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their Founder-Chancellor Rev. Ayya
Dr. T.S AVINASHILINGAM Avargal

MAY 5, 1990

THOUGHTS OF STRENGTH

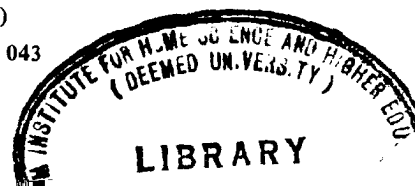
T.S. AVINASHILINGAM



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PREFACE

Swami Vivekananda, has spoken time and again about the urgent need to awaken the youth in India and involve them in nation-building activities. He has also stressed the need to uplift the poor and the down-trodden, living in the numerous Indian villages, where the light of education has not penetrated. 'Let the poor be your God' he said. 'Think of them, work for them and pray for them incessantly - the Lord will show the way'. Sri Avinashilingam Education Trust Institutions have involved themselves in such work for the last three decades.

The thoughts recorded in this volume, are from the talks given to the students of Avinashilingam Home Science College, now Deemed University, on various special occasions. The great teachers, social workers and saints of India have emphasised the need for selfless service, faith in God and in oneself, and hard work. Unless these principles are cultivated by the youth, progress cannot be achieved. There is a great deal of expertise amongst our scientists, writers, industrialists and agriculturalists. The material resources are also in abundance, The need is for the right use of the human resource for developing children.

Youth are the future architects of India. On their shoulders lies the responsibility for conserving all that is best in the Indian Culture and at the same time, modernising the patterns of living and work. Swami Vivekananda said, "Men, Men, these are wanted ; strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone, are wanted. A hundred

such, and the world can be revolutionized” (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. III, 223-224). Our education systems should produce such youth to lead the country.

The different articles in this book seek to place before the readers thoughts of strength, the problems of the nation and their solutions, coupled with a strong value-based approach, to help the vast numbers of aspiring youth.

I am grateful to Dr. Rajammal P. Devadas, Vice-Chancellor, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (Deemed University), for her help in collecting these talks, going through the manuscripts, and editing them amidst her very busy schedule of academic and administrative work. The assistance given by Professor Dr. Shyamala Sivanandam, of the English Department, in this effort is appreciated. I hope that these pages will help generations of youth in the service of the nation.

T.S. AVINASHILINGAM

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THE THRILL OF FREEDOM IN THE MIDNIGHT

The moment comes rarely in History when a nation steps out from darkness to light and from the old to the new, an age ends and the soul of a nation long suppressed finds expression. Such a moment came along 43 years ago when India attained her Independence. This birth of a new era was not wholly joyful, for it was accompanied by the partition of India and millions of people suffered in the process. Yet to lakhs of men and women who lived in that age and participated in India's Freedom Struggle, it was a new dawn heralding a new life of hope, self respect and national dignity.

Everybody felt the thrill and joy of freedom which came at midnight. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said on that eventful night: "The future beckons us. Whither do we go and what shall be our endeavour? To bring freedom and opportunity to the common man, to the peasants and workers of India, to fight and end poverty and ignorance and disease, to build a prosperous democratic and progressive nation, and to create social, economic and political institutions, which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman. We have hard work ahead. There is no resting for any one of us till we redeem our pledge in full and till we make all the people of India what destiny intended them to be."

The whole country was excited about the newly won Freedom. Throughout the night and the next day, all over the country, in all towns and villages, tumultuous meetings were held. In Madras thousands of people led by Congress volunteers who had participated in the Freedom Movement organised meetings, with decorated pictures of Mahatma Gandhi, when speakers highlighted the various aspects of the freedom struggle. Big flag-posts were erected, decorated

pandals were put up and prominent people were asked to hoist the National Flag. The enthusiasm was infectious. As Minister of Education the author hoisted the first flag in Queen Mary's College for Women, Madras.

When Independence was declared on August 15, 1947, Sir Archibald Nye was the Governor of Madras. On the eve of the declaration of independence, he wanted to go round the city and witness the rejoicings of the people. His advisers and aides advised against an erstwhile representative of an alien Government going amidst the people who were in a frenzy, drunk with the joy of their newly won independence. But Sir Archibald insisted and said that he would go incognito. Lady Nye also insisted on accompanying him. Both of them went round to different places. In many places people had gathered in thousands. At midnight, national flags were hoisted everywhere amidst delirious enthusiasm. In one of those places when Sir and Lady Archibald Nye were watching the scene, one man recognising them, shouted 'Here is the Governor'. "Instantly" Sir Archibald said, in an account of the incident, "My blood chilled and I was not sure what was going to happen. The fear of anything happening to Lady Nye non-plussed me. But that was only for a moment; immediately something happened which relieved me. The people laughed a good natured laugh and cried, 'Let the Governor hoist our flag'. They ran to the car, got us out amidst thundering cheers. We were never safer than amongst those people". He added, "This sort of goodwill for an erstwhile enemy can never be seen in any other country. This was indeed Gandhiji's principle in action".

When the whole of India was celebrating its newly won freedom, Mahatma Gandhi, its main architect, was in Calcutta bringing peace and solace to the riot-torn victims of Calcutta.

The Ministers of Bengal came to pay their respects to him on that day. To them he said, "Today you have worn on your head a crown of thorns. You have to ever remain wakeful on that seat. You have to be more patient, more humble and more forbearing. Do not fall a prey to the lure of wealth. You are there to serve the villages and the poor. May God Bless you".

In his weekly newspaper 'Harijan' Gandhi wrote about the duties of the Ministers and the Legislators as follows: "The Ministers and the legislators have to be fearless in the performance of their offices. Offices and seats in the legislatures have no merit outside their ability to raise the prestige and power of the country. And since both depend wholly upon the possession of morals, both public and private, any moral lapse means a blow to the country.

During these 43 years of freedom undoubtedly there has been a great deal of development in Industry, Science and Technology. Agricultural Production has increased more than three fold and kept pace with the population. Along with it India has attained a leading place among the developing nations of the world. These are no mean achievements.

While these achievements are matters to be proud of, it is unfortunate that the spirit of dedication, hard work and sacrifice generated by the Freedom Movement have not lasted long. Selfishness and corruption have crept in. The work ethos which characterised the first decade of independence has given way to the unseemly sight of strikes of even high professionals, like doctors, teachers, engineers and others who ought to be conscious of their duties to the public. There is violence in many states like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and a crumbling down of ethical and social values. All these will indeed cause great pain to the men and women who strive for the good of the country.

The Independence Day cannot be celebrated better than by fighting these forces of decay and creating a new spirit of dedication and love of the country which will help in building a great India. Every citizen of India should strive hard towards this goal.

PATRIOTISM

Patriotism is love of one's country. A country comprises its borders, lands, mountains, rivers, all other physical resources and people. Patriotism means the love of its people which transcends divisions of language, religion, caste and creed, rich and poor, learned and unlearned. It means love of the country's culture, literature, epics, arts, painting, music, saints, and prophets.

Qualities of Patriotic Living

Different people express patriotism in different ways. However, for all people the common expression of patriotism is pride in one's country, culture and achievement. For the Soldier, patriotism consists of defending his country's borders and in suffering hardships in the performance of his duty. To the Businessman, patriotism means integrity, honesty, maintaining the standards of quality, so that people will have faith in the quality of the goods coming from the country. It means eschewing adulteration, making profits by low and foul means, black-marketing and evasion of taxes. For the medical Doctors, it signifies devotion to their noble profession, sympathy for the poor, doing their duty day and night, according to the needs, and willingness to serve the people at all times.

To the Building Engineer, patriotism means that he should not be corrupt and he must keep to the quality and strength of the constructions he has undertaken. He should see that the money entrusted to him is utilised properly. He should learn the latest techniques so that he will be in possession of the latest knowledge in order to contribute his best to his country.

For the Judge patriotism means absolute impartiality, unperturbed by any temptation of money, personal promotion

or political power. For the Teacher, it means inspiring the pupils under his care with love of the country, by his own example of hard work, devotion to the progress and uplift of children without expecting rewards, equipping himself with the latest knowledge, so that he can give his best to the students, safeguarding the property of the institution, so that it can continue to serve generations of people, absolute impartiality towards his students, and above all, doing his duty effectively for the students under his care.

For the Student patriotism means respect for his teachers and elders, pursuing his studies with a view to excellence and hard work in keeping himself abreast of modern knowledge, protecting school and public property and undergoing the training necessary to create a great and glorious India. For the Agriculturist it means working hard to produce goods of quality and quantity, and preserving the fertility of the land. For the Labourer, patriotism means helping to produce the maximum through hard labour.

These are briefly the various expressions of patriotism amongst various sections of people. While these expressions may be different, the attitudes and training which result in the cultivation of these qualities among people who are patriots and lovers of the country must be alike. They should have an emotional attachment to the country, its people and culture.

CHANGE IS PROGRESS

At no other time in the history of the world, have such far reaching changes been brought about as in the last century. The expanding horizons of Science and Technology and the amazing improvement of means of communication through the media, Radio, Television and Satellite, introduction of air travel and the invention of planes with supersonic speed, have brought all people together and made the world small. As Michael Collins - the man who set foot on the moon said, "The earth looks small", the nations and people of the world are no more strangers to each other and whose life, prosperity or adversity affects one other. Under these circumstances rapid social changes are inevitable.

Change is a natural process. Every thing changes. All the particles in the human body are said to change once in every eight years. The earth, the moon, the stars, people vegetation, mountains and rivers are changing every minute of the day. People are born, they grow, become old and fade out. These changes have been happening from the beginning of time. But in the modern age, certain events and developments have quickened the changes both physically and mentally.

Increase of population has brought about changes. Nutrition scientists who have experimented with rats have found that when the population of the rats goes above a certain limit, they begin to kill themselves and become cannibalistic

Coexistence of poverty amongst vast numbers of people in the developing countries with concentration of wealth with a few people is another cause of change. The World Bank Policy Paper on Rural Development mentions that "Approximately 82% of the 76 million poor in developing countries

are considered to be in absolute poverty, most of them in rural areas. As McNamara, the past President of the World Bank had said, there is nothing so degrading and degenerating as poverty which is the reason for malnutrition, disease dirt squalor, and hatred.

Even within the developed countries racial differences such as White and Black, differences of class and religion, language and customs, have initiated movements of change and resulted in their fight for equality and respect.

In the past people took these disadvantages of birth, wealth and lack of opportunities as a divine dispensation to be suffered and endured meekly. But the twentieth century has made a vast change in the attitudes of people. Beginning with the French Revolution when Louis XIV was beheaded in the public streets, the American War of Independence and the American Civil War, which abolished slavery in that country, the Soviet Revolution which led to the execution of the Czar and his family, and the appearance of Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago which gave a blow to the idea that the western culture was superior, and later Mahatma Gandhi's leadership in the Freedom Movement of India, when vast masses of people became conscious of their rights and fought for achieving them. Social changes of far reaching consequences which had never occurred before have been manifesting themselves.

Because of these reasons modern society is facing great social changes. Correction of age long evils in the society and the struggle to raise the standard of the poor, economically and culturally, giving them greater opportunities for progress, these inevitably create tensions in society. And so the question before all thinking men and women is while change may be

inevitable, shall it be through violence as it has been in the past, causing much suffering, destruction, hatred and ill-will or through non-violence and love as pointed out by Mahatma Gandhi?

Non-violence is the English translation of the word, "Ahimsa", which was popularised by Mahatma Gandhi during the Indian Freedom Struggle. Before Gandhi came on the scene, the young men and women inspired by the freedom movements of other countries, used bombs and guns against the alien rulers. But Gandhiji with his faith in Ahimsa changed this trend. He, said. Non-violence based on love was a stronger force than violence based on hatred. Ahimsa is forgiveness of the enemy and is a sure sign of spiritual strength. Ahimsa means love all, serve all, hate none, injure non in thought, word or deed. The practice of non-violence develops will-power to a considerable degree. In its practice, trials and difficulties are bound to come, but with sincere perseverance one can certainly succeed.

The idea of Ahimsa and love for all was preached by ancient masters such as Lord Krishna, Buddha and Christ. Love has always been recognised as a method for leading people to a higher ethical and social life. But what was new with Mahatma Gandhi was that he invented the technique of 'Satyagraha' and applied it as a solution for problems in which large numbers of people were involved. While doing so, he spiritualised the political life of his time, introduced ethical values and infused courage, strength and aspiration for higher life in millions of people.

Inculcating the ethical and social qualities of love, namely, consideration for others, service to the deprived sections, patience with people who follow other ways than our own,

avoidance of avarice, jealousy and hatred which are the very negation of an ethical, social, spiritual life, Gandhiji created a new value system in which unselfishness, purity, simplicity and hard work were respected. In time the changes created strength amongst people so that they did not succumb to temptations but stood up with courage to fight the evil. These should be the tasks before men, particularly in these days of rapid social change.

The changes that are taking place in the world, must be supported by the eternal values embedded in the human minds which existed in the past and which will continue to exist in the future also. As Mahatma Gandhi has said, "In the midst of darkness, light persists, in the midst of hatred love persists, in the midst of death life persists". The way to solve the problems of change should be by emphasising the eternal values held by men and women through out the ages. The eternal values include altruistic love and faith in the inherent divinity of the human soul and development of ethical and spiritual values.

Man has developed through the centuries from being a hewer of wood and drawer of water into a being of mighty power, controlling nature and directing its work. Biologists are of the opinion that further human progress and achievement of human destiny can only be through processing his mind. Julian Huxley says "It is only through possessing a mind that he has become the dominant portion of this planet and the agent responsible for its future evolution; and it will be only by the right use of that mind that he will be able to exercise the responsibility; he will succeed only if he faces it consciously and if he uses all his mental resources - of knowledge and reason, of imagination, sensitivity and moral effort." such development of the mind is possible only by inner discipline,

Swami Ranganathananda said: "Greatness in any field is never achieved without tremendous inner discipline. Energy disciplined is energy increased; and in the mental spiritual field, such increase is both in quantity and quality. That is the nature of all energy; physical or non physical. The psychic energy in the human system can be raised to the highest level in quality and quantity only through inner cultivation: there is no other way, say the Gita and Upanishads again and again. The sooner our people realize this truth, the sooner our young people grasp the meaning of this vital idea, the better for them and the better for the nation. Self-discipline is the way to achieve strength of will, breadth of sympathy, social and spiritual efficiency. It is like raising bumper harvests through intensive farming with the help of scientific agriculture".

The ways of cultivating the mind with non-violence in one's individual and national life have been explained in the Gita and the Upanishads. More recently Swami Vivekananda has spelt out the process in the four yogas-Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Gnana Yoga. These principles which aimed at individual mental development must be applied to social action. This can be effected through improvement of the relationship between the whites and the coloured, the landless and landlord, the higher and lower castes and the rich and the poor in order that harmony in the midst of vast changes may prevail.

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIA

Pre-historic Times

The cultural history of India is a most exciting one. Thousands of years before the birth of Christ, the First Aryans who came to India consisted of virile, energetic men and women who worked hard on the fields and in the homes. They created a civilization and culture which provided the foundation for the cultural values and habits for the major part of the world. They were great thinkers, who had the courage to investigate into such fundamental matters as nature, soul and God, facing the pursuit of truth at the sacrifice of their pleasures and life itself. They did not care for name and fame, so the Upanishads which contain their thoughts do not even bear the names of the authors. The number of Upanishads is said to be 108, but only ten among them are considered most important namely, the Isa, Kena, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Antereya, Taithreya, Chandogya and Brahadaranyaka.

Archeologists are of opinion that there existed in India a pre-Aryan civilization with highly developed art and culture as evidenced by the excavations in Mohanjo-Daro in Sind and Harappa in the Punjab. It is also said that a similar and perhaps connected civilization flourished in South India which formed the basis of Tamil and Dravidian culture. It is, as a product of this culture that Thirukkural, considered as one of the most outstanding universal ethical codes in the world, was produced about five centuries before Christ.

The Epics

The prehistoric civilizations created an ethical code and a culture based on the two epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. Ramayana gives the story of Rama, who at the time of his

being crowned as Emperor abdicated the kingly pleasures to obey the behest of the father and step mother and went into exile to the forests for a long period of 14 years. The inspiring story has been told for generations in folklore in all the 20 languages in India and their myriads of dialects, and has also spread to Malaysia, Srilanka, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Korea, and Japan. The other great epic which has shaped the life of the Indian people, Mahabharata, is the story of lord Krishna, the author of Bhagavad Gita, which is considered to be the essence of the Upanishads.

The Buddhist Period

After the prehistoric period came the Buddha, considered by many historians as one of the greatest figures in human civilisation. Buddha was born a prince, was married to a beautiful princess and had a lovely child. He had all the pleasures which the world could offer. But three experiences made him think. He met an old man bent double with age; he met a sick man and thirdly saw a dead body being taken to the graveyard. These sights made him think deeply about the transience of life in this world and its pleasures. Immediately he renounced his kingdom and family and went in search of Truth. He performed great penance and attained light and Nirvana, 'Bodhi', as it is called, in Buddhagaya under the Bodhi tree.

He preached the Gospel of Love and selfless service. His message has spread throughout the world and nearly one third of the world's population are his followers today. Millions of people from the Buddhist countries come to India to see Buddhagaya where he attained Nirvana, Saranath near Varanasi (Benaras) where he preached his first sermon, the Lumbini gardens in North Bihar where he was born and other places hallowed by his life. The Light of Asia, written by Edwin Arnold, in beautiful poetry highlights the essential nobility and importance of the life and teachings of the Buddha.

Following his footsteps came the mighty Emperor Asoka. His story is also well known. He was filled with ambition to conquer the then known world by might. He slayed his opponents ruthlessly and conquered all the neighbouring countries. The king of Kalinga resisted him and so he invaded and defeated him, killing thousands of people in the process. He went round to see what the might of his arms and valour had achieved. In the field strewn with dead bodies and men shrieking in the agony of pain, a calm, quiet and dignified Bhikku-Sadhu was there ministering to the injured. The Sadhu looked up at the mighty, pride filled monarch and said, 'What O king, have you achieved through this destruction? You have brought untold misery to thousands of families. This will not bring you joy and peace. Not hatred but only love can give you lasting peace'. Hearing these words, the great Emperor was converted to the ways of the Buddha and dedicated his life and power in helping to spread the teachings of Buddha and living the message of love. His edicts bear the Buddha's message to this day.

The Golden Period

The thousand years following Asoka was the Golden period of Indian history. Chinese historians who came across the Himalayas braving many dangers have written that at that time there was so much virtue, contentment and love amongst the people of India that a young and beautiful woman with many expensive ornaments could go through the streets in the dead of night, without any fear.

Then came the Age of the Acharyas in the 8th Century A. D. Sri Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhwa expounded the various tenets and phases of Hindu faith, namely Advaita, Visistadvaita and Dvaita. Sankara, to demonstrate the oneness of India, established his four Maths in the four directions of the

country, namely, Jothir Math (near Badri) in the Himalayas, Dwaraka in the West, Puri in the East, and Sringeri in the South. At the same period there was also a great revival in the South led by the Saivite and Vaishnavite saints, namely, Sambandar, Appar, Sundarar Manickavasagar, Nammalwar and others. Their message given in simple poetry in musical notes have been and continue to be permanent inspiration for the Tamil people.

The Dark Ages

As the poet said prosperity brings decay, material wealth and comforts made the people pleasure-loving and weak. This was accompanied by the privileged classes tightening their hold on the weaker sections and ill-treating them. Caste became rigid and religion degenerated into ceremonials. The result was that the Hindu Kingdoms succumbed to the Muslim invasion in the 11th and 12th Centuries and later to the Western powers in the 17th and 18th Centuries. But the difference between the two was, while the Muslims settled in India and were absorbed as part of the Indian community, the Britishers lived as foreigners with their base in England and exploited the wealth of India for their own benefit. It is good to note that even during the Muslim period, there were great Emperors like Akbar who were fascinated by Indian, Hindu culture and therefore developed a universal outlook. Even in that period India produced many saints and savants like Mira Bhai in the west, Chaitanya in the East, Thayumanavar and Ramalingar in the South and Kabir and Nanak in the North, who kept up the flame of Indian culture and religion.

