

Education for Freedom and Self realization

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ABSTRACT

Human life is a unending process for enriching itself with the perfection, the illumination, the light of wisdom. Freedom is one of the highest value of human life. Knowledge is what gives you your freedom, and justice. To gain education means to gain freedom and loose ignorance. If you do not loose the ignorance you will become a slave to the oppressor. Education liberate people from prejudice. It frees the human heart from its violent passions freedom is every man's ultimate goal. Freedom have a close connection with self-realization. What leads a man nearer to his soul, nearer to the truth, is education.

Key word – Freedom, knowledge.

Freedom is every man's goal, a constant striving through an interaction with a changing reality.

Freedom is a self-expansion without any relationship of subjugation and domination. It is self-extension in the sense of a 'co-operative of selves' as suggested by Rabindranath Tagore, Finding out ways and means towards both fulfillment and liberation calls for an intensive and creative use of reason.¹ Reason provides plans of action for our liberation. Reason clarifies as well as creates. The creative aspect of reason must be incorporated into true rationality in order to get a total picture of an actual, historical development of man. In making himself, man decides upon a priority of needs and gives content to freedom and also creates conditions for achieving further freedom, in which way alone he can shape his future. Reason is his most trusted tool in this project. In other words, man not only is free but he uses his freedom towards a goal which is still further freedom. It is a thing that we have to conquer afresh for ourselves, every day, like love. In the words of Erch Fromm, freedom of man, in the positive sense, involves "the realization

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of his individual self, that is, the expression of his intellectual, emotional and sensuous potentialities.”²

For Indian Philosophy and for Hegel freedom can be achieved within the existing society as it does not count much, for Marxian philosophy it has to be achieved by changing the material conditions of existence in the bourgeois society. For existentialism, freedom in the sense of freedom of choice is unlimited and is there in this society but in the sense of complete authenticity it is never to be achieved. The concept of freedom as completeness is present both in Indian philosophy and in the Marxian view.³

Mahatma Gandhi was an idealist, pragmatist and socialist. He could combine all the philosophical schools of thought in his unique philosophical ideal that is New Humanism. He believed that freedom lies not in political freedom but in the minds of men also. This freedom in thought and action, he thought, could come only through an effective education which would unfetter the people from all sorts of social evils, like ignorance, illiteracy, superstition, orthodoxy, prides and prejudices.⁴

According to Rabindranath Tagore education, he says, “has for its object freedom-freedom of intellect, freedom of sympathy, freedom in the material universe through our truthful dealings with her universal laws, freedom in the society through our maintaining of truth and love in all our human relationships. It is a most difficult idea and that immense difficulty only proves the majesty of the human soul and the magnificence of our true civilization.”⁵

Education is the expression of life force, the ‘elanvital’ of Bergson.⁶ This is communion with greater part of the self not in the sense of individual self alone but the self which is always absorbed in the real integral spirit, undivided unbounded and glistened with truth, Goodness and beauty.

In accordance with the high aim of Education, the achievement of the supreme, saving knowledge, Sankara in his Viveka-Chudamani defines Sravana as listening to the instruction of the teacher and knowing from him the primary truth that the self is to be differentiated from non-self appearing in various forms. To identify self with Non-self is Ignorance, causing Bondage. Bondage is removed by knowledge.⁷

The present age is making it increasingly clear that a rigid separation between ‘intellectual labour’ and ‘manual labour’ creates an unhappy impediment towards the development of a

‘free or a complete man’. For both Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore this separation was the most dangerous prejudice that the traditional system of education handed down to us. As a matter of fact, we are conditioned so powerfully that we develop, almost unconsciously a set of undesirable values and become so crippled that we fail to integrate reality in its fullness into our reason. ‘Passivity’ and ‘detachment’ are held in high esteem in a intellectual vocation. If a society wants to maintain a stability, the greatest help thus comes from its intellectuals.

