration* the outgoing tendency of the mind is limited to a specific activity by the force of interest or habit; the will has very little function in it, and so it is not a self-directed process. Unconscious concentration takes place when a person gets absorbed in reading a book, in drawing a picture, performing a surgical operation, playing chess etc. It is commonly known as 'paying attention'.

In *conscious concentration* the outgoing tendency of the mind is checked, the mind is inwardized and fixed on a specific object by an act of will; it is a fully self-directed process, which needs practice, and is generally difficult. This is what is called *dhyāna*, popularly known as 'meditation'. In India, until modern times, meditation had been practised exclusively by spiritual seekers with

the aim of attaining God realization or Self-realization. But in recent years it is being widely practised, especially in its Buddhist versions such as Zen and Vipassana, for other benefits such as mental relaxation, reduction of tension, correct decision-making, improvement of health, cure of psychosomatic diseases and so on.

In the field of education, normally it is only the first type, unconscious concentration, that comes into operation. One may think this kind of concentration is natural and effortless, and students do not have any problem about it. But in modern times the life of a student is so much filled with distractions provided by mass media, sports events and entertainments, that many students are unable to concentrate on their studies in a sustained way. In fact, a good number of them suffer from a psychological problem known as “attention-deficit-disorder” (ADD), although neither the students nor their parents may be aware of this fact. This problem is particularly seen in children addicted to watching TV. In the United States such ‘TV-children’ are found to be unable to study any subject for more than 20 minutes at a stretch. Regular practice of meditation can cure this disorder.

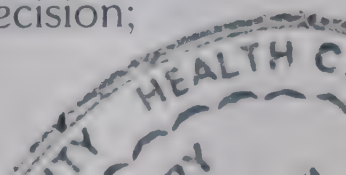
Even otherwise, practice of meditation can greatly increase a student’s powers of grasping and retention of ideas and improve his overall educational performance. About this Swamiji said: “To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts. If I had to do my education over again, and had any voice in the matter, I would not study facts at all. I would develop the power of concentration and detach-

ment, and then with a perfect instrument I could collect facts at will. (CW, 6:38-39)

In a system of Integral Education, daily practice of meditation should form a part of the curriculum. It can be introduced even at the Primary School level.

(b) *Training for efficiency in work and perfection in workmanship* : One of the few things Indians have to learn, especially from the Japanese, is an enlightened attitude towards work. India is well known for its splendid cotton and silk fabrics, jewellery, brassware, massive temples with intricate stone and wood carvings, etc all of which reveal the extraordinary skill and indefatigable work of its artisans. Apart from these special cases belonging to the traditional professions, there appears to be a general tendency in Indian society to look upon work as drudgery or bondage, to avoid hard work, risks and initiative, and to do work in an inefficient or shoddy way. One main cause for this general attitude is that we missed the Industrial Revolution. Another cause is the strangling effect of two hundred years of subservience to foreign rule. Whatever might be the cause, if India is to overcome poverty and backwardness and to compete successfully with other nations in global economy, Indians must develop a new frame of mind having the following attributes:

- (i) acceptance of work as a joyous participation in life;
- (ii) a firm determination to do all work with perfectionist thoroughness and meticulous precision;



- (iii) willingness to work hard and with an alert and thinking mind;
- (iv) readiness to subordinate self-interest to group interest and to work as a team for collective welfare.

Such a frame of mind can be developed through training in Yoga. The *Gita* (2.50) says: *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam* “Yoga is the attainment of dexterity through work.” One of the tasks of Integral Education is to impart such a yogic training of mind. It may not be out of place to mention here that in Japan it was reported a few years ago that 80% of its executives had undergone Zen training. And in Burma, U Nu had made Vipassana training mandatory for civil servants.