The rule of the British, though they lived as foreigners and exploited the country for their own welfare, was not without benefits to the country. For the first time in history, India was politically unified. The contact with the western

culture and scientific spirit gave a new impetus to the revival of the Indian culture. People like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and Keshab Chandra Sen in the East, Gopalakrishna Gokhale and Balagangadhar Tilak in the West and Swami Vivekananda were products of western scientific spirit. In one of his letters Swami Vivekananda wrote, "Let us pray day and night for the downtrodden millions of India, who are held fast by poverty, priestcraft and tyranny. Him I call a Mahatman, who feels for the poor". As if in reply to his anguished appeal Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the scene. The story of the Non-violent struggle for freedom started by him against one of the biggest empires of the world, and the success which attended it is one of the miracles the world has witnessed. The story of Swami Vivekananda is the story of the meeting of the western scientific spirit with the ancient cultural heritage of India.

The Age of Science & Demand for Proof of Religious Experience

In this age of Science, man asks for proofs. Mere quotations from scriptures, however ancient or holy, do not satisfy. Swami Vivekananda was such an agnostic. A graduate of the Calcutta University in the latter part of the last century he was a philosopher and scientist and wanted proof of religion and existence of God. He went round to many of the spiritual luminaries of his time, Keshab Chandra Sen, Maharishi Devendranath Tagore and others. When they preached God, he asked them a simple straight question, 'Have you seen God?' 'Have you proof of having perceived them?' They could not give any reply to the questions. At least at the suggestion of one of his British professors, who said, 'If you want to see proof of superconscious experience, go to Dakshineswar. There lives a God man, who may satisfy you'. He went to Dakshineswar one afternoon. The Sage Sri Rama-

krishna was sitting on a simple wooden bedstead. Swami Vivekananda has recorded the experience. He was an ordinary man, with nothing remarkable about him. He used such simple language, and I thought can, this man be a great teacher? I crept near him and asked him the question which I had been asking the others all my life; Do you believe in God, Sir?. 'Yes', he replied. "Can you prove it Sir?". "Yes". "How"? "Because I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense". That impressed me at once. For the first time I found a man who dared to say that he saw God, that religion was a reality to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense in the world. I began to go to that man, day after day, and I actually saw that religion could be given. One touch, one glance, can change a whole life. I have read about Buddha and Christ and Mohammed, about all those luminaries of ancient times, how they would stand up and say, "Be thou whole" and the man became whole. I now found it to be true, and when I myself saw this man, all scepticism was brushed aside. It could be done, as my Master used to say "Religion can be given and taken more tangibly, really than anything else in the world".

"The second idea that I learned from my Master, and which is perhaps the most vital, is the wonderful truth that the religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic. They are but various phases of one eternal religion."

"Ekem Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanthi". Truth is one; Sages call it many, that one eternal religion is applied to different planes of existence, is applied to the opinions of various minds and various races. There never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion: there never existed many religions; there is only one. One infinite religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist, and

this religion is expressing itself in various countries, in various ways. Therefore we must respect all religions and we must try to accept them all as far as we can.

“In the presence of my Master I found out that man could be perfect, even in this body. Those lips never cursed any one, never even criticised any one. Those eyes were beyond the possibility of seeing evil, that mind had lost the power of thinking evil. He saw nothing but good. That tremendous purity, that tremendous renunciation is the one secret of spirituality. “Neither through wealth, nor through progeny but through renunciation alone, is immortality to be reached”, say the Vedas. “Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and follow me” says the Christ. So all great Saints and Prophets have expressed it, and have carried it out in their lives.”

Sri Ramakrishna proclaimed, “Do not care for doctrines; do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality; and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticise no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show, by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realisation. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained spirituality can communicate it to others, and can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light.”

Continuity of Indian Culture

India has had a hoary past, like other ancient civilizations such as the Assyrian, Persian, Ptolemaic, Greek and Roman civilizations. But there is one vital difference between India and these other countries. The civilization in these countries

flourished for a period; held sway for a few centuries and disappeared after some time. Today these civilizations have become a part of history and are no more part of the life of those people. Other religions and cultures are influencing the people of those areas. But in India a different phenomenon prevails. It has been said that if man who lived thousands of years ago came back today, he would not be bewildered and would not find himself in a foreign land. The same laws are here adjusted and thought out through thousands of years. The customs, the acumen of ages and the experience of centuries seem to be eternal. The cultural life of the people seems to be unaffected by the tribulations, invasions and change of Governments, Kings and Kingdoms.

About the continuity of Indian culture Will Durant says in his famous book 'Orient Message'; "Here is a vast Peninsula of nearly two million square miles; two-thirds as large as the United States, and 20 times the size of Great Britain; 320,000,000 souls (Now 800,000,000) more than in all North and South America combined, or one-fifth of the population of the earth; an impressive continuity of development and civilization from Mohenjodaro, 2900 B. C. or earlier, to Gandhi, Raman and Tagore; faiths compassing every stage from barbarous idolatry to the most subtle and spiritual pantheism; philosophers playing a thousand variations on one monistic theme from the Upanishads, eight centuries before Christ, to Sankara, eight centuries after him; scientists developing astronomy three thousand years ago and winning Nobel Prizes in our own times; a democratic construction of untraceable antiquity in the villages, and wise and beneficent rulers like Asoka and Akbar in the Capitals; minstrels singing great epics almost as old as Homer and poets holding world audiences today; artists raising gigantic temples for Hindu Gods from Tibet to Ceylon and from Cambodia to Java".

During the course of its long history India has suffered many invasions, and at times it seemed India would be overwhelmed and its culture and religion wiped out. But the country has absorbed those shocks, the invaders were transformed as part of Indian society and culture. Thus Indian culture today is a mosaic of various cultures, of various lights and colours. There are people of different races and backgrounds, of different shades of development, speaking, different languages but all, by and large, living together in peace and amity. This resilience, not only to absorb the shocks, but to transform the foreigners as parts of Indian Culture, is remarkable as Swami Vivekananda has explained.

“Every one born into this world has a bent, a direction towards which he must go, through which he must live, and what is true of the individual is equally true of the race. Each race, similarly, has a peculiar bent, each race has a peculiar *raison d’etre*, each race a peculiar mission to fulfil in the life of the world. Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race; it never was, and it never will be. But there has been the other mission given to us, which is to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate, as it were, into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race and give the essential life-giving message to the world. India’s gift to the world is the light-spiritual. Slow and silent, as the gentle dew that falls in the morning, unseen and unheard, yet producing a most tremendous result, has been the work of this calm, patient, all-suffering race upon the world of thought”.

It is because of this Spiritual message of India that Dr. Arnold Toynbee, the famous historian has said;

“It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race...At the

supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way - Emperor Asoka's and Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions. Here we have an attitude and spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family and in the Atomic Age this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves".

Foreign visitors who have read or heard of India's spiritual heritage, about Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi come with great expectations of experiencing this Message. Instead, even as they land, they see in the newspaper no reflection of the noble message of India, but news of strikes, bank robberies, theft and all kinds of violence. And naturally they are disappointed. The people with whom they move are educated people in Government offices and Universities. All over the world they see the rich exploiting the poor, the educated exploiting the illiterate and the politicians exploiting everybody and they don't find any thing different in this country. It is unfortunate that the world today is passing through an unprecedented atmosphere of violence, of nations armed with nuclear weapons and inter continental ballistic missiles which may destroy the world and humanity in a few minutes. The foreign visitors ask where is the spirituality of India of which Swami Vivekananda and Arnold Toynbee have spoken.

Christ said seek and thou shall find. Even so one must seek to find places where these messages are lived. The Ramakrishna Mission, the Aurobindo Society, Sankaracharya at Kanchi, Mahatma Gandhi's Disciple Vinobaji's Ashram, Sarvodaya Institutions, Acharya Tulsi and numerous others who are trying to live this message are some of the people and places where one finds spiritual expressions. If one wants to see the real

people of India, one must go to the so called backward villages, where the poor still have a culture, live amidst poverty but share their comforts with others even in times of dire need.

The expression of Indian Culture has found wonderful exposition in arts and poetry, in the wonderful temples, mosques and churches all over India. The literature on the various aspects of Indian culture is vast, but full of wisdom. It is the duty of every Indian to take it upon himself as a mission to preserve the culture and values for which ancient India stood.

NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A great historian had cynically observed that history teaches no lessons, people in succeeding generations are committing the same blunders resulting in violence and hatred. But that should not be the case with India, where in spite of great failures and tragic happenings, she has continued to have a lasting civilization and culture throughout the ages. She has given birth to great prophets, sages and saints like the Buddha, Sankara, Ramanuja, Guru Nanak, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, from time to time, cementing people and spreading the message of love and peace.

It is undoubtedly true, that there is a cultural unity throughout India in spite of her diversities. But that alone does not contribute to her greatness. Basically, the sense of national integration springs from two sources; firstly, a realisation of the fact that the people have, in spite of their differences, a strong community of interests covering a broad front, and secondly, a feeling of pride in one's country. If either of these motives is lacking or weak, there will be an essentially disintegrated people, at best held together by some kind of political or constitutional red-tape. Or, they will have to depend on some crisis or emergency like a struggle for Independence or a war to experience the thrill of integration for a brief period and then lapse back into internecine conflicts. This has happened in India within the memory of the present generation when, for instance, the country responded to the call of Mahatma Gandhi, to unite in the struggle for freedom or during the two aggressions against the country by Pakistan which shocked the people into a realisation of their essential unity. But both these national demonstrations of unity, magnificent as they were, failed to achieve any

permanent integration. As the struggle ended or danger of war rolled away, the nation returned to 'business as usual' which involved linguistic and class conflicts, political and personal bickerings and other unwelcome exhibitions of the same nature. Political or class differences may not be unavoidable for they are part of a democratic set-up. But there are certain traditions of parliamentary democracy, certain rules of decorum in the political dialogue, certain minimum standards of national discipline and decency that have slowly and painfully been built into the national institutions and character. In the lust for personal power and profit, they are being increasingly sacrificed and no political party as a whole can be made an exception to this charge. National Integration is impossible unless the perfectly legitimate political and other differences are discussed and decided within the framework of parliamentary institutions and the use of patently unfair means, for instance, exploitation of students for political and party ends, are eschewed.

Another dimension of this issue is active promotion of patriotism and pride in one's own country, its cultural heritage, intellectual triumphs, inventions and discoveries, pattern of social life etc. One can be genuinely proud of his country where there is adequate reason for it. It is not enough to have only a glorious and hoary past. If a country has had a rich heritage from the past and the present is hollow, it is not a cause for pride but for shame. It is essential to build a present of which the people can be proud. It must be pointed out to the young people that the progress in the food-front, science, technology and culture are the result of hard work and dedication which form the background of all progress past, present and future.

No society can exist and progress without fostering ethical and spiritual values in its people. They constitute the

integrating principle in any society. As cement holds together separate bricks into an edifice, love, respect, consideration for others and other ethical and social values hold together various individuals and groups in a country into a unified people. Ethical values find manifestation in the context of interaction between human beings in a society. Ethics, therefore, is inseparable from the social context.

It is unfortunate that India today presents a general picture of ethical and spiritual malnutrition. Vast sections of men and women have all but lost touch with the strengthening and purifying spiritual tradition of Indian culture. But what is sadder still is that people have also largely failed to get ethically nourished and strengthened by the experience of socio-political action as a free people during the last four decades. Citizenship responsibilities and civic virtues and graces have not been adequately developed in the people young and old, in spite of the close association with, and the bright examples of modern western nations which, without claiming to be saintly or spiritual, possess more ethical values and character efficiency than us who have a rich spiritual inheritance of the past ages, reinforced in the modern age, by the life and message of a galaxy of spiritual and ethical giants like Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi.

The need of the present time cannot be more adequately conveyed than in the following utterance of Swami Vivekananda: 'Bring all light into the world....Bring light to the poor; and bring more light to the rich, for they require it more than the poor. Bring light to the ignorant, and more light to the educated, for the vanities of the educated of our times are tremendous'.

India has that light; it has enough spiritual resources within it to restore it to the moral health, vigour and the

strength of by gone ages. It is the duty and privilege of every citizen, and more especially of every educated citizen of free India to lay hold of these resources and strengthen himself or herself and pass on that strength to the nation at large.

The creation of this sense of unity should be one of the basic purposes of the educational system. Social and national integration is crucial to the creation of a strong and united nation and education alone can achieve it. There are other agencies which may help in varying measures. But a national system of education is the only agency that can reach all the people in the nooks and corners of India, living in various conditions of economy. Education as an instrument of national integration has served other countries. There is no doubt this instrument can serve India also, if directed with clarity of purpose, strength of will and dedicated service.

Such an edifice of national education should have two essential features. These are, firstly, cultivation of a deep sense of national, social and spiritual values and obligations of citizenship; and secondly, evolving steps to bridge the gulf between the rich and poor, the privileged and under-privileged, the urban and rural, the educated and the uneducated by provision of adequate facilities to all for their development.

This will mean that the educational system must help in the development of habits, attitudes and qualities of democratic citizenship. It needs to counteract the fissiparous tendencies which seek to divide the country. Citizenship in a democracy involves the cultivation of many intellectual, social and moral qualities. These qualities do not grow of themselves but by their constant cultivation in the home and the school. The first requisite will be to develop the capacity for clear thinking and receptivity to new ideas after proper examination.

A dispassionate examination of ideas and the courage to accept or reject them as they may be good or bad for the nation can come only by constant training. And this training should begin from the early stages of education. At the same time, the quality of idealism to give up personal benefit for the good of the country should be developed. As Kennedy said to the Americans, one should constantly be asking one self, not what one can get from India but what one can do for her.

This will mean that the Education should concern itself both in its content and methodology, in the promotion of a national consciousness amongst students in all stages of education. The deepening of national consciousness can be fostered by two programmes: the understanding of India's multi-faced cultural heritage, and the creation of a strong driving faith in a great future for the nation. The first would be promoted by a well-organised teaching of the languages and literatures, philosophy, religions and history of India, and by introducing the students to Indian architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dance and drama in its various phases. In addition, it would be desirable to promote greater knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the different parts of India by the development of fraternal relations between educational institutions in different parts of the country, and the organisation of holiday camps and summer schools on an inter-state basis, designed to break down regional or linguistic barriers. It should also help to establish and maintain all-India institutions which will admit students from different parts of the country. Faith in the future would involve an attempt, as a part of the course in citizenship, to bring home to the students the principles of the Constitution, the great human values referred to in its preamble, the nature of the democratic and socialistic society which is to be created.

For cultivating democratic values, special emphasis has to be laid on the development of qualities such as a scientific temper of mind, tolerance, respect for the culture of other religions and regional groups etc., which will enable us to adopt democracy, not only as a form of Government, but also as a way of life. As stated earlier, the population of India consists of persons who profess different religions, speak different languages, belong to different races, castes, classes and communities. A healthy development of democratic trends will help to soften the impact of this division into social, economic and cultural groups. The task is admittedly difficult; but it can convert the differences of language, cultural pattern, religion etc. into the warp and woof of a very rich and rewarding social and cultural life.

OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES IN PLANNING

In a community where actions are allowed to drift and no plans are formulated, lopsided development and growth in certain sections and complete absence of development in others will result. Therefore, to get the best out of planning, it is necessary to understand clearly the objectives of planning. All over the world today, whether in countries like the United States of America, where the freedom of the individual is held sacred, or in the U. S. S. R., where the individual is considered to be subsidiary to the State, plans are being evolved and put into effect in order to concentrate human energy into nationally important channels. In the context of India's Five Year Plan, it will be necessary to know to what extent the main objectives of national planning are being realised.

Equal Opportunities for All

One of the most important objectives of planning in India is the provision of equal opportunities for all. Indian society has unfortunately, been divided into innumerable castes and communities. Some have had the advantage of learning for generations, while some others have not had the opportunities for learning for many generations. Some have been economically better placed than some others who have been chronically poor. The result of these two factors has been that large masses of people distributed all over the country have not had opportunities for either higher education or a better economic life. It should be one of the prime objectives of planning that opportunities would be provided for these large number of underprivileged classes. Long neglected communities should have opportunities both for learning and earning so that they may march abreast of others in progressive

development. This will mean providing facilities for work to all able bodied men and women in the country.

Avoidance of Large Disparities in Incomes

Closely connected are the disparities in income found in the country. In advanced countries where all have opportunities to work and to earn, the disparities in income are not big, but in under developed countries, due to a variety of circumstances, the richer people continue to become richer and the poor become poorer. In India, it will be seen while the average income per individual is about Rs. 650/- there are around 10 per cent who earn almost half the national income. The result is, a great disparity is evident. It must be one of the aims of good planning to avoid this great disparity.

Equitable Distribution of Economic Power

Equitable distribution of economic power is the social objective. More money, more income, management by a few people of a large number of big undertakings, proprietorship of vast estates and landed property, all these and similar circumstances have tended to concentrate economic power in the hands of a few in the country. Any community which aims at a socialistic pattern of society which wants to provide facilities of development to all, should tackle this vital problem, and avoid concentration of power in a few hands.

Emotional Integration of the People

The fourth and one of the most important objectives of planning in the present context is social and emotional integration of various groups and castes into a single people. India is a large country, with people living long distances apart. It consists of many languages. It is divided into many states, For



a superficial observer, the dress worn the food eaten and certain social habits followed will impress how different the group of people are from each other. But underlying these superficial differences there is a fundamental unity. It is essential that the factors of unity are emphasised so that the nation becomes united and strong.

Balanced Development

There is great need for balanced development of the various aspects of economic life. Providing enough food for the teeming population is the first *sine-qua-non* of balanced planning. The population has increased in the last 10 years by nearly 25 per cent. In 1961, it was 438 millions. Vast populations have remained under-fed for the last many decades. The masses are getting a new consciousness and will not tolerate any more of the poverty, squalor and under-feeding they have been subjected to so long. Therefore one of the most important tasks of planning is to grow sufficient food, through improved agricultural practices. But agriculture alone will not suffice. Agricultural development should proceed side by side with industries. Again it is not enough if there are merely industries for the supply of consumers' goods. Even at the risk of some austerity, it is chemicals and such others which will help to fulfil all the needs at least in the years to come. In this context the needs of small scale industries are important, for it is they who can supply employment on a large scale to millions of the unemployed. In addition care must be taken to see that all regions of the country are equally developed

Social Services

Production of economic wealth alone does not satisfy man. Social services are important to utilise the wealth properly. Provision for education, and health services have to be enlarged. Provision for the old-age should be done and a



variety of other social services need to be strengthened. In spite of the provision in the Constitution no attempt has been made to enforce compulsory primary education in the country. It is imperative that this should be done at least for the age group of 6-10. Secondary, University and Technical education should also receive the requisite attention.

Priorities

Full implementation of all the objectives will cost millions of rupees, which may not be available from resources. Therefore it is necessary that to draw out the priorities grandiose schemes which are intended to supply the convenience of the richer classes can wait. Also investment of money on avoidable consumers goods can be postponed. The first task will have to come first. These are in the following order.

Food

At present the country is producing about 180 million tons of grains. By 2000 A.D. it is calculated that the need will be 240 million tons. Everything must be done to achieve this objective if we are to establish a stable economy in the country. Production of more fertilisers, introduction of better techniques of cultivation, training of more people in scientific practice of agriculture price inducements and all other steps in this direction must be taken.

Employment

The next important priority is provision of employment. It has been estimated that even after the Sixth Plan about 2.6 million people will be yet unemployed. While large scale industries are important, small scale and village industries which have large employment potential should be encouraged. Provision of employment is next in importance only to food production.

Education

Many times in planning, only meagre provision is made for education. This is a short sighted view. Education is absolutely necessary for increasing the national efficiency. All the important objectives like provision of equal opportunities for all, avoidance of disparities of income concentration of economic power and improvement of the living conditions of people can happen only as a result of education. Therefore, the importance of provision for education in its various stages, should not be minimised.

UNTOUCHABILITY

The year was 1932 Gandhi along with many of his followers, was in jail. The second Round Table Conference had failed to reach any agreement about transfer of power. The British Government had tried to make capital out of the religious differences prevailing in India. They wanted to perpetuate the differences by creating separate electorates for Hindus, Muslims and Christians. They went further to divide the Hindu society by driving a wedge between the high caste Hindus and the depressed classes. Gandhiji had opposed this proposal in the Round Table Conference. Now that he was imprisoned, the British thought that they could impose their cunning will on the people. On 17th April, 1932, Prime Minister Macdonald announced the decision of the British Government declaring separate electorates for the depressed classes. But before the announcement, in a letter written on 11th March, Gandhiji warned the British Government that "in the event of their decision creating separate electorates to the depressed classes, I must fast unto death."

Gandhiji said in the letter: "You will perhaps recollect that at the end of my speech at the Round Table Conference, when the minorities' claims were presented, I had said that I should resist with my life the grant of separate electorates to the depressed classes. This was not said in the heat of the moment nor by way of rhetoric. I hold separate electorates as harmful to them and for Hinduism. For me, the question is predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important though it is dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issues." He wrote again as follows: "In pursuance of my previous letter, I have to resist your decision with my life. The only way I can do so is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death, from food of any kind save water, with or without salt, and soda. This fast will cease if during its progress, the British

Government, of its own motion or under pressure of public opinion, revise their decision and withdraw their scheme of communal electorates. The fast will come into operation in the ordinary course from noon of 20th September next unless the said decision is meanwhile revised.”

The publication of this letter and the starting of the fast created consternation in the public mind. There was a great upheaval of feeling and kindling of emotions. Millions offered prayers and fasted on the 20th September, the day the fast began. On that historic day the old deep-seated prejudices seemed to give way. The caste Hindus mixed freely and fraternised with the untouchables. The doors of a large number of temples were thrown open to them. All felt that Gandhiji's life must be saved at any cost. The conscience of the caste Hindus was deeply stirred. All honoured the leaders of the depressed classes, who came forward to solve this problem. Amongst them were M. C. Raja and Dr. Ambedkar. At least an agreement was reached that separate electorates should go, but reservation should be provided to safe guard that a sufficient number of members of the depressed classes will be returned to the Legislatures in the Centre and the Provinces. A unique ceremony, the like of which had never been witnessed in any jail was held on Monday the 26th September at 5.15 p. m., when Gandhiji broke his fast after a prayer sung by poet Rabindranath Tagore.

Gandhiji undertook a whirlwind tour for eradication of untouchability in all its forms. It was not as if the work was easy, in spite of the most wonderful enthusiasm that he kindled in the large masses of people to abolish untouchability. There was much opposition from people who considered the measure as opposed to the Shastras. In Poona an attempt was made to kill him by placing a bomb in the way of his car, But undaunted Mahatmaji went through his campaign. An all-India Harijan Sevak Sangh, with the great social worker, A. V. Thakkar

as its Secretary, was formed with many prominent men and women in it under the chairmanship of Gandhiji. This organisation apart from conducting meetings took upon itself the great task of taking measures not only for abolishing untouchability, but also planning constructive measures for the uplift of the depressed classes, such as starting of harijan hostels, work in slums, temple entry, throwing open village wells etc.

Many statutory measures have been made for the eradication of untouchability. The Indian Constitution has guaranteed some fundamental rights which are based on equality, freedom, non-exploitation. Article 15 states that (i) the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on the ground of caste; (ii) No citizen shall on the ground of caste be subject to restriction regarding access to or use of shops, restaurants, public wells and tanks; (iii) The practice of untouchability is forbidden. It has also laid down certain directive principles of state policy which include items such as "the state shall promote with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation; the President of India will appoint one special officer to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes. The officer is called Commissioner for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes", (Art. 340). The Parliament has also passed in 1956 the Anti-Untouchability Act which has been enforced throughout the country.

Considerable work has been done by the Government and a variety of social service organisations for the eradication of untouchability and uplift of the scheduled castes. There is no doubt that the conscience of the Hindu community has been stirred. The Central and State Governments have provided free education till the secondary stage and a large number

of scholarships in the University stage. In spite of these acts, and the work done by the Harijan Sevak Sangh, it seems as if much more remains to be done.

The Committee, appointed by the Government of Maharashtra to evaluate the impact of measures undertaken by the Government to eradicate untouchability and to suggest steps to be taken to deal with the problem more effectively, has made certain important observations. The committee has observed that untouchability is generally on the retreat. It is disappearing more in the urban areas than in the rural areas. It has also been noticed by them that the Savarna men-folk have a greater intellectual appreciation for the need of speedy removal of untouchability than Savarna women. These observations by the committee are, by and large, true in respect of the entire country.

In some villages of Andhra Pradesh, even now, Scheduled caste people have to wait in a row, with their earthen pots, on the embankment of tanks till some caste Hindu could come and pour water into their pots. The scheduled castes are not allowed to wear dhotis below the knees and in some of the villages of Madhya Pradesh a Scheduled Caste bride-groom can not wear a turban. In some areas of this State, band music is not allowed to be played at the time of marriage among the scheduled castes; their women folk cannot wear bangles and other ornaments made of silver. The people are not allowed to ride a horse or use a bullock-cart as means of transport. Such instances are, however, rare and fortunately becoming rarer every day. But it is to be admitted that untouchability is still practised in many parts of the country, in some form or the other, the most common ones being :- denying access to public restaurants and hostels and the use of utensils kept in such

places for the general public, denying the use of wells, tanks, water taps and other sources of water denial of service by barbers, dhobis etc.; and denial of hired accommodation when posted in the rural areas.

Total ban on entering temple precincts is now rare, but certain other restrictions, like not allowing the scheduled castes to go beyond a certain point in the temple or performing certain rites are often reported.

Generally areas geographically remote and out of contact with progressive and reformative elements continue to remain citadels of orthodoxy. But where education has progressed well the rigours of untouchability are found to be withering. This fact is also borne out by the Maharashtra Committee referred to earlier, which mentions the correlation between educational progress and removal of untouchability. Observance of untouchability in a particular community is as a rule, in inverse proportion to the degree of educational progress in that community. The findings of the study in Gujarat and of the Committee of Maharashtra, hold good to a great extent, in the case of other States too. The worst sufferers from the evil are Bhangis, Doms, Methars, Haris and a few others who are the lowest among the low and are discriminated against even by other scheduled castes. In certain areas this prejudice is so strong that separate wells have to be provided by the Government for different classes of scheduled caste people living in the same village. This fact weakens, to some extent the campaign for removal of untouchability, because this inter-untouchability among the scheduled castes is played up by parties with vested interests.

The following suggestions have been made in the report of the commissioner for scheduled castes and tribes for eradicating this age-old evil:—

Licences should be issued to hair-cutting saloons restaurants, etc., only on condition that these will put up notices at prominent places in their shops that there will be no discrimination against the Scheduled Castes.

Panchayats should be effectively involved in the programme of removal of untouchability as these can be a very potent force in combating this evil.

Scheduled Caste students should be encouraged to join general hostels. As they invariably find such hostels expensive the Government should make some additional grants to these scheduled caste students. The purpose of affording such facilities would be to encourage free mixing of students from different castes and classes.

Systematic efforts are needed for eradicating the practice of untouchability amongst the scheduled castes themselves, instances of which have been widely reported. The propaganda workers should be asked to give special attention to this problem and devise literature, slogans, songs, etc., to combat it.

The District Officers should ensure that development schemes in the rural areas are so planned as to give maximum benefits to the scheduled castes.

Attractive pamphlets, folders, etc. containing messages against the practice of untouchability, in a simple style should be produced and distributed through the gram panchayats to the neo literates whose number is steadily growing in the rural areas.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT

Religious movements have risen from time to time in the world. They have brought about spiritual revolutions in the minds of men and women of their age; some have lasted many centuries and continued to sway millions of people up to the present times. But others after a few centuries waned and some even disappeared. The most ancient is the Hindu religion going back to thousands of years. The age of the Vedas and the Upanishads is still under dispute amongst historians, but none has placed them less than about five thousand years B. C. The other great religions of the world are Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. The Buddha is considered most outstanding in historical times, followed by Jesus Christ about 500 years later, and by prophet Mohammed about 700 years later than Christ. These religions have dominated the world scene till today, drawing millions of followers in various countries all over the globe.

The Founders of these religions had a great message to deliver to the people amongst whom they were born and for the times in which they appeared. In India, Avatars (Incarnations), Prophets and Sages have appeared from time to time to give the much-needed spiritual message to the people. They include Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Chaitanya and Guru Nanak. The latest among them are Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. We now see how the phenomenon of the message of Sri Ramakrishna has developed into a global movement transcending the barriers of race, language religion and country, inspiring millions of men and women, speaking various languages and brought up in different traditions and cultures.

The main message of Sri Ramakrishna was delivered by Swami Vivekananda in the world forum provided by the

Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. In a world torn by strifes and quarrels between various Faiths, he delivered the much needed message of Harmony of Religions in the following words:

“Our watchword will be acceptance, and not toleration; for the so-called toleration is often blasphemy, and I do not believe in it. I believe in acceptance. Why should I tolerate? Toleration means that I think that you are wrong and I am just allowing you to live. Is it not a blasphemy to think that you and I are allowing others to live? I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God with everyone of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the Mosque of the Mohammedan, I shall enter the Christians’ Church and kneel before the crucifix, I shall enter the Buddistic temple, where I shall take refuge in the Buddha and in his law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of everyone. Not only shall I do all these, but I shall keep my heart open for all that may come in the future”.

It is more than a century since Sri Ramakrishna left his mortal coils and it is nearly a century since Swami Vivekananda proclaimed the message of Harmony of Religions in Chicago. The scientific researches of the last century have improved communications in such a vast scale through Radio, Television, Telecommunications and air transport that the world has become a small place, bringing people together. Hence for humanity to live in peace and amity with a sense of brotherliness and good neighbourliness, this message of peace and harmony is essential and timely. Therefore it is that Sri Ramakrishna’s message has developed into a vast spiritual Movement working knowingly or unknowingly in all countries of the world. It works in strange ways and differently in different places.

The Sarvodaya Movement started by Mahatma Gandhi has for its daily prayer the recitation of the following vows:

Ahimsa (Non - Violence), Sathyam (Truth) Astheya (Non-thieving), Brahmacharya (Continence), Asangrah (Non-hoarding), Sairirasrama (Manual labour), Asvada (Control of the Tongue), Sarvathra Bhayavarjana (Fearlessness), Sarva Dharmi Samanathva (Equality of all Religions), Swadeshi (Spirit of Swadeshi), Sparsabhavana (Non - observance of Untouchability)— him ekadasha sevavim namratve vrtha nishchaye (These eleven shall be our vows).

It will be seen Sarva Dharmi Samanathva - equality of all religions is an essential part of these vows.

Swami Sachidananda, of the Divine Life Society, has built the Temple of Light at a cost of a crore of rupees in the United States of America where people belonging to all religions are welcome to worship. This again is an expression of the acceptance of all religions as true in the life of the Ramakrishna Movement. In India there are many shrines like Nagore (Islam) near Nagapattinam, Palani (Hindu) in Anna District, Velanganni (Christian) in Tanjore District, where people of all religions throng for worship. This again is an expression of the Message of Harmony of the Ramakrishna Movement. That a research scholar in the USA should have studied deeply into the religious experiences of Sri Ramakrishna and written a book on his Sadhanas under the title of "God of All" is yet again another expression of the Ramakrishna Movement.

Similarly, other foreign languages and local dialects should be learnt to bring out at least select literature in these languages so that the Message of the Ramakrishna Movement may reach the people in their own tongue and dialects.

While scholars and intellectuals can read and understand high philosophy, spiritual truth reaches common men, women and children only through stories and folklore, through the various expressions of culture such as songs, dance and drama. Harikatha is a universally accepted method of religious discourses throughout India. In addition, Kummi, Kollattam and Villupattu in Tamil Nadu, Burrakatha in Andhra Pradesh and similar folk lore in various parts of India should be used for giving expression to the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna. To the extent this is done, it becomes the permanent cultural wealth of the people. These media have not been taken advantage of for the spread of the Ramakrishna Movement.

The history of religions and cultural movements through the ages points out that when they become institutionalised, they construct ivory towers for themselves and lose touch with the masses. This is a grave danger to all growing institutions. Workers, lay and monastic, must go out and live amongst the poorest in the land, in slums and cheries, giving up voluntarily the comforts of an institutional life to preach by example and precept. It is such sacrifice, love, sympathy, understanding and service that is the essence of religion as taught by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

Our Maths and Mission centres should expand their activities for the dissemination and spreading of messages of Swamiji and Guru Maharaj amongst the people in the surrounding areas through classes, exhibitions, plays, festivals and cultural programmes. All over the country there are hundreds of temples, small and large, which have considerable income. Attempts, are being made to divert their incomes towards social work, education, orphanages and hospitals. People in charge of maintaining temples should use a part of the funds for spreading the basic tenets of religion, thus helping people to understand

their own and other religions. Training is also necessary for the workers of the Movement in the methodology of folk lore to reach the masses.

Those who live in the name of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda should cultivate a spirit of universal love and sympathy. It has been said that people become weak and small through false identification and self-hypnotisation. One should not identify oneself with petty prejudices of caste, community, race, religion, dress or language. Even as Swamiji exhorted, let us appreciate the higher aspirations of people wherever they are and however low their status may be placed in society, and give them a helping push. Their poverty, dirt, ignorance, diseases and their squalid surroundings, should not deter us from working amongst them. It is this universal love, sympathy and understanding that will give strength and vitality so the Ramakrishna Movement. To achieve this end Swami Vivekananda prayed from the fullness of his heart of love, for the poor as follows :

· Let us pray, 'Lead, kindly Light'; a beam will come through the dark, and a hand will be stretched forth to lead us. Let each one of us pray day and night for the down-trodden millions of India, Who are held fast by poverty. prisestcraft and tyranny; pray day and night for them. I love the poor. who feels for the two hundred millions of men and women sunken for even in poverty and ignorance? Him I call a Mahatman who feels for the poor. Who feels for them? They cannot find light or education. Who will bring the light to them - who will travel from door to door bringing education to them? Let these people be your God - think of them, work for them, pray for them in cessantly - the Lord will show you the way''.

This prayer is an inspiration to humanity for all times.

EDUCATION FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING

Once when Swami Vivekananda was walking in Chicago wearing the dress of an Indian monk with a turban on his head, suddenly a man approached him from behind and pulled his turban. Swamiji turned to him and enquired what he wanted. "Why do you wear this horrible dress?" said the man. Remarking on this, Swamiji points out that man by himself may not have been bad; he might have been even a good man, a good husband and a good father. But he could not tolerate a dress other than his own.

An Indian woman scientist went to Australia in connection with an international conference. She was put up with a white family. There was a child in the family, a girl of seven or eight years of age. She looked at the guest and whispered in her mother's ears, "Look at Dr. her hands are brown, how dirty! I don't like to shake hands with her". The mother had a great deal of trouble persuading the child that the lady's hand was not dirty, but had the natural colour of her skin, that there were other parts of the world also where people's colour was brown. They were all clean people and good too. That child was not a bad child. Only she did not know that people could be brown in colour

A majority of the population in Africa are Negroes. Their black colour, manners, customs and food habits are very distinct. Some people may even look down upon them. They know that one of the world's great problems today is South Africa, where the Negroes are treated like outcasts by the majority of the Whites governing them. The result is bitterness, enmity and constant conflict between races.

Today, as the Swami has pointed out, National boundaries are breaking, Science and Technology are forging daily new means of communications. Not only the National boundaries but even the boundaries that separated the earth from the celestial bodies seem to be cracking. Michael Collins the first man to set foot on the moon, in his article on the Trip to the Moon said that from there the earth looked like a small ball in the sky with no evidence of national boundaries.

While on the one side, Science and Technology are facilitating communication between the nations, other imponderables have emerged, which will affect the future of Humanity. Some such emerging problems are described in the following paragraphs.

The Population Explosion

The rapid increase of population, especially in the poverty stricken developing countries, poses an enormous problem for both development and the quality of life. Even if Family Planning and other policies and measures designed to control population succeed dramatically, of which there is little hope, a massive population increase in the country cannot be stopped. Unless some catastrophe intervenes, the doubling of the world population will be inevitable in the 21st century. The most severely affected will be the poorest and the most deprived peoples, but the general pattern of life for the rich is also bound to be affected by population explosion.

Knowledge Explosion

To some extent, application of the fruits of Science and Technology will help to meet the increasing needs. Man will exploit the oceans and explore space for both adventure and wealth. But the present rate at which knowledge is increasing

leading to a knowledge explosion may prove disastrous. if the power of the mind is directed to the pursuit of wrong ends, harmful values and exploitation of weaker people. The man of the next century will need sufficient love and affection to regulate and harness knowledge for human welfare.

The Explosion of Expectations

The unbridled growth of population and new knowledge, especially in the form of technology, leads to another type of explosion, which is even more dangerous because it takes place in the minds of men and takes the form of greed and generates among the masses false images and demands which are the lifestyles of the affluent elite. This gives rise to expectations that cannot be fulfilled universally and may even distort established patterns of life and be the source of conflict.

War and Peace

The powers of existing arms and their destructive potential pose grave threats to the survival of civilization, indeed to human life itself. The issue of war and peace hangs perilously in the balance and leads to the quest for a new type of content of education which seems to call for nothing short of man's spiritual transformation.

The Gap between Developed and Developing Countries

An enormous gap now separates nearly 30 per cent of mankind living in material affluence from the other seventy per cent condemned to persistent poverty and deprivation. As the gap grows wider and wider, mankind is becoming poignantly aware of the fact that the fantastic achievements of science and technology are accompanied by the persistence of poverty and wretchedness among the vast majority of human beings living in the developing countries. Demands of social justice, equality, humanity and human solidarity

cannot be met without bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, the have and have-nots. International co-operation and human benvolence need to be directed to the emerging global task of reducing this gap.

This will depend upon the effectiveness of some suitable form of international education for the 21st century. In the last few decades there has been a marked growth in international organisations. The United Nations is undoubtedly the most significant among them. The UN Organisations such as UNESCO, FAO, UNICEF and WHO have brought peoples and nations together on common platforms.

One of the objectives of the U. N. as stated in its preamble, is to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our life time has brought untold sorrow to mankind'. The preamble proceeds to state that three objectives of the Organisation truly endeavour to attack the root causes of the scourge. These are (1) to reaffirm faith in fundamental human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations, large and small, (2) to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained and (3) to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. For the attainment of these ends the UN expresses the determination of the peoples of U. N. to (1) practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, (2) unite their strength to maintain international peace and security, (3) ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and (4) employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples. To attain these laudable objectives a system of education to promote international peace and understanding is necessary.

Attempts have been made to draw up curricula for teaching international understanding. As stated in the Preamble to the UNESCO, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". All great moves forward in the history of mankind have required changes of existing attitudes and states of mind, so that real life can catch up with the creative ideas that underline our evolution. We have to work toward a world order in which aggressive nationalism and expansionism are banished as a means of promoting or protecting national interest, where war is no longer necessary to support a different point of view, and where diversity can be preserved without resort to prejudice and hatred".

A committee composed of 14 distinguished scholars and educators, one each from as many countries, was appointed to advise the Director-General of the UNESCO on principles and methods of education for international understanding and cooperation. They stated : "It is not easy to find the right kind of education to enable the peoples of the world to understand each other and work together for the common good. Seen globally, the world has shrunk, but the world of each individual has expanded enormously, and this has left him exposed to strains and anxieties that may seriously affect his attitudes towards other men, particularly those beyond his own national borders".

The first step towards international understanding, as Swami Vivekananda has explained in his East and West, is to understand that good qualities are not the privileged monopoly of any nation or people. Secondly, each nation has its own culture and tradition.

The problems which the new forces, tensions and fears create confront educators, whether of children or adults, with

tasks of new quality and magnitude. Not only must people be given a wider variety of new skills, but it must be the conscious aim of education to find ways of carrying over from smaller groups to increasingly larger ones, and finally to the world as a whole, attitudes and values which make for decent living in a complex society. Not least of the problems in this regard is that of the relation between national and international interest and loyalties. It is possible and necessary to teach that loyal citizenship of one's own country is consistent with one world and that national interests are bound to suffer if international interests are ignored.

The author of a pamphlet for British teachers, in defining the qualities to be cultivated in members of an integrated co-operative world community, says: "These qualities are but an extension of those we expect to see in a good national citizen. Among them will be the following: a concern for the welfare of others; willingness to place the common good above one's own immediate interests; the will and courage to co-operate by good means for good ends; receptivity to truth wherever and however it may be revealed; a capacity to think clearly, independently and without prejudice; a capacity to form critical judgements; a quality of mind that is tolerant to honest opinion but intolerant to evil, selfishness and dishonesty in all their forms; readiness to claim no rights for oneself that one is not willing to concede to others; a sense of personal responsibility for the right ordering of community life; respect for persons of every class, race and colour; a quality of imagination that enables a man to assess the results of any action of policy on people far removed from his immediate surroundings".