(c) *Training to deal with the problems of life* : Apart from training in concentration, an integral system of education should provide training in facing the problems of life. The first problem is moral. Mere knowledge of values or morals does not make a person moral. One of the drawbacks of the recent movement to introduce value education is that it merely attempts to thrust upon young people certain ‘values’ (mostly virtues) without teaching them how to make those values real in their lives. It is no use telling a young man or woman, “Be fearless”, unless the deep-rooted cause of fear in him is removed. What is the use of giving advice to a person about the ‘value’ of love if in his life he has received no love from his parents or others?

Stressing this point, Swami Vivekananda said in one of his lectures on *Karma Yoga*: “We hear ‘Be good’ and

'Be good' and 'Be good' taught all over the world. There is hardly a child, born in any country in the world, who has not been told, 'Do not steal', 'Do not tell a lie', but nobody tells the child how he can help doing them. Talking will not help him.... Only when we teach him to control his mind do we really help him." (CW, 1:171)

According to Patanjali, there are three basic instincts in man: to enjoy, to hate, to fear. These three basic instincts manifest themselves in the form of innumerable desires, impulses, emotions, ideas etc., constantly rising in the mind. Then there are problems created by the society in which one lives. Most students experience these problems, or they will do so in later life, but they do not know how to deal with them. One of the purposes of education should be to help young people to deal successfully with the problems of life. For this they need training of mind. This training involves at least three main processes. First of all the student should be taught to understand the workings of his mind, and discover the root-causes of his problems. Another process is to detach his self from the mental disturbances. The third process is to bring about the necessary inner transformations to solve his problem. All these processes of mental training and the whole science of consciousness have been dealt with in depth in Patanjali's Yoga system.

Life is full of uncertainties and difficulties, but this does not mean we should succumb to them. We succumb to them only because of our unconscious and uncontrolled ways of living. Yoga enables us to live an awakened, self-directed, holy life, and gives us the power to triumph

over the difficulties. Swami Vivekananda wanted that our whole life should be converted into Yoga. Students can be taught to conduct all activities—studying, playing, working, eating—everything as Yoga. This is one of the important aspects of Integral Education envisaged by Swami Vivekananda.

4. Holistic Development of Personality

One of the aims of education according to Swami Vivekananda is to attain harmonious development of the whole personality. Now, there are two main views of personality. In the Judeo-Christian tradition and in Western philosophy, personality is regarded as dichotomous, that is, it consists of only the body and the mind—the mind itself being treated as the soul, spirit and self. In Hindu philosophy, human personality is regarded as trichotomous, that is, it consists of the body, the mind and the Atman. Integral Education helps in the holistic development of all the three dimensions of personality in the following way.

(a) *Physical development* : First of all there should be proper understanding of human physiology. Children should be taught to lead a regulated life with regard to food, sleep, exercise and recreation, and not to cultivate any bad habit. Swami Vivekananda believed that physical weakness was one of the main causes for the failure of Indians in several fields.

(b) *Mental development* : Swamiji wanted that there should be harmonious development of all the three faculties of the mind—thinking, feeling and willing. He

said: "Would to God that all men were so constituted that in their minds all these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and of work were equally present in full! That is the ideal, my ideal of a perfect man." (CW, 2: 388)

(c) *Spiritual Development* : It was stated earlier that, according to Vedanta, human personality has a third dimension known as the Ātman, which is different from the mind and body, and which is a part or reflection of the Supreme Reality known as *Brahman*. Owing to ignorance, the Ātman is not directly experienced by ordinary people. This truth has been expressed by Swami Vivekananda through the phrase 'potential divinity of the soul'. Through spiritual disciplines and unselfish work ignorance gets reduced, and the divinity of the soul manifests itself more and more. Thus for Swamiji, spiritual development is a process of spiritual unfoldment. Every activity, one's whole life, can be looked upon as a process of manifestation of divinity of the soul. As Swamiji has stated, 'My ideal, indeed, can be put into a few words, and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.' (CW, 7:501)

This means physical development and mental development are not an end in themselves, but are only means for spiritual unfoldment, for the manifestation of the divinity of the soul. This understanding spiritualizes, divinizes, not only one's whole life but also one's relationships with others. Holistic view of human development is an essential part of Integral Education.