While cultivation of character has a definite place in teaching in schools, it is not enough; breadth of outlook and understanding can come about only through emotional integration, through the realization that, though we are

different in many ways, we are really one. In this connection it is desirable to mention the story of two brothers. One of them ran away from home while young, joined the army, and was stationed in Ladakh for many years. He did not return home for a long time and got accustomed to the type of food, drink, dress and language of the region where he was stationed. After many years he wanted to see his own native place. He came, but could not recognize any of his relatives. Many had passed away and those who were children had grown up into men whom to recognize was difficult. He was hungry and went to a hotel and ordered something to eat. Another man also entered the hotel, who thought this man dirty, rude and uncultured, and sat at some distance from him. After eating the man from the army opened his purse to pay the bill and in that process dropped down something, which fell near the other man's feet. The other man took it up and saw that it was a picture of a woman, his own mother. Suddenly he recognized that the soldier was his own brother! As soon as the recognition dawned, he lost his prejudice, embraced him, wept in joy to find his long-lost brother. All the prejudice, hatred and contempt vanished when love dawned in his heart. The feeling of kinship made the change from hatred to love.

Even so, real international understanding can only come through the conviction that all are brothers, because all are children of the same God in whatever name and form He may be worshipped. The great qualities necessary for international understanding can come only through the cultivation of the consciousness of this spiritual unity. Physically all are different. Identification with the body is selfishness. Consciousness as family, community, caste and nation are but larger manifestations of the physical consciousness. Real spiritual consciousness can be achieved only by transcending this narrow consciousness and perceiving the underlying spiritual unity.

This perception is more than tolerance; it is understanding, consideration for, and love of, others; and that is the essence of all religions.

Education for international understanding can therefore be had only through the practical cultivation of these qualities in daily life, through developing an intellectual conviction and emotional feeling that all are one, brothers of the large human family and children of God.

As Swami Vivekananda has pointed out, science has demonstrated through physical means the oneness and solidarity of the universe, how physically speaking, man, sun, moon and stars are but little waves in the infinite ocean of matter. In the same way, in spirit all are one. The infinite oneness of the soul is the eternal sanction of all morality, that all are not only brothers, but that they are really one. This is the essence of Indian philosophy. This oneness is the rationale of all ethics and spirituality. The knowledge and practise of this oneness is the only sure and safe way to international peace and understanding.

ADULT EDUCATION

Scope of Adult Education

As the Encyclopedia in Education defines it, Adult Education can mean everything to everybody, that is education of adults in any form and by any means to meet their needs outside their regular accredited education system provided by the school, college and university. In this sense Adult Education includes all the aids used by the doctors, engineers, scientists, teachers, administrators and lawyers and other learned men and women to keep themselves up-to-date in their knowledge through journals, seminars, workshops and a variety of other means. Research and knowledge are expanding so fast that everybody needs to undergo these means of continuing education to keep himself up-to-date in his own professional/specialised field. But in countries where illiteracy is high, adult education is generally equated with literacy work, followed by post literacy and non-formal education programme for the neo literates.

Now-a-days, the phrase Functional Literacy is often used. This is one way of reminding oneself that the context and type of literacy is relative to the various groups in the community. Many complex industrialised societies, although they have eradicated illiteracy long ago, now find they confront severe problems with large numbers of 'functionally' illiterate adults.

The assumption that education is an end in itself and a source of social and economic improvement and economic advancement has not proved correct. There is a scepticism in informed circles about the extent to which formal education can produce the changes desired. This doubt arises because of recognising its necessary functions of conserving and transmitting knowledge and culture and to serve best those

social groups and classes who are relatively under-privileged. This disillusion with formal education has been an important cause of the wide spread trend in modern times in favour of non-formal education.

Adult Education and Eradication of Poverty

Economic improvement and reduction in poverty are the main objectives of adult and non-formal education. They must be met by providing instruction in skills for higher productivity along with literacy. This will help the under privileged to share in the profits of development.

In June 1980, the International Council for Adult Education of Australia convened a working session on Adult Education, International Aid and Poverty. It was attended by members from aid agencies and adult educators from all regions of the world. It was resolved in that meeting to establish a Commission to explore further the relation of Adult Education to the reduction of poverty and the role of international aids and specifically, to prepare a number of case studies on the contribution, if any, of adult education efforts, to the reduction of poverty.

The objectives of the commission were to

- a) examine the strengths and weaknesses of adult and non-formal education programmes in the reduction of poverty;
- b) examine and monitor the provision of international aid relating to adult and non-formal education by the various agencies;
- c) establish and continuously review criteria and modes for resource allocation to adult and non-formal education.

- d) review adult education strategies and methods through case studies, comparative studies and in other ways to provide a source of information and advice on the apparent relative success of different approaches for the reduction of poverty in different contexts;
- e) provide an inter-disciplinary forum for dialogue between adult educators and those responsible for development and aid planning and the implementation of programmes.

Instances of failure might be as important to study as success stories, and more helpful for understanding the relationship between Adult Education and poverty in different settings. So little is firmly known that it was unimportant even if the initial set of case studies proved to be a somewhat ill assorted collection.

Problems in Adult Education

The problems in Adult Education are much more complex and varied than in formal education systems. In the various stages of formal education, like Primary, Secondary, University and Professional, one treads on a beaten track, with recognised patterns, which are fairly well known and obsolete, But in Adult Education, one is in an unchartered sea wherein all aspects are fluid and in continuous experimentation. Besides, to attract continuous attendance and participation of the illiterate adult women learners, the programme needs to be tailored for each person or group according to his or her needs, understanding and capacity. The greatest problem is motivation of the adults to participate in the adult education programme regularly. They can be convinced only by proving to them that the courses are beneficial to them in improving their economic position; not by making a promise for the

future, but for the present. The courses must be purposeful with their aim on higher economic productivity. Even then some inducement by way of stipends may have to be given to make good the loss by wages, when they attend these courses.

Evaluation of the work carried out by Avinashilingam Trust in Adult Education, has shown that

- a) 58.5% learned reading and writing, 14.6% only writing and 26.9% only reading.
- b) The orientation and motivation for the staff handling Adult Education classes should be greater.
- c) The prospects of motivation to participants will be greater if the programme is combined with economic purposes leading to greater income.
- d) The difficulties in running Adult Education Centres with only college students are great as there will not be continuity of instruction at the time of examination and holidays. Combining students with full time workers may help in giving continuity.
- e) Adult Education Animators should be chosen and trained from the local community. This has many advantages such as less cost, more continuity and greater knowledge of local conditions and people.
- f) The Field Publicity Officers of Government should integrate their work more with adult schools.

Suitable Administrative Machinery

It is necessary to evolve an administrative get-up which will inspire workers, at the grass-root level to dedicate themselves to the work and motivate the community to give the programme their fullest and whole-hearted co-operation.

In the last few years much work has been done in Adult Education in various parts of the country. Considerable literature has been generated on the subject and much experience has been gained such as the aids necessary, methodologies for motivation and training of grass-root workers, teachers and supervisors, writers of books for neoliterates and non-formal education courses suitable to various sections of people.

Conditions for Success

As Swami Vivekananda said three things are necessary for all achievements. Firstly, feeling from the heart. It is feeling that leads to dedicated effort. Secondly, feeling should not be merely sentimental but should lead to organised, constructive effort. Thirdly, cultivating steadfastness to pursue the work through thick and thin and continuously labour with love, hope and dedication.

Jesus Christ said, "The harvest is plenty, but labourers are few". Ways must be found to organise a large army of devoted men and women for this truly tremendous and great task.

EDUCATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Education to be worthwhile must serve the purpose of National Development. The needs of countries are different and consequently the directions of their development also differ. India is a large and ancient country with a culture and civilization which can be traced into the hoary past, and at the same time with the incrustations of these many thousand years. Therefore the problems of development in India should be identified as also the ways and means by which they can be solved. In this process of social change, there is no greater and more effective instrument than the educational system.

The National Problems

India is the biggest democracy in the world with a large population next only to China. Consequently her problems also are large. The most important of the problems are...

The need to produce enough food for the growing millions. Fortunately, the Agricultural Scientists have made a major break-through in this important field and food production has nearly doubled in the last twenty years. Along with the increase in food production the population has also increased to an alarming extent. Hence the need for further production is imperative if the growing numbers are to be fed.

Allied to this problem is the control of populations explosion. The land that India has is limited and there is a limit to the population it can bear and support. People, rich and poor, in the towns and villages, have to be given population education, so that its growth can be regulated.

Along with the increase of population, unemployment has increased considerably. To provide employment economic growth has to be stepped up. The resources in land and water must be explored and exploited so as to ensure economic growth with social justice, by providing employment to the unemployed and under employed millions, so that the profits of development can be enjoyed also by the poorer sections of the population.

In India people are in various stages of development, divided into numerous castes, communities, regions and languages. What is needed is social and national integration to unite all as one nation and people, in spite of the differences in manners customs, food habits, castes and creeds.

To achieve this end the democratic basis of the political set up must be strengthened by the creation of an educated electorate, dedicated and competent leadership and cultivation of the essential values of self-control, tolerance, mutual good will and consideration for others supported by patriotic feelings which will put the country first and individuals second.

The Present Position

The World Bank has said that three-fourths of those in absolute poverty are in the developing countries of Asia, reflecting both the low levels of national per capita income and the large size of the rural sector there. Of the population in developing countries considered to be either in absolute or relative poverty, more than 80% are estimated to live in the rural areas. Hundreds of millions of people are caught up in conditions of deprivation and poverty which no statistics can clearly describe. Malnutrition disease, illiteracy, unemployment and early death pervade these vast populations. Such poverty is an intolerable assault on human dignity and decency.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the critical issue within the developing economics is not simply the rate of growth but the nature of growth. In these countries' pursuit of rapid economic advance, the poorest 40 per cent of their populations are being largely left behind. The task then, for these governments is to reorient their development policies in order to attack directly the personal poverty of this huge and most deprived segment of their people.

Assumptions in Education

Till quite recently, the leaders assumed that expansion of education will build the human capital, and once a satisfactory level of education has been reached, development would follow automatically. In fact, expenses on education have been described as "Investment in man". But the questions, "What kind of education?" "What values would it inculcate?" were never raised. Experience now indicates that educational expansion has taken the educated out of development rather than into the process. Instead of promoting social responsibility, it has stimulated selfishness and self-aggrandisement and has misguided the educated to gravitate towards the elite, who are the custodians of 'status and prestige'.

The Development Process

It is important to integrate all the vital elements of the development process into a mutually sustaining relationship. Growth is vital to development. Economic growth must raise the productivity and saving capacity of people and ensure a satisfactory rate of growth over time. Growth needs to acquire the qualitative dimensions of social justice, people's participation and human values. The efficacy of growth must be judged by these qualitative criteria. Does the process of production result in a net addition to social welfare or to social cost? Is its objective simply an increase in the aggregate

of goods and services, or of such goods which stimulate self-reliant development? This is the dynamic and integral concept of growth.

The Meaning of Development

What are the basic human needs? According to the 'Ode of an Asian Humanist' they are:

While in my mother's womb, I want her to have good nutrition and access to maternal and child welfare care.

I want good nutrition for my mother and for me in my first two to three years, when my capacity for future mental and physical development is determined.

I want to be able to go to school, together with my sister, and to learn a usable trade, and to have the school impart social values to me.

When I leave school I want a job, a meaningful one in which I can feel the satisfaction of making a contribution.

I want to live in a law and order society, without molestation.

I want my country to relate effectively and equitably to the outside world, so that I can have access to the intellectual, cultural and technical knowledge of all mankind, as well as to capital from overseas.

As a farmer, I would like to have my own plot of land, with a system which gives me easy access to credit, to new agricultural technology, and to markets, and a fair price for my product.

As a worker, I would want to have some share, some sense of participation, in the factory in which I work. As a human being, I would like inexpensive newspapers

and paper-back books, plus access to radio and television.

I need some leisure time for myself, and to enjoy my family and want access to some green parks, and to the arts, and my cultural heritage.

I would like to have the security of co-operative mechanisms in which I join with others to do things which we cannot do alone.

I want clean air to breathe and clean water to drink. I need the opportunity to participate in the society around me, and to be able to help shape the decisions of the economic, social and political institutions that so affect my life.

I want my wife to have equal opportunity with me.

These are the fundamental needs of life. Development should seek to achieve these for all and education should accelerate the development process.

Test of Development

Despite the fact that India has the third largest pool of technical personnel and scientists in the world, only 30 per cent of the population are literate. The majority is still illiterate and uneducated. A highly educated elite on one hand and the uneducated masses on the other hand has created serious imbalances resulting in a communication gap between the two. The educational system must be revamped and reconstructed to reduce this gap and to orient the academic world to policies, priorities and realities of national development.

The test of development is an increase in each individual's productivity. Therefore both men and women need full access to means of increasing their capacity to produce.

In achieving these great objectives, the Educational System has a great part to play. Other agencies may help and achieve in particular directions, but only a national system of well thought out, well planned and well-mannered education can reach all the people. To do so the educational system in all its stages must relate to the life, needs and aspirations of the people. Spelt out more specifically it will mean —

The educational system should aim at greater productivity in industries, agricultural and related resources such as fishery, poultry, dairy etc. instead of being merely academic.

The schools and colleges should be aware of, and feel themselves as partners of this great endeavour of national development instead of being silent and uninterested spectators.

Education should strengthen social and national integration, consolidate democracy and cultivate the qualities necessary to make democratic living the way of our national life.

It must build the national character by cultivating social as well as moral qualities based on our spiritual heritage.

Subjects of practical and national significance such as health, nutrition and population education should find a place in the curricula in all stages of education.

Science and technology must be increasingly utilised in daily life to increase productivity and fight diseases.

Work experience should become an integral part of all stages of education and vocationalisation should be introduced in the secondary level to meet the needs of modern scientific agriculture, industry and trade.

Any discussion of Education for Development immediately and inevitably involves the consideration of the

goals of development, its priorities, methods and processes, and its implications for and impact on our various societies as a whole. Development cannot only be conceived of as a matter of economics, in isolation from the social environment and without regard to the historical processes that account for our various existing social realities. Nor is education the exclusive role of formal schooling, because society and the environment also have educational functions which are too often overlooked.

A radical reconstruction of this type will require not only massive additional expenditure, but also considerable redistribution even within the existing expenditure. To be successful, however, educational programmes need, not only funds, but sustained hard work, an ethical atmosphere and cultivation of proper values by the entire academic community. The teachers, students, and educational administrators have an important role to play in this endeavour.

The teachers should lay down a code of the highest professional conduct for themselves and enforce it rigorously through professional organisations. It is their responsibility to see that the highest standards are maintained in educational institutions, to identify themselves fully with the welfare of the students committed to their charge, and also become closer to the community through programmes of mutual service and support.

The students should strive to cultivate the basic values of democracy, socialism, and secularism and should fight against all reactionary and obscurantist forces. They should specially strive for equality and justice, show deep sensitivity to the sufferings of the poorer classes.

The educational administration has now become extremely weak with an almost infinite capacity to tolerate inefficiency.

It is largely oriented to day-to-day maintenance and obsessed with personnel administration, especially with transfers and postings. It provides little educational leadership and is unable even to cope with qualitative improvement. A radical transformation of this system is, therefore, urgently called for.

The Central and State Governments on whom the responsibility for educational reconstruction ultimately rests will have to show the political will and provide the needed financial support and the public will have to cooperate fully and be prepared to sacrifice their other needs in the larger interests of building up the nation through this massive educational drive.

NON FORMAL EDUCATION

The Present Position

The formal educational system, which is now a gigantic structure with about a million educational institutions, enrolls 135 million students at all stages, has about a million teachers and involves an expenditure of about 99,990 which is next only to that on defence. In spite of all this expansion and changes made the educational system continues to benefit mainly the upper and middle classes for whom it was originally designed. It still makes only a marginal contribution to the education of the poor people, who have only a limited access to it, both qualitatively and quantitatively. In fact the total injustice of the system and its unpardonable discrimination against the poor, can be highlighted by the following indisputable facts:

About 60 per cent of the people (age 10 and over) are still illiterate and have received none of the benefits of this vast educational system.

About 20 per cent of the children, mostly the lowest of the low, never enter the schools at all.

Of those children that enter the schools, nearly half drop out by class V and nearly three-fourths drop out by class VIII; and only about 15 reach class XII, and less than one gets the first degree.

The system accords very low priority to programmes like adult education, universal elementary education, or non-formal education which would benefit the poor. On the other hand, it accords high priority and invests the bulk of its resources in secondary and higher education which benefit mostly the top 30 per cent of the population.

The children from poor families get an unfair deal in the system which still continues to use English as the medium of instruction in higher education; and whose entire ethos is oriented to the needs and aspirations of the upper and middle classes.

It would be incorrect to describe the existing educational system as an instrument for educating the people; the evidence adduced above clearly shows that it is more appropriately designed for not educating them. In fact, the primary objective of the system is not to spread education among the people, but to function as an efficient and merciless mechanism to select individuals who should continue to remain in the privileged sector or enter it afresh.

The Need for Non-formal Education

The great defect of the educational system is that formal education is divorced from reality; those who have acquired technical knowledge don't know to use their hands for productive purpose and those who work with their hands don't have knowledge for superior performance. The result is poor productivity and consequent poverty. The problem is to carry education to the workers working in the fields and factories and to involve educated people in actual work. All those who work in the field cannot be put through formal education in schools and colleges. Each group of people must be given whatever education is necessary to make them more productive. The answer is a well organised system of non-formal education, tailored to suit the needs of various kinds of people, involved in various kinds of activities. This will mean identification of the needs of men and women engaged in thousands of occupations and providing them with the required knowledge and skills, cultivation of proper attitudes towards life and work for greater productivity and the building of a great and prosperous nation.

Agriculture the Basic Industry

As the Prime Minister has said India will continue for a long time to be a predominantly agricultural country and as Dr. H. N. Sethna has stated emphatically in the recent Indian Science Congress at Bhubaneswar, 'India's battle for development will be won or lost in the field of agriculture'. Agriculture in today's context has an extended connotation, meaning not only agriculture but also development of animal resources such as dairy, poultry, fishery, sheep-rearing, piggery etc. Not only should research be geared to their better performance, but the knowledge of the latest findings of research and the methods of their implementation should be conveyed through non-formal education to the millions of people involved in all those and other related avocations.

Training in scientific Agriculture, which has created new job opportunities, should be provided to the thousands of agriculturists throughout the country. Some of them are maintenance and repairing of electric motors, oil engines, pumpsets, gadgets used for plant protection etc. In many areas tractors are being increasingly utilised, Short courses designed to meet these needs of the practising ryots should be implemented.

Non-formal Education for Industry

There are excellent industries in India as in other countries, they have not helped in raising the general standard of productivity. Researches made by UNESCO in Iran have conclusively proved that non-formal education giving scientific background of their operation had increased the productivity of labour upto 30%. Research experience in Coimbatore has proved that educated men and women, when given the same

work as the uneducated, could pick up the work sooner and perform much better, in a shorter period. Inculcation of scientific understanding of the actual processes of their work, succeeds in developing greater skills and speed, provided the syllabus for their course is not made by somebody who does not know anything about the needs of people in the locality. Such courses should be of short duration, so that the workers will be able to give time, should be of practical interest to the participants, and result in higher productivity and consequently more earning capacity.

The Field of Health

In the field of health, surveys by the World Bank in developing countries have shown that the deterioration of their man power as well as loss of working days, absence from duty due to sickness, have been mainly due to insanitary conditions, improper utilisation of human waste and malnutrition. For the development of human health, inculcation of personal and environmental cleanliness is a must. In India insanitary utilisation of tanks, rivers and canals are the causes for cholera and other water borne diseases. Along with training in sanitary living knowledge of balanced diet, the benefits of a mixed diet, utilisation of milk, green vegetables and the need for developing kitchen gardens in every house, must be given.

Moral and Spiritual Values

While increasing the purchasing capacity of people is an essential background for all development, there is another aspect that should be remembered. The surveys around Coimbatore have shown that mere economic improvement need not mean better living. The mill labourers get an average pay of Rs. 500/- per month. There are families where two or three members work in mills thus earning about

Rs. 1,000/- or 1,500/- per month. But a study of the income utilisation has revealed that amongst many families much of it is spent in drink, cinemas, debauchery and violence, proving thereby that a cultural, moral and religious background is necessary for a better utilisation of higher income. Studies of the expenditure of the higher income group have also brought out the same findings. Inculcation of moral, spiritual and cultural values along with economic improvement are absolutely essential for national development.

Agency for Non-formal Education

Since a separate Department for non-formal Education for Rural Development, cannot be setup, the net work of schools and colleges in the country should be utilised for this purpose. But before entrusting it with this important work, the Department should be reorganised and the Department Officers must be retrained to do this kind of work. The teachers in the schools should be given the requisite training. Care should be taken to see that their existing teaching does not suffer. Additional staff, incentives and equipment should be provided wherever necessary. The schools and colleges should be so reorganised that they become centres of non-formal education as related to rural development.