5. Service as a Way of Life

Swami Vivekananda was the first religious leader in modern India to point out that the main cause of India's downfall was the thoughtless selfishness of the upper classes who, directly or indirectly, exploited the poor masses without giving them at least education in return. He said, "So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them." (CW, 5:58) Swamiji made renunciation and service the national ideals of India. This was not rhetoric but truth based on a proper understanding of the inter-relatedness of universal Life gained by the ancient sages.

The Upanishadic sages discovered that the microcosm (individual life) and the macrocosm (cosmic life) are of the same nature and are in dynamic contact with each other at different levels—physical, mental and spiritual. Each individual receives food, and various articles of daily use from society at the physical level, and various types of information, love etc. from society at the mental level. But this *inflow* of things can be maintained only if there is a corresponding *outflow* of things from the individual to the society. From this fact came the Law of Karma, which states that what we receive in this birth is the result of our actions done in a previous birth. It is what we give that we receive. Hence, giving to society anything in the form of monetary help or service to people is not an obligation or duty imposed upon us, but a natural way of life to be followed for our own good.

Vivekananda showed further that, since the Supreme Spirit dwells in all beings, service to man is service to God. Such an attitude not only reduces selfishness but also eliminates egoism from the field of service.

This ideal of service as a way of life should form an essential part of education of boys and girls in India. This is all the more necessary in the coming decades because India, which already has a 250-million-strong middle class, is poised to become an economic superpower with a sizable chunk of affluent society by 2020. Wealth without wisdom will cause degeneration of the individual and the society. This is what is happening in Western society now. In this context it may be remembered that once upon a time India was the wealthiest nation in the world. How did we lose this wealth? According to Swami Vivekananda, the surplus wealth produced by the labour of the masses was not used for the education and uplift of the masses. It remained in the hands of a few privileged people which caused moral degeneration, and the upper classes who ruled the country succumbed to foreign invasions. This should not be allowed to happen again. One of the aims of Integral Education should be to create the awareness that wealth is a collective concept and should be used for one's own welfare and the welfare of others. It may be noted here that monetary help is not the only form of service; one can serve others by giving one's time or by making use of one's talents and capacities for the good of people.

6. Love as the Expression of Spiritual Oneness

Love is undoubtedly the most important factor in human sustenance, health and happiness, from cradle to cremation. It is the most powerful and sublime form of emotion, and is the primary driving force behind all forms of art, culture and social life. At least half of all human misery is caused by the ignorance, distortion or misdirection of love. For many of the problems of humanity at social, national and international levels also love seems to be the only ultimate solution. And yet, it has seldom been studied in depth or included in school curricula at any level. A proper understanding of love is an essential part of Integral Education envisaged by Swami Vivekananda.

One point which is common to most religions is that true love has a spiritual, divine basis. In Christianity true love is regarded as a form of energy called *agape* which originates from God, unifies people and returns to God. In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad, the sage Yajnavalkya tells his wife that one Supreme Self dwells in all beings, and it is this underlying spiritual unity that manifests itself as love for the husband, for the wife, for children and for all others. In other words, love for human beings is an expression of love for God. This understanding divinizes, sanctifies, elevates and strengthens all human relationships. In modern times it was Sri Ramakrishna who propounded this view of love and demonstrated it in his own life.

One of the functions of Integral Education is to create the understanding of the sanctity, significance and strength of love and its spiritual basis among the younger generation and train them to put it into practice in social life. Family is the basic unit of social life, and it is in the family that the sanctity, strength and joy of love should find full expression. Children nurtured in this form of pure love feel secure and develop a calm self-confident disposition, positive outlook on life and friendly attitude towards other people. When there is incompatibility, disharmony and resentment between parents, children feel insecure and develop a negative attitude towards life. Modern psychology has shown that many of the personal problems of adult life are due to faulty upbringing in childhood. Integrity of family life is a necessary condition for the preservation of culture. If Indian culture has endured for three millennia, it is not only because of its spiritual vitality but also because strong family bonds could ensure the continuity of spiritual and religious traditions.

However, loyalty to family should not limit one's vision to one's own family, but should extend it to the web of social life extending in all directions. Family bonds should provide a strong, supportive base for rendering various forms of social service. And as a person's mental horizon expands, he can extend his love to members of other societies and other nations cutting through the barriers of caste, creed, nationality and race. Sri Sarada Devi, the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna, although an unlettered village woman, exemplified this universal love

in her simple life. Her last message to humanity was: “Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; this whole world is your own!” (*Sri Sarada Devi, The Holy Mother*, p.199) This simple message deserves to be taught to all children all over the world.

7. Higher Levels of Happiness

Pursuit of happiness is a basic urge in all beings and is the primary motive for all human actions. The character and conduct of a person depend to a great extent on the type of happiness he pursues in his life. Many of the conflicts and quarrels in social life are over the attainment of happiness. Hence a proper understanding of the true nature and function of happiness in life should form an essential part of Integral Education.

One of the important truths discovered by the sages of the Upanishads in ancient India is that ānanda, bliss, is an essential nature of the Ultimate Reality. Just as knowledge is inherent in the Ātman, so ānanda is also inherent in the Ātman. External objects provide only a stimulus for the manifestation of this inherent joy, and the effort to get happiness is nothing but an effort to remove the obstacles to this manifestation. In other words, all the happiness that we seek in the external world is really within us. The unlimited variety of happiness that a person experiences is caused by the endless variety of the manifestation of this inner happiness.

Another discovery, related to the first one, made by the ancient sages is that there are different degrees or levels of happiness. The Taittirīya Upanishad gives a

remarkable description of different levels of happiness as an ascending series from the lowest physical pleasures to the highest bliss of Brahman. This scheme may not have much relevance to modern times, but it is important to recognize that there are higher levels of happiness much more satisfying than sense pleasures.

This understanding is vitally necessary for the youths of the modern world, because the modern society offers a great variety of enjoyments to them. It is well known that indulgence in sense pleasures reduces physical stamina and intellectual vigour, and inhibits the development of higher spiritual faculties. It also involves enormous waste of money, time and energy which could more profitably be utilized for the achievements of the higher goals in life. One of the reasons why many youngsters run after sense enjoyments is their ignorance about the higher levels of happiness that are open to them.

The highest forms of transcendental bliss that comes from the realization of Ātman and Brahman may be beyond the immediate reach of most of the people. But there are higher forms of pure joy which can be attained by anybody who leads a disciplined, goal-oriented life. Some of these forms of pure joy are mentioned below.

(a) *Joy of knowledge* : Even in the secular field, the acquisition of any higher knowledge or the discovery of a new truth, as a result of deep study and thinking or research, brings pure joy.

(b) *Joy of selfless-service* : Any form of selfless service, especially service to the poor and the sick, brings pure joy as an unsought reward.

(c) *Joy of pure love* : Pure love, that is, love untainted by sensual or selfish considerations, gives a deep fount of joy. *Bhakti* or love for God is a higher form of this love.

(d) *Joy of self-control* : When all the sense organs are brought under complete control, a higher form of pure joy suffuses the soul. This is the wealth of spiritual seekers.

(e) *Joy of meditation* : As already mentioned, the *Atman* or Inner Self is the true source of joy but, owing to the disturbances of the mind, we normally experience very little of this joy. Meditation makes the mind calm, and then the joy of the *Atman* manifests itself: this is the joy of meditation. It is very often of the nature of deep peace.

There are also lesser degrees of happiness that can be attained through studies, music, other forms of art, sports and games, which are better than wasteful pleasures. One of the aims of Integral Education is to inform students about higher forms of happiness and help them to attain it.