Students power, that has been recently made available for rural work, must be utilised. This scheme began on a voluntary basis through the planning forums and National Service Corps. Some Universities like the Madras University have introduced rural development as part of the academic curricula and counting for grades. According to the U.G.C report for 1987-88 there are 6597 colleges in the country with a total strength of 38,14,417 students and 1,88,808 teachers in the university level. If properly directed they can be a great force for constructive work for rural development in addition to making the education more

real and purposeful. But it is no easy matter to organise this large numbers into effective work. This means training of student leaders and staff of the Institutions and co-ordinating the work of this large number of people distributed throughout the country with a national programme of rural development as administered by local officials and local organisations like Panchayats.

The Womens' Sector

The Womens' Sector Serves a very important part in both the economic and cultural life of the country. In a survey made by the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University about the labour force employed in Agriculture, it has been found that of the 14 crores of people working in agriculture, eight crores are women. Many of the major aspects of cultivation like planting, transplanting, weeding, drying and a large part of the post harvest work is done almost entirely by women in all parts of the country. Surveys by the Central Food Technological Research Institute have shown that over 20% of the grain now being lost can be saved through better post-harvest technology methods. Improvement in these aspects can only be through improving the skills and techniques of farm women. Besides, women have a large share in decision making in the family, food preservation, preparing food for all the members of the family and in transmitting culture, moral and spiritual values from generation to generation. The literacy amongst women is unfortunately very low, being 29% in 1985. They cannot be brought to the schools in any large numbers and so education should go to their houses and places where they live and work. In addition, the family planning programme, so essential for our development, can be implemented only by educating them. These cannot be done by men. Therefore, the organisation of non-formal education to this very important sector of our society poses great problems and should be faced with clarity, imagination, sympathy and understanding.

Problems to be Faced

The task of organising a scheme of non-formal education for a country and population of this size is immense. They are intensified by the low literacy rate in the country as a whole amongst women, harijans and scheduled tribes in particular. How to reach these people and identify their actual needs is the most important problem. New methods of non-formal education to suit the people should be evolved and adopted.

In order to improve productivity amongst the 80% of people living in village, involved in agriculture and related occupations, their needs have to be identified. The need of the people will naturally differ according to the land, water facilities and crops and animals raised.

New skills and jobs required for scientific agriculture, such as use of electric motors, preparation of fertilizers, cattle feeds etc. should be identified.

In industry also the scientific knowledge required for each of the processes has to be identified and provided.

The kind of nutrition and health education to be given should also be identified. This again should be related to the social customs, food habits and traditional beliefs of the community concerned.

In increasing productivity the problem is not only one of production but also of marketing. Women can be taught fruit preservation, making of pickles, pappadams etc. but unless arrangements are made to market them by a central organisation, these will not have any value. A well organised system of marketing especially for articles produced in village centres of non-formal education is an essential pre-requisite to its success.

The Task Ahead

A well organised non-formal and adult education movement with the specific objective of the various needs of employment and luring of the myriad kinds of people is absolutely necessary.

Action-oriented research must be taken up to motivate the masses of people.

As the work is colossal, all kinds of available resources of the formal education systems, such as the students, teachers, buildings, equipment, voluntary organisation, trade unions, farmers, women's institutions, the unemployed youth of the country and other professional institutions must be utilised.

Provision of job training for all those categories of people will be essential as, without it, their labour may go to waste and lead to frustration and failure. For this purpose constant evaluations of the methods, organisations and other processes of the adult and non-formal education should be made to correct and improve the working.

Above all a missionary zeal and dedication in the staff employed and voluntary organisations utilised for this national purpose is required.

LITERACY FOR WOMEN

The present position of literacy amongst women in India is very disheartening. Considering the total picture, literacy in India is very low. That among women is lower than among men, and it is lower among rural and weaker sections than among the urban population. Enrolment of girls in schools and colleges is much lower than the enrolment of boys, while the drop-out ratio of girls is greater than that of boys.

According to the findings of the 1981 census, only 24.88 per cent of Indian women are literate, leaving behind 75.12 per cent as illiterates. The literacy rate among males has all along been approximately double the female literacy rate. The enrolment ratio in the age group 6-11 for boys is about 110 per cent compared to about 80 per cent for girls.

Therefore the problem is truly imminent requiring the Herculean effort of thousands of men and women for its solution

Motivation

The most important factor for the success of any educational programme for women lies in motivating them. The younger children should be persuaded to join the schools provided by the state. The steps to be taken for this purpose are, providing schools within reachable distance, providing separate schools for girls where the community demands it, providing free lunches in schools for indigent children, adjustment of school working hours to suit the convenience of the children and the families, and providing an element of persuasion and compulsion to make all school going children join the school programme and be in it at least till

the fifth standard. More important than these, is to provide suitable curricula, which the parents and the community consider useful.

With regard to older people, young and old women, who cannot be brought into the school, non-formal education is the only approach for educating them since education can be given to them only on a voluntary basis and with their willing cooperation, it is important to explain to them the need for it. Motivation can come only when they feel that it fulfils their felt needs. Studies should concentrate on observing and finding out their felt needs, the satisfaction of which will attract the illiterates to attend non-formal adult education courses.

As a large number of women especially in the rural areas are very poor living in the sub-economic level, their first need is improvement of their economic condition. The adult education course should help them to earn more.

The second and perhaps their biggest emotional urge is the love they have for their children. Anything that will make their children healthier, happier and help them grow into respectable people will enthuse the mothers. There are a variety of child care practices such as immunisation, better feeding and prevention of diseases by better sanitation in which they will be interested.

Most of women rich and poor the poor more than the rich, have faith in God. They will be attracted to bhajans prayers, and simple namasankirtans. In the West the Bible has been the biggest adult educator, that is, many could keep up their literacy because of their daily devotion to the Bible. This is true of India also.

That we have declared ourselves to be a secular state, does not mean that we have given up Faith in God. Suffering humanity throughout the ages has turned to God and prayer for consolation and strength, and it will continue to do so. Therefore fulfilling this urge for prayer will be one of the sure ways of motivating people and attracting them to non-formal education.

The preparation of the curricula for adult groups, men or women, should be as varied as is required by the different groups. They should also be based on their interests and help in solving their problems. The curriculum may consist of the following items.

Effects of nutrition on health, need for personal hygiene, how to improve living conditions and beliefs regarding health of the child and mother.

Childhood diseases, their prevention and cure.

Awareness of the diet needed by expectant mothers and infants and use of supplemental foods.

Awareness of the facilities and resources available for maintaining good health of the child and mother (immunization, safe delivery, medical check-up of mother and child)

Preventive Measures

They must be taught such as

1. Making the living conditions conducive to children's health.
2. Taking special care of pregnant mother's health
3. Visiting Health Centres for periodical check-up of children's Health
4. Getting children immunised against infectious diseases.

5. Going to a doctor as soon as one finds that the child.
 - a. does not sleep well
 - b. does not take proper diet
 - c. is not gaining weight
 - d. is not cheerful
6. Introducing supplemental foods, prepared out of indigenous sources in the baby's diet
7. Feeding the baby in hygienic conditions (Cleanliness of food stuffs, hands and feeding utensils)
8. Keeping three to four years gap between the birth of successive children
9. Producing foods needed for the child in the home.

In a country like India with restricted social relationship between the sexes, education of women will not be possible without women workers. Fortunately in the last quarter of the century, in thousands of schools situated in villages, the teachers are women. In Tamilnadu it is the government's policy that all villages having a population of three hundred and above persons should have a school and should be within walking distance from the villages.

Teachers should be motivated with proper inducement to take up adult literacy work. For this special training in content as well as in methodology is necessary. Every school should become a centre for adult education and rural development, using the same buildings and furniture. But this will mean that the schools will have to be upgraded both in quality, number of staff, teachers and equipment.

In any programme of adult education, follow up work is absolutely necessary, or else the neoliterates may lapse in to illiteracy. Small village libraries, made mobile through

bullock carts can help in this aspect. More important than this is the production of suitable literature, without political interference of any kind trying to preach any particular or social ideology.

These are some of the problems in carrying literacy to the millions of illiterate women in the country. To achieve the great objective of total literacy it is essential to develop sincerity and dedication to the cause, accentuated by love of the poor people. Swami Vivekananda said, "Him I call a Mahatma who feels for the poor! Who will bring the light to them! Let those people be your Gods - Think of them work for them - pray for them incessantly - the Lord will show you the way".

BASIC EDUCATION

In the course of his long public life, leading India, Gandhij touched almost every aspect of Indian life, and touched nothing that he did not attempt to reform radically. With all his rich experience and against the background of his work in South Africa, he found that the final solution to the ills of the Indian people could be found only through a proper system of education. 'Basic Education' was thus his most precious gift to the nation.

Although he formulated the scheme of Basic Education in 1937, his perception of its underlying principles had been taking shape much in advance over several years. Ultimately he found that education, to be useful, should be integrated with life and work. Obviously to serve the millions of poor in India only that type of work that had the qualities of simplicity and availability, could meet much of the needs. It should require the minimum of technical training that can be acquired within a few days or weeks and it should fulfil the felt and abiding need of the people. It should not involve a large investment of money. While working among the poor in Orissa Gandhi found that hand-spinning and weaving fulfilled these requirements: the charkha was easy. Next only to food, the production of cloth fulfilled the most important basic need of all people. As he expressed it himself: "The disease of the masses is not want of money so much as want of work. Labour is money. He who provides dignified labour for the millions in their cottages, provides food and clothing. It is not even poverty that matters so much as idleness, which was at first enforced due to lack of work and now has become a habit. Idleness is the root of all evil and if that root can be destroyed, most

of the evils can be remedied. Through chronic famine conditions, the people of Orissa have been reduced to beggary. It is a very difficult thing to make them work. Revival of spinning is their only hope”.

What Gandhiji said of Orissa applies to the entire country. This nation with more than 800 million Population is one of the poorest countries of the world and helpless in almost every aspect of life. This abject poverty of material wealth, which is also an indication of want of faith in oneself is due partly to laziness and want of application and partly to labelling manual work as inferior, hereby relegating it to the lower castes. Work, by its nature, will inspire confidence and strength. A national system of education for India which would pave the way for an enlightened society must accept this fundamental view of life and the essential place of work in society, Gandhiji, however, found that the prevailing system of education went in exactly the opposite direction and led to disastrous consequences. He said: “Whatever may be true of other countries, in India at any rate, where more than eighty per cent of the population is agricultural and another ten per cent industrial it is a crime to make education merely literary, and to make boys and girls unfit for manual work in later life. Indeed, I hold that as the larger part of our time is devoted to labour for earning the bread, children must, from their infancy, be taught the dignity of labour. The children should not be taught to despise labour. It is a sad thing that the boys in school look upon manual labour with disfavour, if not contempt”. Gandhiji therefore, desired to have an educational system based on work and on the dignity of manual labour. This became the most essential principle of his scheme of Basic Education. Gandhiji formally mentioned the scheme at a Conference of Educationists, summoned in Wardha, in 1937.

After Gandhiji's speech and the preliminary discussions, the Conference converted itself into a Committee to consider this new method of education. Many prominent educationists of the country including Dr. Zakir Hussain, Sri Aryanayakam and Dr. K. T. Shah, many other men and women who had been doing experiments in national education in different parts of India, and the Ministers of Education of provincial governments, participated in the discussions. The following resolutions were formulated and passed unanimously by the Conference;

“That, in the opinion of the Conference, free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale;

That the medium of instruction be the Mother Tongue; That the Conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period should centre round some form of manual and productive, work and all the other abilities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child;

That the conference expects that system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of teachers.

Philosophy of Education

In the new ideology, that is Basic Education, work is the pivot on which all instruction revolves. The work may be of various types. Activities involving personal and community cleanliness should be foremost in a Basic School. Education for the young does not mean stuffing impracticable ideas into the minds of children; it is essentially training them

in good habits. Thus cleanliness and sanitation, scientifically understood and practically carried out are the beginning of Basic Education. The daily experiences that every child has to undergo such as regular morning evacuation, brushing teeth, cleaning the nose and eyes, bathing, physical exercises, washing etc. can be exploited as practical experiences and for inculcating good habits. In the same way, social and religious festivals, weddings and other social events, visits to temples and other places can be made useful methods of instruction. Above all, Basic Education recognises that useful manual labour, through constructive crafts, intelligently performed, is one of the best means of developing a balanced intellect.

The objective of education is not only to turn out good individuals, but also socially useful men and women who understand their place in and duty to, the society in which they live. This has been termed 'Training for Citizenship'. No education is complete until this important aspect of training is accomplished. Basic Education regards this aspect as an essential part of education, to be given not theoretically, but by practical observance from the first day at school. And this, in its turn, leads to team work and discipline. Activities involving social objectives gradually lead children to the cultivation of a social sense. They also learn to place the needs of the community above their own petty pleasures and advantages.

A sharp intellect can be cultivated through other methods, but then it may not be 'socially' developed. On the other hand, an intellect developed through the medium of socially useful manual labour must of necessity become an instrument of service. Mere intellectual training ordinarily makes a child individualistic. But Education through work and team activities brings him in contact with other children in

cooperation with whom he has to work. This brings out clearly the social objective which is important for healthy living, and trains the pupil not only in a sense of cooperation, but also in qualities of leadership.

For the success of the productive aspect of Basic Education, the following conditions are absolutely necessary;

- i) The Basic School should consist of eight classes and should not be a truncated basic school of five classes only.
- ii) Every class should have its full quota of 30 students
- iii) Basic schools should be well - equipped with the necessary tools and appliances, as well as sufficient land and livestock, in the case of agricultural basic schools.
- iv) They should also be staffed and supervised by well-trained persons having faith in the objective of self-sufficient and self-supporting education.

The Implication of Basic Education

Basic Education, as conceived and explained by Mahatma Gandhi, is essentially an education for life and education through life. It aims at creating eventually a social order free from exploitation and violence. Therefore, productive, creative and socially useful work in which all boys and girls may participate, irrespective of any distinction of caste or class, is placed at the very centre of Basic Education.

Effective teaching of a basic craft becomes an essential part of education at this stage, as productive work, done under proper conditions not only makes the acquisition of much related knowledge more concrete and realistic, but also adds a powerful contribution to the development of personality and character and instils respect and love for all socially useful work. In addition, the sale of products of craftwork helps to meet part of the

Basic education should not be regarded as meant exclusively for the rural areas. It should be introduced equally in urban areas both because of its intrinsic suitability and also to remove the impression that it is some kind of an inferior education designed only for the village children. For this purpose, necessary modifications will have to be made in the syllabus and the choice of basic crafts for the urban schools but the general ideas and methods of basic education should remain the same.

Thus basic education, properly organised and implemented, is a unique method of education that facilitates the development of the best in the child, socially and intellectually, making him a useful member of the society in which he lives.

SPIRITUAL VALUES ORIENTED EDUCATION

To-day when man is discovering the secrets of nature and finding himself in possession of large powers, inculcation of spiritual values has become a vital issue. Such powers, when wisely used can prove a boon and a lasting benefit to humanity. But they will destroy the world, humanity and civilization if they are impelled by selfishness and aggrandisement. Therefore, thinking people all over the world lay stress that cultivation of spiritual values should be the core of education. National educational planners need to build up an educational system which will inculcate human and spiritual values in children, for it is in the home and the schools that the foundations of character are laid.

Religious or spiritual life does not consist in following ceremonials or rituals or the mere study of the Scriptures. As Swami Vivekananda said, "We may study all the books in the world, yet we may not understand a word of religion or spiritual life. We may talk and reason all our life, but we shall not understand a word of truth until we experience it ourselves. We may be the most intellectual people the world ever saw and yet we may not come to God. On the other hand, irreligious men have been produced from the most intellectual training. It makes men selfish and exploiting". The cultivation of the heart raises one to a position beyond the reach of the intellect to the level of inspiration.

Mahatma Gandhi said: "It is not through books that one could impart training of the spirit. Just as physical training can be imparted only through physical exercise and intellectual training through intellectual exercise, even so the training of the spirit is possible only through the exercise of the spirit". Leading a life of the spirit involves the development

of the highest character which consists in shaping one's life on the basis of two fundamental and vital principles namely, Truth and Nonviolence. By Truth Gandhi meant not only truth in speech, but truth in thought and in action. Asked as to how one realises the truth, he replied, "By single minded devotion (abhyasa) and indifference to all other interests (vairagya). The quest of Truth involves tapas, self-suffering, even unto death". He proclaimed in the manner of the great scriptures of the world, the need to follow a life of the highest purity. He said, "Brahmacharya is the source of all strength. A depraved man can never have the strength and the confidence to do anything great. This requires great watchfulness in one's daily thoughts. Eternal watchfulness is the price that a striver has to pay for leading a higher life".

Real religion and spiritual life can be acquired only by the cultivation of spiritual qualities. These qualities have been described in detail in the Bhagvat Gita. "Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and yoga; charity, control of the senses, yajna, reading of the Shastras, austerity, uprightness, non-injury, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, tranquility, absence of calumny, compassion to beings, uncovetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness, boldness, forgiveness, fortitude, purity absence of hatred, absence of pride; these belong to one born for a divine state". Of these, fearlessness is the first requisite of spirituality. Cowards can never be moral. Where there is fear there is no religion. Therefore, the spiritual way of life is for the strong and the brave. Only this way of life can give man abiding joy. The reputed American agnostic, Mr. Ingersol told Swami Vivekananda, "I believe in making the most out of the world in squeezing the orange dry, because this world is all that we are sure of". To this Swami Vivekananda replied, "I know a better way of squeezing the orange of this world than you do and I get more out of it. I know

I cannot die; so I am not in a hurry. I have no fear, so I enjoy squeezing. I can love all men and women. Every one is god to me. Think of the joy and get thousand-fold out of it”.

These spiritual qualities must be inculcated in school children. The educational system should be so adjusted and the school time so planned that along with knowledge, qualities of fearlessness and values are also cultivated. To do so, the term spiritual qualities must be clearly understood. As mentioned earlier, they are not merely ceremonials like applying vibhuti, going to temples, making pranams to Sadhus or even fasting on particular days, though many times these observances may help in the cultivation of spiritual life. Those qualities, and observances which are fundamental to the spiritual life of the individual and the advance of nations must be studied in detail. Some of the most important ones are fearlessness and courage, love, compassion and service, truth, purity in personal and social life, honesty and simplicity, control of the senses, forgiveness and a sense of responsibility in the discharge of one's duties. These are generally covered by the word good character.

Dr. Radhakrishnan said, ‘Religion is either revolutionary or it is nothing. If it does not transform your society, if it does not transform your nature, if it does not bring about a human civilization, it is not true religion. We must see to it that we rid our society of all the social evils and the inequities which we have imposed in the name of religion. Unless we are able to knock them out of our society, we cannot call ourselves truly religious beings”.

The three aspects, intellect, emotions and will, have to be integrated and transformed so as to express the great qualities of love, dedication and Abhaya, freedom from fear. These, when integrated with academic education, will prepare young people to face the challenges of a progressing nation with fortitude and confidence.

THE MEANING OF FESTIVALS

The festivals are the visible embodiments of Indian culture. Every festival has a great and abiding significance. Navaratri, the Festival of Art, combines the worship of God in the aspect of Universal Mother, Ramanavami is the expression of a national hero worship of one of the greatest men of all times; Onam in Kerala, Pongal in Tamil Nadu and Makarasankranti in other parts of India during the time of harvest, are thanks-giving festivals invoking the blessings of Mother Earth. However their meaning and significance are being forgotten these days. The schools rarely take note of them, except to declare a holiday. The children think no more of them than as opportunities to be absent from school. The festivals have no links with education. The present educational system is wholly divorced from the cultural effects of the festivals, resulting in a dull routine, devoid of the zest of life, cut adrift from the observance of the mass of the people. Even the little vestiges of culture which children express today are because of the influence of the home, and not the schools. The observance of Festivals by itself will give a wealth of outlook, and inculcate tolerance and respect for all religions in the minds of children. Basic Education, being education for life, must utilise festivals to integrate education with life.