8. Harmony of Science and Religion

Harmony of science and religion is one of the foundational principles of Integral Education. Vivekananda did not look down upon science as a product of materialism. It is true that science does not accept the existence of transcendental spirit or the validity of spiritual or mystical experiences. Swamiji knew only too well that these limitations of science are caused by its strict adherence to

objectivity and verifiable truth. On the other hand he regarded science as representing a higher stage of human evolution. Nor was he afraid of technology or the alleged dehumanizing effects of machines. He regarded industries as necessary for eradicating poverty by producing more food, clothing and other necessities of life.

In recent years the advancements made in information technology and biotechnology have made technology a key factor in achieving socio-economic development. Developing countries like India can attain success in a competitive world only by mastering technology. Hence science and technology have to become an essential part of education in India. The only question is how to enable the youth to master science and technology without succumbing to the stranglehold of materialism and the evils of Western society. Vivekananda's idea of Integral Education, with its emphasis on *spiritual orientation*, is the only viable solution to the problem.

It may be mentioned here that the type of antagonism between religion and science which characterizes Western culture is unknown in India. Until the 11th century science and technology had been regarded as an adjunct to religion. Vivekananda was the first great religious leader in India to attempt a reconciliation of religion with science. The premises on which Swamiji attempted the reconciliation are as follows :

(a) Science and religion deal with two planes of Reality, the empirical and the transcendental; hence they are not contradictory but complementary to each other.

(b) Just as science is based on the eternal truths and

laws of the empirical world, so religion is also based on the eternal truths of the transcendental world; these were discovered by the sages in ancient India; the Upanishads are a record of these discoveries.

(c) As in the case of scientific truths, the truths of religion are verifiable, although this verification takes place at a transcendental plane.

(d) Science seeks the explanation of all phenomena within the system; it rejects supernaturalism. The Judeo-Christian tradition regards God as the creator who remains outside the creation and explains all phenomena as caused by Divine Will—this is known as supernaturalism. But Vedanta regards God as immanent in the universe and all phenomena are explained within the system (CW, 1:369-370; 2:329)

These principles of harmony enunciated by Swamiji enable modern students to accept both science and religion as necessary and complementary disciplines and to be benefited by both of them.

9. Art as Layman's Mysticism

Science and Technology, however important they are, can be the concern of only a small number of people. If there is one form of human activity which evokes universal response from one and all irrespective of the distinctions of social status, age, gender, caste, creed or language, it is Art. Youngsters are particularly sensitive to art. As a matter of fact, every youth lives in his or her own private world of art. In India the entertainment industry provides the most lucrative opportunities to

young men and women at present. Various forms of art popularized through mass media are influencing modern youths in several ways. Not all this influence is good or healthy. Violence and sex are entertainment in the West and it is reaching Indian youths through foreign TV channels.

In view of the tremendous influence that art exerts on the lives of youths, it is surprising that hardly any provision is made in the curricula of schools and colleges for giving students a proper understanding of art. One of the foundational principles of art is freedom of expression. Any attempt to stifle this freedom by putting art in the straitjacket religious doctrines or spirituality will kill art. Art is art—in all its infinite variety. What education should do is to give students a correct understanding of art—its nature, meaning and purpose—and also of art-experience (known as aesthetic experience).

What is Art? As was stated earlier, Western culture is value-orientated and in it, from the time of Plato, Goodness, Truth and Beauty are regarded as the ultimate values. According to Plato, art is the pursuit of the value Beauty. In later centuries the idea was developed that art is the expression of emotions.

Indian culture is Reality-orientated, and in it the Ultimate Reality is regarded as sat-chit-ānanda, “Being-Awareness-Bliss”. In the Middle Ages eminent thinkers like Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta developed the theory that art is the expression of the ānanda or ‘Joy’ aspect of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. The true Bliss of Brahman can be experienced

only by transcending the senses through yoga and attaining a state known as *samādhi*. This transcendental spiritual experience is known as mystical experience. This is possible only for a very small number of illumined souls who lead an austere life. But for common people, who cannot practise austerities and yoga, art provides just a tiny bit of the Supreme Bliss of Brahman filtered through the veil of *Māya*. This minuscule of joy gained through art is known as *rasa*.

It is for the sake of this little bit of joy that people read novels and poems, listen to music, witness dramatic performances, dance etc. The artist evokes this joy through *dhvani* or suggestion. Music, as the Greek philosopher Pythagoras believed, is an expression of cosmic rhythms which he called the 'Music of the Spheres'; In Indian religious philosophy it is known as *nādabrahman*. When you listen to music, thoughts are stilled for the time being, the mind is put in tune with cosmic rhythms, and you experience the joy of *nādabrahman*. Similarly, dance also is an expression of the basic rhythms of Life which in ordinary life we fail to notice.

The 14th-century Kashmiri philosopher Abhinavagupta pointed out the similarities between mystical experience and aesthetic experience: (a) in both the types of experience there is detachment of the self which remains a witness; (b) in both there is free flow of joy unobstructed by egoism, fear, hatred etc; (c) in both there is transcendence of time and space—when you are absorbed in a book or movie you lose awareness of time and space; (d) both are universal experiences available

to all. Of course in art experience the mental changes are temporary, whereas in spiritual experience the changes are permanent. There are also other basic differences between the two.

Nevertheless, the similarities are so striking that they provide a wholly new, enlightened approach to art. This approach was indicated by the late Professor M. Hiriyanna of Mysore University, a sage thinker, by his definition, "Art is layman's yoga". This squares well with Swami Vivekananda's idea that the sacred and the secular are two aspects of the same Reality and one's whole life is yoga.

One point to be remembered in this context is that there is good art and there is bad art; and only good art deserves to be called 'layman's yoga'. Creating in young people proper understanding of art is one of the tasks of Integral Education envisaged by Swami Vivekananda. Once they get this understanding, they themselves will be able to distinguish between true or good art and worthless trash which goes in the name of art.

10. Openness to Nature

By openness to nature is meant two things: ecological awareness and nature mysticism.

(a) *Ecological awareness*: The Supreme Court of India has recently passed an order making environment awareness a compulsory subject in all schools in India. The reason for this is obvious: India, like several other countries, is facing at least three major types of threat to its environment. One is the shrinking of forests (which

cover 19% of the total land) and extinction of animals. India has the second largest biodiversity in the world. The second threat is air pollution in cities and the pollution of rivers. The third threat is global warming and the depletion of ozone layer. Although these threats are of a serious nature, there is very little awareness of it among the public. One cause for this is rapid urbanization and the enormous increase in population.

But the main cause is the alienation of the people from the culture of the land. This is unfortunate because in no other culture is the interdependence of all beings so fully recognized as in Indian culture. In the R̥g-Veda, which is dated by Western scholars at around 1,000 B.C., the Sun, the Wind, Waters, the sky, the dawn, the earth etc. are divinized and worshipped. In the West it is only in recent years that James Lovelock, a British scientist, has put forward the view, known as 'Gaia hypothesis', which holds that the earth as a whole is a single living organism. But for more than three thousand years Indians have worshipped the earth as a Mother-goddess.

Apart from mythologies and rituals relating to the environment, there are two important concepts in India's ancient religious thought which has immense relevance to the present-day ecological movement. The first of these is the idea of the fundamental unity of all existence and its corollary, the interdependence of all living beings—both living and non-living. In the Vedic hymn known as Puruṣa-Sūkta, the whole universe is regarded as the body of the Supreme Self (the Puruṣa) who is described

as having thousands of heads, thousands of eyes, and thousands of feet.