Festivals are of seven types - The *first* group consists of religious observances connected with Maha Shivaratri, Vaikuntha Ekadashi, Vinayaka Chaturthi, Gayatri Japam, Christmas, Easter, Prophet Mohammed's Birthday, Guru Nanak's Birthday, Mahavir Jayanthi. The *second* group pertains to the seasons, reflecting changes in nature, such as Onam, Pongal, the Adi Festival and the Lunar and Solar

Eclipses. The *Third* kind such as Deepavali and Saraswathi Puja are days of rejoicings in all parts of the country accompanied by expressions of art and music. The *Fourth* kind consists of national festivals namely, the Republic Day, the Independence Day and Sarvodaya Day. The *Fifth* is the celebration of the birthdays of national leaders and saints such as Buddha, Sankara, Ramanuja, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Gandhiji. The *sixth* kind of festivals namely, the literary festivals include the birthdays of Thiruvalluvar, Kambar, Tulsidas and others. The United Nations Day, the Human Rights Day, the World Health Organisation Day, and the Red Cross Day constitute the *Seventh* kind of festivals. The celebration of the festivals helps children to develop an international outlook and inculcates in them a spirit of universal brotherhood in addition to enlightening them about the world wide organisations and their great ideals.

The purely religious festivals form only a small proportion of the vast number of festivals. The emphasis, in a large majority of the festivals, is on art, music, dancing, joy, national consciousness and exchange of gifts, ideals of devotion and service. Utilisation of festivals for purposes of education is essential for the children to develop a healthy body and mind. The festival days, far from being declared holidays, should be the days when schools work in full strength, not for the usual routine work, but for understanding the implications of the festivals and through them the cultural background and traditions of India.

Utilising Festivals for Education

The festivals indicating the harvest and the change of seasons are significant ones. Boys and girls living in towns are rarely aware of the exhilarating effect of the change of seasons which these festivals indicate. To celebrate Pongal is

to enjoy the harvest as well as to thank the Almighty for His blessings for the supply of food throughout the year. Children should be taken on excursions to the countryside so that they can come into contact with Nature. They must learn to share in the national rejoicings found in the villages and rural homes.

A celebration to which the agriculturist attaches great importance in Tamil Nadu is Mattu Pongal (meaning pongal of the cattle) when offerings are made to the cattle, which are indispensable helpers of man in his basic industry agriculture. In addition to providing him with working power, they also provide him with milk and manure. On Mattu pongal day man acknowledges that help and expresses his gratitude to the cattle. The cattle are bathed and their horns painted with gay colours. Offerings of food are made to them. The celebration signifies the brotherhood that man sees in other creatures and the gratitude he expresses to them for providing him with companionship in work. If the children can participate in all these ceremonies and understand the sentiments underlying them, they will receive education which is not found in the class-room. These experiences will inspire them with a sense of comradeship and provide exercise to the body and mind. Similarly observances during the Lunar and Solar Eclipses can be used to explain the movements of the sun, earth and the moon, together with study of the planets.

Festivals such as Saraswati Puja and Deepavali are celebrated throughout India. The former is mainly the festival for those undergoing formal, academic education, and so Saraswati Puja can be celebrated in all educational institutions. The ceremonial worship may not be shared by members of all religions, but all can certainly participate in the cultural and artistic aspects of the festival. This

festival has a universal character. On this day books and instruments that men use in daily life such as the knife, the scythe, the plough and the pen, old instruments of self-defence such as clubs and spears are assembled for worship. In many village schools, children, rich and poor, bring offerings from their homes according to their economic status. All these are mixed and offered to the Goddess of Learning, for in her presence all are equal and the offerings are shared by all. In addition, 'kirtans', 'bhajans', 'dramas, dances, and similar activities are organised. These cultural activities provide tremendous scope for self-expression and training in community effort. They bring out the creative abilities of the pupils and contribute towards developing leadership. The celebration provides each one opportunities for growth and self-expression, not in competition, but according to one's capabilities and in cooperation with one another.

Educationists in other countries are trying to create 'projects' for the education of their children, but India which has a variety and abundance of colourful festivals, does not make sufficient use of them. These festivals need not be confined to old orthodox observances. Sports, contests, singing and orchestra, literary and art competitions and many other activities can be included in these celebrations according to the abilities of the children and the conditions of the surroundings.

National celebrations such as Independence Day are of great importance to the country in bringing all people together. But in many schools, their significance is not adequately explained to the pupils. As these days are holidays for schools, they lose the opportunities of learning about them. Independence was not achieved in a day. It was the result of over 60 years of national struggle, built by the sacrifice of the lives of hundreds of thousands of men and women in all parts of this

great country. To whatever part of the country one may belong, all are children of this great country. Freedom is not for the weak or the careless. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. To die for a cause is a great thing. But to live for it, namely, a lifetime of devotion and service for the country, is greater and more glorious. Boys and girls in schools and colleges should feel and cultivate the zest for a devoted life. To paraphrase an English saying: "who lives if India dies, who dies if India lives". National Days should not only be celebrated as days of victorious achievement, but as days of dedication and service. While there is legitimate reason for congratulating ourselves on what has already been achieved, the national days must remind us of things that have still to be done. Eradication of poverty, misery and ignorance throughout the country, and provision of opportunities for all, are the major tasks to be achieved. Every citizen must dedicate himself to these objectives on these memorable days and contribute to National Integration.

Hero-worship is characteristic of the human mind. Young adolescent minds should be exposed to the lives and personalities of leaders whom they can admire and follow. All expressions of power and strength are worshipped by the young. Of these, none is more powerful than that class of men who have moved the world from time to time. There have been great emperors like Alexander and Caesar. Few people, but historians, know more than their names today. Fewer know of their lives. But greater than these have been the great saviours of men whose names have been immortalised. They have moulded the lives of millions of men and women for thousands of years. Such is their strength and power that from their lives and work millions draw their sustenance to the present day. Rama and Krishna of pre-historic times, Buddha, Christ and Mohammed in the historic age, Sankara, Ramanuja,

Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi in the modern age belong to this category. Their lives will continue to be an inspiration for thousands of years in the future. If children in schools and colleges are to be inspired by high ideals, and shape themselves on the rock-bed of purity, daring and immense strength, it can only be through study of the lives of these great personalities. Their birthdays should be celebrated by re-telling the stories of their lives, the dangers they faced, the tremendous odds they had to overcome and the efforts they had to make before attaining their objectives.

Many of the great heroes began their lives as ordinary men, with common human weaknesses, but with vision, purity indomitable will, a life of love, devotion and service, they reached the peak of achievement. They are not distant personalities beyond human reach, but are men of human flesh and blood, who by dint of persistent work reached the highest stages of human endeavour, a stage which others can also, achieve through hard work and faith. The celebration of their birthdays should inspire faith and stimulate children to tremendous efforts.

The literary kind of festival is familiar to all countries. Celebration of the days of the great men of letters like Thiruvalluvar, Kambar, Kalidas, Thulsidas, Tagore, Thiagaraja and others goad people to study their great works, which have shaped the lives of generations of men and women. Studies of the writings and the speeches they had delivered must encourage them. Their teachings are not for mere scholastic study or literary appreciation, but for moulding one's character and life.

The international festivals have become part of every nation. Today a country cannot keep herself aloof and outside the reach of the world currents of thought and life. Nations

cannot surround themselves with uncrossable barriers. There is an increased consciousness of the need for co-operation between countries for purposes of mutual peace and benefit. Narrow national prejudices must be eschewed and ideals of world brotherhood developed. The atomic and hydrogen bombs have made national borders and barriers small and vulnerable. Cultivation of feelings of world brotherhood is the only way to save humanity from mutual destruction. These ideals can be inculcated in children through such celebrations as the United Nation Day, the Human Rights Day, World Health Organisation Day, the Red Cross Day, etc.

Education is not mere intellectual understanding. Education of the emotions is an equal, if not more important part of wholesome education. Mere intellectual education is liable to make man selfish, self centred and cynical. But education of the emotions gives him the right social perspective. Festivals give opportunities for this necessary aspect of education.

Another aspect of festivals is their close link with the community. Schools are not islands in society. They are integral parts of community life. The foreigners who organised schools did not know the Indian way of life and so schools under them became cut off entities, out of touch with the life of people, regulated by a code of their own. But today the situation is different. The schools must become community centres. They must provide opportunities to pupils and teachers for community service. The students and the teachers in schools should have the exhilaration of serving social needs. The festivals during which tens of thousands of people gather offer endless opportunities for social service. Such places of festivals and pilgrimage exist throughout the country. When large numbers come together, sanitation,

water supply, rendering first-aid, helping women and children, maintaining orderly traffic etc. pose difficult problems. The students of neighbouring schools and colleges must organise themselves and help in these matters. Training in social service and citizenship can be acquired by organising such services. These are, learning-by-doing as applied to the science of Social Service.

In the evolution of character and the inculcation of self-confidence and faith, there is nothing more effective than trust and work. Thirukkural says: "Select the proper man and having done so, trust him completely". There is nothing like opportunities of work to mould adolescent minds. The muscles become stronger with exercise, lungs become healthier with hard breathing, the mind becomes sharper through effort and wills become strengthened by facing difficulties and solving them. Mere books, reading and writing, do not provide the varied exercises necessary for the development of the body, mind and intellect. Opportunities for work and a judicious combination of work and knowledge can help towards full development of the young. Since Festivals supply the much needed educational opportunities, every school should take steps to deploy them wisely.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF YOUTH

Anybody who is young need not necessarily be a youth. There are many 'old' people among the youth. Youth means strength, determination, alertness, vivacity and confidence to do different types of work. Whether the tasks are humble or of great magnitude they must be done with the right conviction efficiently.

Youth does not pertain to the physical build. The psychologists say that there are two kinds of 'ages' - the age of the body and the age of the mind. There are old people who are young. Freedom fighters, by their strength, sacrifice and steadfastness, achieved freedom which could not otherwise be got. Their will power alone was responsible for great achievements, the harvest of which the present generation is reaping. Free India is the gift they have given the nation. As a free country India is honoured all over the world. The Freedom Fighters went through living death. That was the spirit of youth-what they faced was the challenge of youth.

Today the challenges the youth face are of different dimensions. They are, to make India great, united and prosperous. In spite of the differences in language, caste, creed, wealth and poverty, we are a mighty nation. Nothing can shake India if the people are united in thought and deed.

Youth should think about the following questions?

- 1) How can we build a united India?
- 2) How can we serve the poor?

The youth must be conscious of the problems of the country. The future is theirs. The country will be as great as the youth make it. If young people are strong, daring

and dedicated to service, disregarding wealth, they can achieve great things for the country. Swami Vivekananda said that only young men and women are needed to develop the country.

How does one make oneself strong? People who believe that they are strong are strong. Union is strength. In order to conserve and use strength meaningfully youth should not fritter away their energy on dissipating thoughts, trifles, strifes and petty desires. Those people who concentrate alone are able to do great things.

Man grows when he works with joy. Whatever the age those who concentrate on higher ideals are the youth. Youth should practise cultivating love, for love binds and gives strength. Jealousy, hatred and indifference are negative qualities which destroy human values. Youth should cultivate positive values that will help them achieve great things in life. They should be assets to the nation and not liabilities. This is possible only through channelling the energies of youth towards constructive work and dedicated service to all.

YOUTH-THE SHAPERS OF HUMAN DESTINY

The problems of modern youth are many. Owing to the purposeless education he receives, he feels that he is drifting in society, unsure of his own future. Today, more than ever before, there is violence and unrest everywhere. The newspapers are full of strikes, thefts, kidnappings and violence on women and children. These do not provide the youth with the ideals necessary for life. In the Schools and Colleges there exists no mutual love and respect between students and teachers, that can build character and confidence. Youth finds that teachers who should guide him in living a life of good ideals, are themselves resorting to strikes and neglecting their duties regardless of the welfare of students. In the towns, where there are not many playgrounds to play, the only recreation available to the youth is the cinema which is full of sex and violence. Research has proved that many youth resort to thefts and house-breaking induced by what they see in the cinema. In public life youth sees the unedifying sight of politicians highly placed openly resorting to corruption, thus setting very bad examples to the youth of the land.

Under these circumstances the youth is confused and frustrated, not knowing which way to go or from whom to seek guidance. Youth has plenty of energy; youth has the idealism and the desire to do something great for himself and for his country, but he feels helpless.

In the midst of all this confusion there exists a call which has been inspiring generations of young men and women to great ideals and action, backed by purity and selfless service, particularly to the poor and the needy; a call for dedicated service. In the modern age this call of the spiritual heritage has been delivered by Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi.

In every age and in every country, at times of crisis, it is the youth that has arisen and moulded the destiny of nations and peoples. A youth who would be capable of moulding the destiny of mankind would be, pure in heart, clear in brain, grounded in truth scientific in temper, unselfish in motivation, fearless and strong, uncaught in the traps of narrowness, smallness, rooted firmly in his faith, free from bigotry of any kind, but respectful to all authentic religions; inspired by the noble ideals of self-giving, respect for what is good, great, abiding and life-giving in tradition, sensitive to the pain and suffering of all those who suffer and need succour, ready to work steadily in a balanced manner wholly with head, heart and hand to make available the best opportunities to all for the fulfilment of the values of life such as righteousness, wealth, pleasures of life, spiritual illumination, and a great vision to achieve this ideal.

There were two great men in Indian history who in their youth were fired with these ideals. One was Buddha who lived 2500 years ago. When he was born sages predicted that if the child chose to live in this world like any house holder, he would become an emperor, commanding great power. But if he chose to renounce this world, he would become the emperor of the spirit, entering into the hearts of millions of people. Buddha knew about this prophecy and about the choice. He was a prince endowed with everything, wife, child, wealth and pleasures. He was deeply beloved of his father who was grooming him to be the next king. By the time he was twentynine the second prophecy came to his mind. 'I shall become an emperor, not of this material world, but of the spirit,' he thought. And that was a tremendous resolution that he made. What did he achieve by this renunciation of his throne? He entered into the hearts of millions of people in Asia during the next thousand years and is still inspiring millions of people all over the world.

The second example is of our own times. Narendranath, as Swami Vivekananda was called when he was young, was very idealistic, courageous and fearless, physically fit and had a scientific spirit. Two pictures of greatness came to his mind. One was of a very successful man of the world, doing wonderful work as a householder, a citizen, and a lawyer even as his father was. And the other, a picture of a wandering monk possessing nothing but God, doing lasting good to humanity. Day after day these two pictures dominated his mind and it was Sri Ramakrishna who finally shaped the course of his life. Vivekananda became a man of God. He brought, and still brings, strength, manliness and cheer to millions of people in the East and the West. He created a new Order of monks who will live for thousands of years to come helping the poor and the down trodden and the youth to achieve the great ideals of love and service.

Every Youth can Shape a Great Destiny

All young people can cherish these two dreams for shaping their own lives. They must consider what they could do with the tiny organic energy system that they possess. Today India needs all young people to nourish this kind of dreaming and if they do, they will get immense spiritual guidance. The question before each one is, 'Shall I have a small petty dream of petty pleasures or shall I grow to make a lasting contribution to our people and country and in that process achieve lasting joy and happiness?'

It is here that the great science of religion comes into the picture. Character development is the greatest contribution of the science of religion. Religion does not mean static piety, for there can be any amount of evil along with mere observance of ceremonials which goes in the name of piety. Real religion is dynamic humanism. In spiritual growth and development

which is the product of the science of religion, crude energy gets transformed into compassion, spirit of service, high character energy and mighty strength. This transformation, of training the energy of youth, channelising it for the benefit of man, is what is needed in India today. That is the only way to banish poverty, to bring the best out of human nature. Scientific religion teaches the method to discipline and to channelise the crude energy of youth into something great and noble. It is here that Hinduism has a profound message to India and to the rest of the world.

DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY

Personality does not mean physical appearance. Some of the greatest personalities of the world, who have wielded tremendous power over millions of men, have not had a very prepossessing appearance. Napoleon was of less than average height. Abraham Lincoln was by no means a beautiful person. Milton was blind. Tamurlane was lame and Roosevelt was a cripple. History is full of examples of women who were not very beautiful, yet commanded the loyalties of men and affected the lives of thousands of people for good or evil.

Therefore, personality is something beyond the body. It is a combination of many qualities, which results in tremendous power or influence. Strength, courage, firmness, ability to inspire people to trust and follow them are some of the qualities common to all men and women of outstanding personalities. Personality is the sum total of all biological and acquired dispositions, impulses, tendencies and instincts of the individuals. "It is revealed in his habits, thought and expression, attitudes and interests, his manner of acting and his personal philosophy of life.

The force of personality does not emanate from the intellect, as there are many intellectual persons who do not command the respect of people. It emanates from character, that is, those who are wedded to certain principles, command some respect. In the early days of Gandhiji's appearance in Indian political life, Lord Reading who met him wrote to his son: 'He has a very ordinary appearance. I will miss him in a crowd and not notice him. But when he begins to speak there is a tremendous power in his words and it is difficult to resist him.'" Mahatma Gandhi had a most ordinary physical appearance; his intelligence was not above average. The

tremendous power Gandhi had over millions of men and women, and his friends and foes alike was due to his devotion to Truth and Non-violence, his complete identification with the poor and depressed of all lands and for all the best aspirations of India. In a way he represented every Indian's aspiration of freedom. In addition, the quality of love towards all and absence of hatred even towards his enemies gave him an identity towards all living objects. This was the source of all his power.

Swami Vivekananda has made some the following statements in the matter of development of personality.

“We know that the greatest power is lodged in the fine; not in the coarse. We see a man take up a huge weight, we see his muscles swell, and all over his body we see signs of exertion, and we think the muscles are powerful things. But it is the thin thread-like things, the nerves, which bring power to the muscles; the moment one of these threads is cut off from reaching the muscles, the muscles are not able to work at all”.

The Swami illustrates this by a beautiful story. “There was once a minister to a great king. He fell into disgrace. The king, as a punishment, ordered him to be shut up on the top of a very high tower. This was done, and the minister was left there to perish. The minister had a faithful wife, who came to the tower at night and called to her husband to know what she could do to help him. He told her to return to the tower the following night and bring with her a long rope, some stout twine, pack thread silken thread, a beetle, and little honey. Wondering much, the good wife obeyed her husband and brought him the desired articles. The husband directed her to attach the silken thread firmly to the beetle, then to smear its horns with a drop of honey and to set

it free on the wall of the tower with its head pointing up ward. She obeyed all these instructions and the beetle started on its long journey. Smelling the honey ahead, it slowly crept onward in the hope of reaching the honey, until at last it reached the top of the tower, when the minister grasped the beetle and got possession of the silk thread. He then told his wife to tie, at the other end, the pack thread, and after he had drawn up the pack thread, he repeated the process with the stout twine, and lastly with the rope. The rest was easy. The minister descended from the tower by means of the rope and made his escape”.

This story illustrates that the greater power is lodged in the fine rather than in the gross. What is the meaning of fine and gross? By ‘gross’ Swami Vivekananda means material power and violence, and by ‘fine’ he means the qualities of love, truthfulness, consideration for others, adherence to principles without regard to material motives or personal gains.

Secondly, Swami Vivekananda claims that Raja Yoga has discovered the laws which develop personality and that by proper attention to those laws and methods one can grow and strengthen his personality. Raja Yoga consists of eight stages. They are the practice of Yama, which includes non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-receiving of any gifts, Niyama, meaning cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study and self-surrender to God; Asana, or posture, Pranayama, or control of prana; Pratyahara, or restraint of the senses from their objects; Dharana, or fixing the mind on a spot, Dhyana, or meditation, and Samathi or super-consciousness.

Swami Vivekananda said, “We are what our thoughts are. Thoughts live, they travel far; and so take care of what you think”. The size of one’s personality and power is determined by the cause or object with which one is identified.

If one is identified with one's small family, his powers don't extend much further. But if any one identifies himself with the people of his country, the poor and depressed people, one sees the magic effect of millions of these people identifying themselves with him. His personality grows with his selfless love and his identification with the masses. The great prophets like Buddha and Christ identified themselves with the whole of humanity by their love, and their personality inspires millions of people even today to follow them. The more selfless one becomes in living for the aspirations of the people, the more one's personality grows.

Building the personality of children is not high philosophy or astronomy, but a practical and day - to-day work, which is very important for the future of the children and the progress of the nation.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural Development aims towards eradication of poverty and unemployment, which are the biggest problems facing the country. Nearly 40 to 70 per cent of people are living in various levels of sub-economic level, without enough food, clothing and shelter.

The characteristic features of an under developed country like India are (a) Increase of population, (b) Greater importance to Industrial development depending on capital intensive technology imported from developed countries which does not require unskilled labour; (c) Persistence of mass poverty inhibiting the growth of the market.

A combination of labour intensive agricultural, labour using minor development works agriculturally oriented small-scale industry, use of labour intensive techniques with low capital requirements, and an atmosphere of self-reliance is necessary to find proper solutions to the poverty situation. This means that establishing a scientific agriculture and agro industries, proper infrastructure and building local enthusiastic leadership are necessary.

The problem of translating scientific and technological knowledge into realities and achievements, has socio-political dimensions. It is, important to draw a clear distinction between two categories of problems: (a) those which can be solved using existing knowledge; and (b) those where research and generation of new knowledge is essential.

High scientific technology is certainly necessary in areas such as new varieties of seeds, nitrogen-fixation through biological or chemical methods, biological control of pests,

photo-synthesis, new uses for various local plants and other materials, recycling of waste products, new sources of energy, improvement in the productivity of soils, better understanding of parasitic diseases, fertility control, spinning and weaving techniques, rural housing etc. However, the fulfilment of basic needs of food, health, housing, fuel, water supply, sanitation and basic education is largely dependent on the use of existing knowledge and expertise. Recent progress in agriculture has underlined the contributions that science and technology can make to national development. It is important to devise instrumentalities for corresponding commitments in the science and technology sector and a strategy for harnessing more intensively the capability which exists on a wider front.

Science and technology efforts have to be reoriented and geared to the imperatives of development of rural areas which account for eighty per cent of the population. The tasks are manifold. The productivity of artisans and craftsmen in rural areas must be enhanced by upgrading existing processes, tools and techniques and improving people's understanding of the technological content and the simple new processes and techniques. Science must identify and utilise local natural resources such as agricultural wastes, solar energy human wastes etc. Agro-industries have to be developed, water supply and sanitation improved and health delivery services strengthened. Science must provide a new philosophy enabling man to rise to his full stature.

Universities will have to undertake programmes for enhancing the scientific outlook, knowledge and skills of workers in existing voluntary agencies, and training a large number of young people in the new techniques. Universities will also have to reorient some of their educational programmes,

including those in technology and management, to serve the needs of decentralised development and to prepare the youth to face the challenges of development.

Some of the work done in this area by Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya and Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College includes, Introduction of low cost improvised science kits for Balwadis, Elementary and High Schools; Nutrition Education in Schools; Solving the problem of malnutrition by finding through research a good low cost protein source from leaves; Evolution of a low cost weaning food and a low cost balanced diet from locally available material within the purchasing capacity of the rural poor; Research in utilisation of gobar gas; Experiments with the hay-box, an inexpensive labour and fuel saving device; Experiments in the use of solar energy for cooking; and finding ways for cutting costs in rural housing.

In some fields, there is considerable knowledge output from the laboratories, but the problem is that they have not been adopted widely. The findings of research must reach the rural community. The problems faced are;

The proven scientific-agricultural practices are not adopted in large areas in various parts of the country, particularly in the backward and tribal tracts.

Water management techniques suggested by the Research Stations have not been adopted, even while large areas are suffering from insufficient water resources which can be better utilised.

Post-harvest technologies, which the experts claim can save nearly 20% of our national produce from avoidable waste on the field and in the home have not been adopted by the people at large.

The recommendations of the dry land research stations have more or less continued to be on paper and have not been adopted in spite of the fact 70% of the dry agricultural land, if made more productive, can make a significant contribution to the economy.

They meet more men than women and so rarely understand the difficulties and needs of women folk.

They meet the users of resources like members of cooperatives rather than non-members and adopters of new practices and so are not able to pin point the reasons of non-adoption.

Any one of these biases on their own may be serious. But together they systematically lead the observer to perceive rural people as being more prosperous and less deprived than they really are. The prosperity of a male farmer in a project near a roadside to a town may colour the perceptions of scientists and officers. The plight of a poor widow starving and sick in a remote area may never impinge on the conscience of a scientist.

Besides, scientists choose places near their headquarters for reasons of being in sight of the powers that be, and for reasons of prestige and promotion rather than going to far-off corners where their work and services are most needed.

Therefore, conscious efforts to give the necessary orientation and encouragement to the scientists to work amongst the poor in the corners of the country is very necessary if the development processes are to be carried out amongst people where it is most necessary.

NUTRITIOUS MEAL PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN

At 12 noon on July 1, 1982 nearly 5.6 million children sat down in 21,137 Child Welfare Centres (Balwadies) and in 32,370 Primary Schools spread all over the State of Tamil Nadu to partake of the hot nutritious meal served at government cost. Thus was born Tamil Nadu's gigantic "Nutritious Meal Programme for Children" for children in the age range of 2 to 10 years, living below the poverty line—perhaps the most massive nutrition programme of its kind to be undertaken anywhere in the world. This colossal venture, designed to bring about a significant change not only in the health nutrition status of the children but also in the social environment in the rural areas, at a cost of nearly 12 crores of rupees per year. The unique feature of the programme is the feeding of all the needy children from 2 to 14 years of age below the poverty line on all the 365 days of the year. The programme thus gives the 'under fourteen an opportunity to have at least one good meal a day'.

The problem is stupendous. The United Nations Children's Fund says that in the world, 15 million children die every year because of disease, malnutrition, parental ignorance and lack of hygiene. About 50 per cent of these deaths are due to malnutrition associated with the insufficiencies of diet which erode the natural defences of the child against infection. Most of the ailments are triggered by polluted water in the urban slums and villages, while the insanitary industrial environment causes respiratory infections. The role of poverty in this sordid situation is reflected in the fact that the infant mortality rate in poor families is 200 per 1000 in respect of births which are within one year of each other. Where the interval is three or four years, the mortality rate is lower, at 80 per 1000. For preventing deaths due to certain common agents and

sources of infection which can be controlled, the services of specialists are not necessary. The task can be undertaken with a reasonable degree of competence by the para-medical personnel trained for that work. The bigger challenge is however, improving nutritional standards, since the efficiency of the child's defences against infection depends heavily on the prospects of assuring on a continuous basis nutrient rich diets at home or in the school.

The Government of India has been giving serious attention to these matters for the last many years. To consider in depth the problems involved in feeding children especially in schools and in reaching their families, a national seminar was held in the Avinashilingam Home Science College in 1970.

The recommendations were as follows:-

Nutritional Feeding Programmes should be considered as the component of the total development of the children. The economic, health and educational factors should be integrated into all the feeding programmes. Therefore, no feeding programme should be initiated or allowed to continue, unless clean space, equipment and safe water supply are assured.

Nutritional Feeding Programmes should not be regarded as 'charity or relief' programmes. They are fundamentally programmes for development and should be woven into the educational and extension fabric of the community.

In view of the wide diversity of conditions prevailing in the various parts of the country regarding food habits, methods of processing and cooking and preservation, it is desirable that several formulations for infant and child feeding, should be made available and promoted.

Efforts should be taken through nutrition institutions and research centres, to evolve low cost, nutritive, easy to

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prepare supplements prepared out of locally available indigenous food stuffs for the feeding programmes, aimed towards reducing dependency on imported foods. Such foods should be tried out first on selected samples forthcoming, and the benefits derived popularised.

In order to ensure the success of the nutritional feeding programmes in the villages, there should be adequate mechanism to convey to the decision makers and specificity of problems arising at the village levels, such as non-availability of time and resources to the functionaries for implementing the feeding programme, storage, foods, maintenance of records and nutrition education.

Nutrition education should be an integral part of any feeding programme and a continuous process. It should precede, accompany and follow any feeding programme.

Research is needed to spell out for each nutritional feeding programme in the following aspects.

The line of responsibility.

The type of co-ordination necessary, the forms and quantity of foods available and their sources. The forms in which they are acceptable. The cost per head, in terms of foods, transport, storage, cooking, and distribution.

The personnel to carry out the trials in the first instance to determine how much, and in what forms food must be given.

The machinery needed for the organisation, implementation and evaluation of the feeding programmes at the Block-village levels.

The keeping qualities of the food formulas.

The method of motivating, stimulating and involving local participation.

The location of low cost nutritious foods like 'chekurmani leaves and leaf protein and highlighting them in the feeding programmes.

The bringing about of standardisation towards uniformity in the methodology and terminology involved in feeding programmes.

The location and evolution of effective methods for nutrition education.

The economic, nutritional, social and aesthetic benefits of school, community and kitchen gardens, poultry and so on.

Research in this field has led to one major conclusion, namely, to get the maximum benefit out of programmes of School Feeding, Nutrition Education is of the utmost importance. It is heartening to note that with education and training of teachers, parents and children, it can contribute towards national development. It has been proved that imparting nutrition and health concepts through an integrated curricula in the pre-primary and primary schools has brought about improvement in the knowledge, practices and the school teachers. For this purpose it is recommended that nutrition education should be an essential component of school feeding programmes. In the absence of this educational component, they may degenerate into mere feeding programmes, not creating any permanent improvement in the quality of the population.

ERADICATION OF POVERTY

Eradication of Poverty is the most pressing problem in India. Two thousand and five hundred years back the great Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar said that there is nothing so cruel and degrading as poverty, which cuts at the roots of human dignity. Poverty makes a man mean, in human and desperate. It drives him even to sell himself, his wife and children and commit murder for a morsel of food to appease his hunger.

Another kind of poverty keeps people living on the verge of hunger under sub-economic level. These people have no other thought than to get the means of living day to day. Leading a life of misery and illness they have no time to think of anything higher or nobler than making both ends meet. A country in which large masses of population live under such sub-economic conditions can never rise to be a great or glorious nation. Any amount of politics would be of no avail until the masses of India are once again well fed, well educated and well cared for.

Impact of Poverty Amelioration Programme

India has concentrated on Rural Development for over four decades. The Community Development movement was inaugurated with great enthusiasm on October 2, 1952. Many foundations like the Ford and Rockefeller's supported the movement. At the end of nearly 40 years of the various efforts, the number of poor and illiterate persons has increased, income distribution has worsened and the pressure on food resources is higher than at the beginning of Independence. In spite of the five per cent growth, the development strategy has proved inadequate, in the sense that it has resulted in a condition which makes it possible to have Gross National Product growth at five or six per cent, but leaves 40 per

cent of the population at the base to continue to live in the sub-economic level. The Gross National Product has improved but the distribution has worsened.

Profile of in India Poverty

Poverty in India is more a rural problem than urban as 80% of the people living in sub-economic level are in the villages. During the early days of independence, considerable investment was made in large scale industries with the hope that their profits will percolate to the poor in the towns and villages. While these industries have provided considerable employment in the towns, they have not benefited the villagers. Therefore, the towns became rich but the villages continued to remain poor and exploited. The economic rift dividing the rich and the poor has been widening. The concentration of large wealth in a few people has led to their political influence, which has further exploited the poor.

Furthermore, in the rural areas there is more poverty in dry areas which form nearly 70% of the country's agricultural land. Giving employment in the dry areas during the non agricultural season is a very difficult problem.

Another aspect of the poverty scenario is, even in the villages the Harijans, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are poorer than others. Amongst the higher castes poverty is prevalent among the landless labourers, owners of uneconomic holdings and village artisans who have lost their jobs due to the change of the pattern of life of the people. Their uplift has been made more difficult due to their illiteracy and ignorance. The solution lies in comprehensive programmes involving education, health and socio economic rehabilitation.

Efforts taken to Ameliorate Poverty

The Seventh Plan has indicated that the process of economic growth and the anti-poverty programmes have

made some dent in ameliorating poverty. From estimates of the incidence of poverty based on the provisional results of the latest National Sample Survey presented in the 7th Five Year Plan, one can conclude that around 36 million people had crossed the poverty line between 1977-78 and 1983-84

The development strategy of the Seventh Plan and the pattern of growth emerging from it are expected to lead to a further reduction of poverty at an even faster rate. The percentage of population with a consumption standard below the poverty line is expected to come down from an estimated 36.9 per cent in 1984-85, to 25.8 per cent in 1989-90.

The anti-poverty programmes can not be expected to remove poverty on a sustainable basis by themselves. It is only in the framework of an expanding economy and dynamic agricultural sector that a lasting impact on the problem of poverty and under-development can be made. A major task ahead therefore, is to integrate the different beneficiary-oriented programmes, sectoral programmes and area development schemes into a comprehensive development programme in each District and Block, taking into account its specific needs and development potential.

The findings of research in Avinashilingam Institute point out that:

1. The poorest in the villages and urban slums do not have the strength, education and initiative to profit by the poverty ameliorative programmes and benefit by them. It is the well-to-do amongst them that come forward to reap the benefits. Therefore, unless those who are in charge of these programmes make a sincere effort to reach the poorest, the benefits may not reach the poor at all.

2. In the Lab-to-Land programme, in which inputs like good seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and know-how, training for three seasons were provide. All the beneficiaries benefited and produced more, but the poor could not save enough to continue the investment needs of higher productivity, such as purchase of better seeds, fertilizers etc, after the aid was withdrawn because of their consumption needs. But the more well - to - do who could save for investment needs for the next seasons benefited by continuing the improved practices.

3. In development work, it is necessary to educate and train women in the household, especially because women have a vital part in agricultural operations. For improvement of child care, immunisation, environmental sanitation, small savings, family planning, nutrition, social forestry, kitchen garden etc., enlightened participation by women is essential for success.

4. Small-scale labour-using light industries with low capital requirements should be established in the rural areas to supplement employment opportunities in agriculture. Certain light industries are better than others, such, as the processing of agricultural commodities produced in the area concerned, fabrication of inputs for agriculture, such as feeds for cattle, pig and poultry fertilizer mixing plants, small tool making shops and clay, brick and tile works. However, wherever economically feasible, rural industry could also produce consumer goods and infrastructure projects. At the same time considerations of efficiency should not be abandoned to solve the unemployment problem.

5. Attempts need to be made to increase the productivity of men and women workers, especially amongst the landless labourers, marginal farmers and village artisans, to

enable them to get a living wage. To do this a network of non-formal education programmes for spreading literacy and inculcating necessary skills and attitudes will be necessary through the existing infrastructure of Krishi Vigyan Kendra and other schools, colleges, voluntary organisations and social service agencies.

6. A cadre of workers for Rural Development should be trained in skills and necessary attitudes. Institutions doing dedicated service to the rural poor should be approached to give this training. It is important that these workers integrate themselves emotionally with the life and aspirations of the poorest of the poor in the land and learn to work for them with love, humility and understanding.

7. Success rests on a combination of many factors, namely, labour-intensive agriculture; labour-using minor development works; agriculturally-oriented, small-scale, light industry and labour-intensive techniques with low capital requirements. An atmosphere of self-reliance offers the best prospect for developing a self-supporting agriculture which can, in turn, provide the increased incomes and savings for the social overhead facilities and services required for self-sustaining rural development.

Planning and implementation of a programme of self-sustaining rural development needs to receive highest priority. It is necessarily a long-term task which requires continuous effort, farmers support, scientific agriculture, proper infrastructure, financing and building up of local, enthusiastic leadership.

Public cooperation including that of the people in the villages, the block and the beneficiaries, is vital for the success of the poverty amelioration programmes.

Lifting millions of people from the depths of poverty, dirt, illiteracy and ignorance is not an easy task. It cannot be done through government effort alone. The Government does not possess enough resources nor the necessary machinery. This mighty task can be done only with the cooperation of the public and the voluntary social service agencies spread throughout the country. Their work must be tapped, mobilised and integrated with the national effort. The youth force that has emerged with the starting of NCC., Scouts etc., should be utilised for this purpose. They should be inspired to involve themselves in this great task and feel proud about their participation. Those who are in charge of these training programmes should also be trained in Rural Development techniques:

i) Cooperating in Integrated Rural Development/Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme, TRYSEM programme

ii) Implementation of land ceiling and distribution of surplus land.

iii) Enforcement of minimum wages to agricultural labourers.

iv) Service in the cause of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

v) Afforestation, social forestry, development of biogas and alternative energy sources (solar and wind energy, improved chulas)

vi) Promotion of family planning and programmes for women and children in rural areas.

vii) Primary health care; control of leprosy; TB, blindness; preventive health programmes using village resources.

viii) Helping in the efficient running of elementary and middle schools for children, adult education and non-formal education

ix) Promotion of handicrafts, village and cottage industries and

x) Improvement of urban and rural slums, environment and ecological balancing.

The success of IRDP and other poverty amelioration plans depends on the extent of cooperation of the banking institution with whom rests the responsibility of financing individual schemes. The State Government should make sure that there is no political influence or malpractice in the choice of the beneficiaries. State and District level authorities should properly and effectively use all the resources wholly for the benefit of the poor. Identification of those below the poverty line should be done with caution, and in no case the benefit of the scheme should be allowed to flow to the well-off in the community. The viability of the poorest families covered under the programme should be kept under constant watch. Above all, one should not measure the achievements such as the number of milch-cows supplied, amount of subsidies released and credit arrangement made for the target group in physical terms alone. The acid test of the impact should be, how many families could be given integrated programmes for sustainable improvement and what has been the increase in income after their involvement in the programme.

Need for Dedicated Service

The great need for the good performance and success of any movement is dedicated service. Dedicated service is necessary for the good performance of any work. It is much more so in the case of service of the poor and down-trodden. Those who serve the poorest should express love, sympathy

and a clear understanding of the problems. As Swami Vivekananda pointed out, a thousand young men fortified with leonine courage out of their love for the poor can transform the world. He condemned in the strongest terms the educated who at their expense do not come forward to serve them.

HOME SCIENCE AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION

In the olden days education was for the few. The 19th Century saw a new conception of education. It came to be accepted that a certain amount of education was necessary for all the individuals in the state and that the state should compulsorily provide it. For a long time, it was thought not necessary for women to go to schools and colleges. 'Later, they were admitted to higher education but their particular needs were not considered. Early in the present century, the special duties that women perform as the makers of the home and nation, were recognised and with that recognition came the evolution of a curriculum of studies suited to their needs.

More than any other country, in India education for proper management of the home is important, since a very large percentage of women marry at an young age and run their homes. Only a very small number go for careers. But till recently neither the schools nor the universities provided the education women needed. The girls in schools and colleges had to take the same courses as their brothers. The result was that instead of becoming helpful co-partners in living, girls were, in many cases, regarded as costly and unsuitable. They knew Chemistry and Physics, but little about the food they had to prepare and serve; they knew good English, but little about our great cultural traditions; they knew a great deal of Mathematics but knew little to take care of their clothes; they knew the History of England and of the world but did not know how to bring up their children. It is being increasingly recognised now that even for the few women who would like to go to professions, homemaking is an important aspect of their lives. From this point of

view it is essential that they should know those branches of knowledge which will help them in good living. Home Science education is an attempt to provide this much needed knowledge.

Since the idea of Home Science in education began and developed in the United States and other countries of the West, it is natural that text books on Home Science are patterned after the lives of those people. While we should adopt the science and the technological part which are capable of universal application, we should take care to see that we design Home Science courses according to our cultural background and produce something which will assimilate the best in our high spiritual tradition as well as the scientific outlook of the West. This Home Science Girls' High School has been started as a humble effort towards that high objective.

In Tamil Nadu, Home Science was introduced as a bifurcated course of studies in the High Schools in 1948 (when the author was the Minister of Education). It was intended that Home Science should become the main subject of study in all Girls' schools. It is unfortunate that, for various reasons, such a development has not taken place. It is necessary that Home Science becomes one of the core subjects for girls. The Education Department needs to be sized of this matter and take such action as is necessary.

In the University stage, though Home Science was introduced as far back as 1942, out of the 22 colleges for women in this state, only two are offering it for degree courses with provision for a limited number of seats, in spite of a great demand for these courses. Consequently many of our girls have to seek admission in far-off places like Baroda

and Delhi. In view of this Home Science needs to be increasingly introduced in all the High Schools. Then there will be a demand for a large number of teachers. I hope the University and Management of colleges will take note of the changing needs in our society and provide for them.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA - THE MAN

The turn of the 19th century was very important in the cultural history of India. The industrial age and the era of scientific inventions had started in right earnest. The first effects of the scientific and technological age in religion were enormous. Under the tremendous sledge hammer blows of scientific research, the old superstitions were crumbling away like masses of porcelain. It seemed that the surging tide of materialism would sweep away all faith in culture. Two movements appeared on the scene which aimed to save the country from this cultural and religious destruction. One of these was by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who started the Brahmo Samaj Movement. The other was the revival of Sanatana Dharma under the Arya Samaj by Dayananda Saraswathi. While these helped in building up a cultural resistance to a great extent, they could not create the dynamic power needed to arrest the flood of Western materialism.

The first half of the 19th century was faced with people whose confidence had been destroyed by hundreds of years of foreign domination. There were thousands of castes each quarrelling with the other for superiority. Untouchability loomed large. All the social and religious, institutions which once held great and noble purposes, had, degenerated into institutions of tyranny and exploitation. Religion decayed into mere frothy talk with a world of disparity between words and action. Women were neglected and looked upon as objects of lust. People lost their originality and the zest for higher life. The so called educated lost their moorings and became completely anglicised. In 1835 Lord Macaulay declared that India had no worthwhile culture of her own, that all the

books in India were only as many as could be placed in a single shelf, and for the maintenance of the British Empire, as well as to save the Indians, the Britishers should introduce the English way of life in India.