The second concept is the universal Law of Sacrifice which regards the whole Life as a cosmic yajña or sacrificial ritual. To keep a fire burning a constant supply of fuel is necessary. In the same way, to keep life going there is need for a constant sacrifice of living beings. Every plant and animal is allowed to live for a short span and then sacrificed so that another plant or another animal may take its place. In the *Gita* (3.14-16) this sacrificial cycle is called yajña-chakra, the wheel of sacrifice. The *Gita* says that it is the duty of everyone to keep this wheel moving. The idea is that man cannot go on exploiting the resources of nature for his selfish purposes, but must contribute something to universal Life for the welfare of other people.

Unfortunately, during the Middle Ages these great ideas of the basic oneness of existence, interdependence of beings, and the Law of Sacrifice gradually gave way to ideas of personal salvation and illusoriness of the world. Indians lost to a great extent their concern for collective welfare and protection of environment. The Indian mind ceased to be open to nature. What is now required is the recovery of the ancient ideas of the oneness of life, interdependence of beings and interest in, and openness to, nature. This can be done through Integral Education.

(b) *Nature mysticism* : Openness to nature has also a higher, mystical aspect which is very little known. In the previous section, while discussing art experience, it was

pointed out that genuine spiritual experience or mystical experience can be attained only by the practice of austerities and yoga. There is, however, one kind of mystical experience which is effortless and spontaneous, as if it were a free gift of Nature. This is known as 'Nature Mysticism'. It is a sudden ingress into the silent under-current of Life, a sudden awakening to the mystery of Life. It is a state of intense interior stillness, intense silence, intense awareness in which the past and present are blotted out from the mind and consciousness is riveted to the *present moment*. The world around, the rustle of leaves, the song of a bird, the distant voice of a child, a spider weaving its web, ants scurrying about—everything appears as if parts of a strange drama or dream of which the person is the sole spectator. The experience may last ten or fifteen minutes or much longer.

This kind of experience is the spiritual wealth of great poets, writers and artists. Some of them like William Wordsworth, P. B. Shelley, Rabindranath Tagore, Richard Jefferies, William Blake and others are particularly sensitive to this experience of nature mysticism. But why have we discussed this topic here? The main reason is, it is children who usually get this kind of experience. The most intense form of this experience occurs in adolescence. Reminiscing about his own childhood experience, Wordsworth wrote:

*There was a time when meadow, grove and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and freshness of a dream.*

In these days when competitive examinations have caused tremendous stress in children's lives, and have converted them literally into learning machines and their minds into living computers crammed with thousands of bits of information, experience of nature mysticism or simple communion with nature can be a great blessing and a source of peace and liberating joy, which the children very much need. In Integral Education this kind of experience has an important place.

11. Creativity and transcendence

Creativity. Everyone is endowed with potentialities in the form of innate talents and capacities. And there is also in most people a natural urge to actualize their potentialities. It is in response to this urge that people sing, paint, become engineers, doctors, political leaders and so on. Among them there are a small number of people who have in them what is known as the 'creative urge', the urge to create, discover or invent something *new*. It is to such creative individuals that humanity owes its progress and achievements. One invention like that of the electric bulb, the camera, the transistor, the ball-point pen, or one discovery like that of X-ray, penicillin, insulin, etc., benefits millions of people all over the world. Similarly, the theories of Newton, Darwin, Marx, Einstein, Planck and other great thinkers have profoundly affected human life and thought.

Apart from these great creative geniuses and pathfinders, everyman can strive to improve his own life and the lives of others by giving practical expression to the

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creative spirit in him. Although creativity cannot be artificially created, one of the aims of Integral Education should be to encourage creativity in thinking, in art, in scientific research, in medical practice, in agriculture, in the use of machines, etc.

Transcendence. As stated earlier, man's real nature is the immortal Ātman which is one with the Supreme Spirit known as Brahman, Īsvara, God. This means, man holds in his heart the source of supreme knowledge, supreme bliss, power, and beauty. Yet, ignorant of all this inner glory, the vast majority of humanity spend their lives seeking the petty and perishable things of the world.