It is perhaps one of the ironies of History that the very next year, in a village, some distance from Calcutta, was born a man who was bound to infuse new life into the dead bones of India and show that India still lived and could contribute towards the spiritual revival of mankind. He was not learned in the ordinary sense of the word. He had received no higher education than village schooling. Neither had he power or wealth. Great prophets are born and grow unknown, unperceived and unthought of; but in course of time they grow into large proportions and become dynamic like an immense tidal wave falling upon society with a force that none can resist. Even so, Sri Ramakrishna who was born in a far off village amongst poor people and who lived in the temple of Dakshineswar dedicated his life to the pursuit of spiritualism.

Swami Vivekananda was his foremost disciple. As a young man, Narendranath as the Swami was then called, was one of the greatest intellectuals of his time. Born in a wealthy family, with all the gifts which man can be heir to such as personal beauty, health and erudition, he was attracted to Sri Ramakrishna, whom he adopted as his spiritual guide and Master. His mission in life was to preach the great message of peace and harmony of all religions expounded by Sri Ramakrishna. When he returned to India after his great success in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 and his triumphal lectures in many cities of the United States of America, he was received with an ovation and enthusiasm fit for an emperor. He became the symbol of

all that was great, glorious and noble in India for the past thousands of years. Millions of people throughout the country heard him and literally worshipped him.

After the death of his great Master, he wandered throughout the length and breadth of India, mostly on foot, and saw for himself, the condition of the country. For nearly fourteen years of his life, he travelled from place to place braving starvation and discomfort. His physical accessories were almost nil, but he dared to live where the thermometer registered thirty degrees below zero. In some places he was treated royally by princes and kings, and in others he was ridiculed and treated with scant courtesy. But he persisted, indifferent to praise and blame, as he has sung in his Song of the Sanyasin:

“Heed then no more, how body lives or goes,
Its task is done, Let Karma float it down;
Let one put garlands on, another kick
This frame, say naught.

“Have thou no home, What home can hold thee, friend ?
The sky thy roof, the grass thy bed, and food
What chance may bring ; well cooked or ill, judge not

“Few may know the Truth. The rest will hate
And scoff at thee, great ; but pay no heed ;
Go thou, the free, from place to place, and help
Them out of darkness, Maya’s veil’

Thus he travelled throughout the country, from the snow clad Himalayas to the warm South, and saw the pitiable condition into which our people had sunk. When he reached the southern most extremity of India, Cape Comorin, he worshipped at the Mother’s temple and retired to a rock further south of the Cape, which was separated from the mainland. Sitting on the last rock of India in the midst of a tumultuous

sea, he meditated on the glorious past of this country, the time that produced the noblest and greatest thoughts which the human mind can conceive, namely the Upanishads, the Gita and the Thirukkural, when all the world came to India, to be taught the highest truths. He contemplated on the later days when India degenerated and lost her freedom during the Mohammedan invasions and the more recent foreign domination by the West, and the pitiable position to which the people had sunk. When he thought, how the children of the rishis had become next door neighbours to beasts, his heart wept and throbbed at the misery and poverty of the great masses. Agony was in his soul, when it occurred to him that those very persons who should have been guardians and teachers were responsible for ill-treating the millions of people, and that the autocracy of the priesthood, the despotism of caste and the terrible divisions created by these in society were responsible for the downfall.

From that moment, he dedicated his life to the service of his country and people, particularly to those who were poor, downtrodden and ill treated by the higher classes. To him religion was no longer a matter of personal realisation of God, but the realisation of God in all living beings, through service to them. Worship no more meant ceremonial offerings and observances in the temples, but consisted in serving humanity and alleviating its sufferings. Out of this meditation grew a new vision of Mother India, rising again to be a great queen among the nations of the world.

It was during the wanderings that he heard about the Parliament of Religions to be held in Chicago in 1983. His friends and admirers, who recognised his great intellect, understanding and erudition, requested him to go to America to participate in it. But he hesitated for he wanted to know the Divine Will. Twice they collected funds and both the

times he had them distributed to the poor. He prayed to his Master for guidance. One night he lay in his bed half asleep, the command came to him in a dream. The Swami saw the figure of his Master Sri Ramakrishna walking into the water of the sea and beckoning him to follow. He construed it as the command of the Master to go, and after getting the blessings of the Holy Mother, prepared to leave India to attend the Parliament of Religions.

The great success that attended him in the Parliament of Religions is part of history. The Parliament consisted of the most distinguished group of men representing all the great religions of the world. Most of them were famous and well known, while he was not known to any. He had spent the previous night on a hay stack. At last, when he was asked to speak, his face glowed with fire. Uttering a silent prayer to Goddess Saraswathi he began his address with the words "Sisters and brothers of America". The result was electrifying. The whole assembly was caught up by a wave of enthusiasm. Everyone was cheering. After this he gave his great message of Harmony of Religions. From that day he became the favourite speaker in the Parliament of Religions. Newspapers paid him glorious tributes. Thousands waited for hours to hear a few words from him. His success in America was assured. He was invited by the highest in the land and treated royally.

But in that hour of glory, when any other person might have been happy in his success, the Swami felt very different. His mind and thoughts were with the poverty stricken millions of India. He cried, 'O Mother! what do I care for name and fame when my motherland remains sunk in utmost poverty? When millions in India die for want of a handful of rice, here they spend millions! Who will raise

the masses of India? Who will give them bread? O Mother! show me the way to help them!" Out of this feeling was born a tremendous will to serve his countrymen.

After his triumphant tour in the United States and England Swamiji returned to India to give the message of faith, hope and strength to his people. Those speeches, (Published under the title 'Colombo to Almora') continue to be one of the most glorious literatures of modern India. Such were their charm and force that Romain Rolland, the great French savant, on reading them after thirty years, wrote as follows, 'His words are great musical, phrases in the style of Beethoven; stirring rhythms, like the march of Handel's choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are, through the pages of books at thirty years, distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. What shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning, words, they issued from the lips of the Swami'.

He not only had a great vision of India's glorious future, but also a mighty personality, which could inspire thousands of young men and women to renounce everything for the service of people. He gathered around him hundreds of brilliant disciples, who would follow him to the world's end, in the pursuit of the ideals he had placed before them. With them as the nucleus, he built up a well knit organisation, which is now known to the world as 'Sri Ramakrishna Math and Mission'. It is today perhaps one of the biggest Missions of its kind in India, with over one hundred and twenty centres throughout India, and in many other countries, dedicated to service. The scope of its service includes educational, medical relief work during plague, cholera, earthquakes, riots, famines etc. The mission is but a physical projection of the spiritual ideology of service entertained by the great Swamiji.

Swami Vivekananda was a diamond of many facets; while immersed in our own great ancient culture, he was also well versed in the Western philosophies and religion. In addition, he had also a highly scientific background. He was the meeting point of not only the East and West, but also of the ancient and modern culture of India. Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems. He was a fine man·imposing, full of poise and dignity, sure of himself and his mission and, at the same time, full of dynamic and fiery energy and passion to uplift India. The result was he delivered a much needed message to India and the world.

TAGORE THE TEACHER

Rabindranath Tagore was a great poet, artist and thinker. He delved deep in the highest spiritual literature of India and tried to assimilate the universal message they exhume. He was not deeply read in the academic sense, but in his own family, there was an atmosphere of the learning of the Upanishads and the Gita. These he gradually absorbed in his own personality as he grew. He was a poet and a writer, but his ivory tower would not satisfy him. He wanted to create a place, where children could grow amidst nature in a natural manner, in harmony with their surroundings. His dream materialised into Vishwa Bharati in shantiniketan. He wanted to evolve an educational system suited to the genius of India's ancient culture and at the same time provide for a universality of spirit.

According to Tagore, "the highest education is that, which does not give merely information, but makes our life in sympathy and harmony with all existence". "But we find, he continues, "this education of sympathy is not only systematically ignored in schools but it is severely repressed. From our very childhood habits are formed and knowledge is imparted in such a manner that our life is weaned away from the beginning of our days. We rob the child of his earth to teach him geography, of language to teach him grammar. His hunger is for the Epics, but he is supplied with chronicles of facts and dates. He was born in the human world, but is banished into the world of living gramophones. Child-nature protests against such calamity with all its power of suffering, only to be subdued into silence by punishment.

The object of education is to give man the unity of truth. Formerly, when life was simple, all the different elements of man were in complete harmony. But when there

came the separation of the intellect from the spiritual and the physical, the school education put the entire emphasis on the intellect and the physical side of man. We devote our sole attention to giving children information, not knowing that by this emphasis we are accentuating a break between the intellectual, physical and the spiritual life”.

The poet cherished greatly the thought of the ancient Ashram schools called Tapovans of which mention is made in ancient Indian literature. These places were neither schools nor monasteries, in the modern sense of the world. They consisted of homes, where lived with them, men whose object was to see the world in God and to realise their own life in Him. Though they lived outside society, they were to society, what the sun is to the planets, the centre from which it receives its life and light. In the Ashrams boys grew up in an intimate vision of eternal life before they were thought fit to enter the state of house-holder. In ancient India the school existed where there was life itself. The students were brought up, not in the academic atmosphere of mere scholarship and learning, or in the maimed life of monastic seclusion, but in the atmosphere of living aspiration. They took the cattle to pasture, collected firewood, gathered fruit, cultivated kindness to all creatures, and grew in their spirit with their own teachers’ spiritual growth.

The life in Tagore’s own school was patterned on the life of the ancient Tapovans as much as possible. At Shantiniketan, except during rains, classes were held in the open. The pupils were free to frisk about, run, climb trees and enjoy themselves in their natural setting. The open air, the religious emphasis, the close relationship between the teachers and the pupils, which was traditional in the ancient system were to be found in this new school. The pupils rose, before dawn, made up their beds and attended to the drawing

of water and other household duties. This fostered the spirit of self-help. The poet wanted to inculcate habits of independence, strength and self-reliance in his pupils, and so he made it self governing by the pupils themselves. They had their own dairy farm, post-office, hospital, temple and workshop. They held their own courts and inflicted their own punishments. But no corporal punishment was allowed. Games were played vigorously and with good success. The boys also went out to the surrounding villages to run night schools for the labouring classes and lower castes. He cultivated in them the habit of keeping the surroundings clean, orderly and beautiful. The poet believed in meditation and set aside fifteen minutes in the morning and evening for that purpose. 'I insist', he said, 'on this period of meditation, not however expecting the boys to be hypocrites and to make believe they are meditating. But I do insist that they remain quiet and exert their powers of self-control'.

Tagore considered the main advantage of this Ashrama education to be the opportunity it afforded for revitalising the principles of cooperation in daily life. In order to cultivate these qualities he said, "It is essential that in the early days of education, we are not burdened with unnecessary paraphernalia. Our sensibilities become coarsened when we are solely occupied with material things. Beauty and order are things of the mind and the mind must be delivered not only from inertia and ineptitude, but also from the greed for material goods. Children need training in self help from early childhood. In our country this aspect of education is sadly neglected. Let the child never tire in his efforts to give play to his creative joy, by inventing things, with the help of whatever material lies ready at hand. Let him, at the same time, find delight in voluntarily performing the tasks, calculated to add to the health, happiness and comfort of the community".

In the sophisticated upper class of those days, immersed as they were in the false notions of caste and lacking a sense of the dignity of labour, there was a resistance to the type of education in which the boys were asked to do all the work connected with their community living. When this came to the notice of the poet, he gave them a very spirited reply, in his own inimitable poetic way:

“There are men who think that by the simplicity of living, introduced in my school, I preach the idealisation of poverty which prevailed in the medieval ages. But seen from the point of view of education, should we not admit that poverty is the school in which man has his first lessons and his best training? Even a millionaire’s son is born helplessly and has to begin his lesson of life from the beginning. He has to learn to talk like the poorest of children, though he has means to afford to be without the appendage of legs. Poverty brings us into complete touch with life and the world, for living richly is living mostly by proxy, and thus living in a world of lesser reality. This may be good for one’s pleasure and pride, but not for one’s education. Wealth is a golden cage in which the children of the rich are bred into artificial deadening of their powers. Therefore, in my school, much to the disgust of the people of expensive habits, I had to provide for this great teacher - this bareness of furniture and materials, not because it is poverty, but because it leads to personal experience of the world”.

Nature has endowed children and youth with tremendous vitality. They have the God-given curiosity, the wish to know things for themselves. These in the opinion of the poet should not be suppressed with unnecessary taboos which are applicable to adult society. In the ordinary class-room bookish education, the energy is sought to be restrained by fear or punishment. But provision of useful activities in which children

can participate helps to divert their pent up force into useful and constructive channels. He agreed with Gandhiji about the use of such activities in the growth of the child. But he was against using these activities for learning a craft and for an economic purpose or for utilising it for maintaining the school. He wanted, as he said, 'the children to be pure, but not puritanical'.

In his scheme of education, he considered the teacher as the very heart and centre of education. To quote his own words, "He is a man and no machine. He is actively human, because his main concern is to help humanity to realise its goal. He considers it his duty to baptise the heart and mind of his disciples with the living waters of his own penance. The disciple draws inspiration from his immediate conduct. This association with a mind perpetually awake is the most valuable element of education in an Ashram. The born teacher is the man in whom the primal child responds readily to the call of children". Satish Chandra Roy was such a teacher who dedicated his life to teaching the pupils of Shantiniketan.

The poet saw in the country numerous instances of persons with dead minds ascending to the highest peaks of academic success. Many of the college graduates, while they received, distinction in degrees, had lost the spirit of service. He wanted an education in which the students should show an eagerness for establishing a workable human relationship with their immediate environment. He wanted the students and staff of educational institutions to shed their complacency and apathy. Apathy is a kind of death of the mind. 'Nations which have established their power and influence all over the world are irresistible in their curiosity. They desire to know everything under the sun. No country is so far, no time is so remote, no subject so obscure, as to be, beyond the sweep of their minds, he said. He wanted the educational

institutions to develop in pupils, the spirit of enquiry, the daring and strength which will help them triumph over ordeals.

Speaking about the qualities of life and forbearance which are necessary for a good teacher, Rabindranath Tagore said, 'None but those who have the spirit of forbearance are fit to be teachers. Patience comes naturally to persons who are affectionately inclined towards children. One of the serious handicaps that teachers have to face is that they have to deal with people, who are not their equals in power and authority, For little or no reason and for reasons imaginary rather than real, it is quite easy and possible for a teacher to lose patience with his students, to insult, ridicule and even punish them. Children come to their mothers' lap, weak helpless and ignorant. The only guarantee of their protection is the abundant love in the heart of the mother; even so is the teacher. Whenever one sees instances of severe punishment inflicted on students, more often than not it is the teachers who are to be blamed. In the educational as in the political sphere, a reign of terror spells the utter inefficiency of power. To forgive is the privilege of the brave. Where tolerance is lacking, there is bound to be a lack of moral strength.

Tagore lived at a time when the freedom movement under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi was at its height. While thousands of young men and women underwent voluntary suffering in the cause of Independence, Tagore, in his turn, inspired them by his patriotic ideas embedded in rich and eloquent poetry. He was no politician but he was too sensitive and devoted to the freedom of his country to remain always in the ivory tower of his poetry, song and drama. He gave a new and lofty meaning to Indian Nationalism, epitomised in his poem "Where the mind is Without Fear".

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free”.
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls:
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake”.

AVVAIYAR

Avvaiyar is one of the greatest literary figures in ancient India. She was one of the many distinguished women saints whose names have lived through the ages down to the present times. Tamil is one of the oldest living languages in the world. The beginning of Tamil dates back to more than 4,000 years. Old Tamil literature, assigned to 1000 B C, is as profound, varied and interesting as the most highly developed modern literature of any country. It is said that the land of the Tamils extended beyond the present borders of South India. A whole subcontinent which existed then has been submerged in the sea, according to the references in the most ancient Tamil literature available today. Recent geological observations support the view that many thousands of years ago India was connected by land with Africa and that the land extended to the south of the present Cape Comorin.

From time to time many languages have existed in various parts of the world, flourished in their own times, and disappeared in the course of time. There were the Sumerian, the Assyrian and other civilizations and each developed a rich language, which decayed later. Sanskrit, itself one of the most ancient and the mother of many of the modern Indian languages, while it possesses some of the highest literature in the world, is now a literary language.

The case of Tamil, however, is peculiar. Born many thousands of years back and possessing one of the richest literatures from ancient times, Tamil has continued to be current. Ancient Tamil literature reveals an enlightened civilization, rich in culture, expounding the highest view of life. One of the most famous personalities in ancient Tamil Literature

is Avvaiyar. According to records there were two people of the name. One was a contemporary of the great Thirvalluvar, the author of the famous Tirukkural, one of the greatest ethical books of all times dating back to a few centuries before Christ, and the other belonged to the seventh century A.D. The earlier Avvaiyar, was the more outstanding personality, the later one having taken the name of her distinguished predecessor. The life of this great saint coming from many centuries back, is shrouded in legends. Nevertheless she was a great woman, full of wisdom, human sympathy and a friend and a well wisher of all people, from mighty kings to the humblest men and women.

Avvaiyar became an orphan while a child and was found and brought up by a poet. At sixteen she became famous for her beauty and many suitors came to marry her. But she was devoted to her religion and literary pursuits and hence she refused marriage. Many kings and nobles resist the handsome offers of rich personages, and they decided to marry her. A neighbouring prince. Faced with this dilemma and prayed before her chosen deity for help. She prayed for help to free her from this predicament. She prayed for help to take away her youth and beauty and to help her fully dedicate her life to the service of God. It is said that God heard her request and she became an old woman with a common appearance. She refused from proposals of marriage and continued her World preaching words of wisdom. This perhaps is a legend; but the truth is that It is a truism to say that one can reach the highest knowledge only by undivided consecration to that cause. The joys of youth and beauty must be sacrificed for the

pursuit of the highest ideals. This is what Avvaiyar did and in the course of a few years it became a legend.

During her wanderings she met a couple. The wife was a termagant who ill-treated her husband. He found Avvaiyar in a starving condition and taking pity on her, invited her to his house for lunch. But he had no courage to ask his wife to feed Avvaiyar. With great hesitancy and timidity he requested her to give food to Avvaiyar. The wife flew into a rage and belaboured him. Observing this Avvaiyar walked away. The man followed her and apologised. She sympathized with him and said: "Married life is a joy only when you get an affectionate and accommodating wife; but when that is not possible it is hell, and the proper thing is to give up the household and take to sanyasa".

On another occasion she met an affectionate rustic couple. The wife was persuading the husband to give up tilling and take up service under a neighbouring chieftain. They consulted Avvaiyar and she advised them as follows: "The tree on the bank of a river and a life of dependence on a king, both these have an insecure existence and will crash some time. There is no more dignified profession than tilling the land. No other profession is as independent and dignified as agriculture".

Avvaiyar was highly respected by the kings who ruled over various parts of the Tamil land. They vied with one another to invite her to their courts. When there was the danger of war she acted as a successful mediator between them. She pointed out to them that it was the ambition of the kings that created wars; and the people who suffered were the common men and women on both sides. She

explained the evils of war and persuaded them to lead peaceful lives.

Though much sought after by kings for her wisdom, she avoided them and sought to lead a simple life amongst the poor and unsophisticated people, who flocked to her wherever she went. She lived in their humble dwellings, ate their simple food, wore their plain clothes and guided them in their sorrows and worries. She was beloved of everyone and she was called the Universal Grandmother. She lived to a ripe old age, never failing in her mission of spreading wisdom and peace.

Avvaiyar wrote many ethical works. The most famous of them are Atti Chudi, Kondrai Vendan, Ulaka Nithi, Mutturai, Nalvazhi, Nanneri, Nithi-neri-Vilakkam, Nithi Venba, and Aranericharam. Some of these are pithy sayings consisting of a few words, and the others are quartets in the venba form. All of them are words of wisdom addressed to the young or the grown-ups.

Avvaiyar's works are studied even today in schools. She was not merely a scholar and saint, but a woman of courage, conviction and clear thinking. She remains an immortal model of all that is noble and practicable in life.



Devoted each to his own duty,
man attains the highest perfection

— *Bhagavad Gita*

All the offerings you give, God will
return to you thousand fold

— *Sri Ramakrishna*

Pray to the Lord to make your
heart as pure as the Star

— *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi*

Arise, awake and stop not
till the goal is reached

— *Swami Vivekananda*