This external seeking, especially of sense pleasures, has been carried to the extreme in Western countries. In recent decades this has caused serious psychological reactions in the form of feelings of loneliness, meaninglessness of life, unfulfilment, lack of love, guilt, worthlessness, anxiety etc. These problems have no external cause. They are caused by inner emptiness, the alienation of the ego from the divine centre within, the true Self, the *Atman*. Since these problems arise from the roots of man's existence as man, they are called 'existential problems'. There is now growing awareness that these problems have only a *spiritual solution*. It is this awareness that is turning the minds of many Western people to Indian spirituality and mysticism.

The spiritual solution discovered by the sages of ancient India is the direct realization of the true Self of man, the *Atman*, and its oneness with the Supreme Self

or God. The Ātman, however, is so subtle that it cannot be realized through the senses or ordinary gross mind. To realize the Ātman one has to transcend the senses and ordinary mind.

In the external world, in order to see the sun a person must have physical eyes and must keep them open. In a similar way, in order to perceive the inner light of the Atman one must have the 'Divine eye', or faculty of intuition, known in the Vedas as dhī or higher *Buddhi*. This remains dormant in most people. How to awaken this dormant faculty is the central problem in spiritual life. From the various references to this problem in the scriptures it is clear that there are at least three minimum requirements for the awakening of the dhī: (a) Purity of mind. (b) Concentration of mind. This is achieved through prayer, meditation, repetition of a Mantra and other spiritual techniques. (c) Inner Power. The first step in acquiring inner power is to avoid the dissipation of physical and mental power, and for this Brahmacharya is an essential discipline. Inner power also comes through *Divine Grace*.

When dhī awakens, a person perceives the light of the Ātman, and gets transcendental knowledge. With this knowledge he becomes capable of knowing many subtle truths of the spiritual world. Such a person is known as a Rishi, a seer. On this point Swami Vivekananda says, "He who realizes transcendental truth, he who realizes the Ātman in his own nature, he who comes face to face with God, sees God alone in everything, has become a Rishi. And there is no religious life for

you until you have become a Rishi. Then alone religion begins for you, now is only the preparation.” (CW, 3:283-284). It may be pointed out here that the Rishi ideal is meant not only for celibate monks but also for householders. In fact, most of the Rishis who lived in ancient India were married people.

It may appear to us that the attainment of transcendental knowledge, the state of a Rishi, is possible only for a few exceptionally qualified people, and so there is no need to give any place for it in our modern system of education. But Swami Vivekananda thought otherwise. According to him it is possible for all. Nay, more: everyone *should* strive to become a Rishi or Prophet, as he sometimes referred to the Rishi. Here is a thrilling exhortation of Swamiji: “This very moment let every one of us make a staunch resolution: ‘I will become a Prophet, I will become a messenger of Light, I will become a child of God, nay, I will become a god.’” (CW, 4:134)

Swamiji has made still more astounding statements in several of his lectures delivered in India and the West. “They had hundreds of Rishis in ancient India. We will have millions—we are going to have, and the sooner every one of you believes in this, the better for India and the better for the world.” (CW, 3:284) “The time is to come when prophets will walk through every street in every city in the world.” (CW, 6:10)

What is the relevance of these great assertions in the field of education? The answer given by Swamiji himself is: “The schools and colleges should be training grounds for prophets.... We have to work now so that everyone

will become a prophet. . . . This, the training of prophets, is the great work that lies before us. . . ." (CW, 6:10-11) It is clear Swamiji was seeing a great vision, a vision of the situation in the world in the Third Millennium. He himself once said in Dhaka, "What does it matter! I have given them enough for fifteen hundred years."

In conclusion, we may say that, although the scheme of Integral Education we have outlined above may at first appear to be too idealistic, it is based on Swami Vivekananda's vision of the future and so holds the promise of future possibilities. Anyone who has proper understanding of human history, and has observed the tremendous transformation of human consciousness now going on all over the world, cannot but feel certain that some system of Integral Education like the one outlined above is sure to become the common course in schools and colleges in India and other countries before the end of this 21st century. ■