An individual becomes a full-fledged individual when he is free. Percy Nunn truly says, Nothing good enters into the human world except in and through the free activities of individual men and women. Freedom is the basic need of the human soul. So the educational world must be tinged with the spirit of freedom. Freedom in thought, action and movement, which does not mean licence. Rather this freedom hints at the dawn of discipline, which touches ‘the inmost springs of conduct.’⁸

The common sense concept of freedom means the absence of restraint. Liberty, in the sense of doing what you like, is attractive Plato says, but it cannot last, and it is further more less desirable than doing the right thing, even though most people, not being wise enough to know and to choose for themselves what is right, have to be directed by others.⁹

When freedom is mentioned in any particular context, it is always relevant to ask two questions: freedom from what? And freedom to do what? During the second world war. President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill drew up, in the Atlantic charter, a declaration of ‘Four Freedoms’ as their war aims. The four freedoms were: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from fear, freedom from want. The first pair of freedoms specify two kinds of action which should be free or unrestrained and the second pair of freedoms in the Atlantic charter specify two kinds of restraint which should be removed or prevented.¹⁰

The Idealist view of true freedom has three different things, (i) freedom of inner harmony (ii) freedom of choice, and (iii) freedom to give effect to our choices.¹¹

Although the idealist concept of freedom confuses different senses of the term, it does have a point in directing our attention to the potentialities of human nature rather than to actual present desires. There are circumstances in which a man’s present desires do not from the determining factor for saying whether or not he enjoys. Freedom consider the example of a slave who is contented with his lot and genuinely does not want any different status. If freedom

is defined as the absence of restraint on satisfying present desires, it follows that the contented slave is not un-free. A discontented slave who wants to be released from his present state is un-free, because the legal conditions of his status are a restraint upon his wishes. The contented Slave is subject to the same legal conditions, but they are not a restraint upon his wishes since he does not want to change his situation.

In thinking of freedom we assume a norm of human nature in which the desire for self-fulfillment would be restrained by the conditions of slavery or anything else.

Moral freedom applies only in one direction, as the freedom to do what is right. But if moral freedom did not allow of genuine alternatives, to do what is right or not to do so, it would not be choice. The theory infers that we can be forced to be free, because it equates 'being free' with 'doing what is right'.

The paradoxical conclusion simply means that we can be forced to be what is right. This may well be justifiable, but not on the ground that it gives us freedom. If we are forced, we are not free. We do what is right, but not freely.

A free man, is an inner directed man using his reason against his perceptions.

Blavatsky traveled all over the world. She had a strange habit; she would carry a handbag in which she kept flower seeds; and wherever she went whether by train or by car, she was throwing the seeds out on either side. People asked her why she was doing this: She said, it is time for the rainy season; the water will fall on the seeds and they will sprout and grow into plants. Flowers will come. It will be beautiful. People said that even if the flowers blossomed, what did it matter to her? She was not going to pass along – the same road again. She said – I see flowers all around which have grown from seeds thrown by others and I am delighted. I owe a debt to those who sowed those seeds. By throwing these seeds I am paying back the debt. I imagine that others who pass by this road some time will be delighted, even though I may not pass here again. Even in my imagination I feel delighted at that happy prospect and I feel overwhelmed.¹² Have you ever imagined somebody being delighted because of something done by you? Even if you can understand by imagining-it that somebody may be delighted because of you, or that somebody's heart may glow because of you, that is enough.

An individual is not regarded as 'me with others' but 'me' and 'others' this may also be called freedom as 'self-realization' which commits us to believe logically in an immutable, essential

core of a person that has to be realized. Atmanam Viddhi (know thyself) will be the urge for freedom; dispel ignorance and desires and impulses.

Freedom must have a close connection with self-realization if freedom is to be a value. A man is truly free when he has realized his true self. Freedom is to be defined in terms of self-realization, which is a positive notion, not a mere negative one.

Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaya (Vishnu Purana, Parasara, 1.19.41) knowledge is that which liberates. This is a marvelous saying. It is the most original definition of knowledge.

The knowledge of self is the highest wisdom knowing which a person comes to terms with himself and with the whole world. The happiness that man seeks from the world of objects is as ephemeral as the objects themselves, but the bliss of the self is always there and it can not be taken away. So happiness must be sought within and the whole attempt to share this knowledge with others by those who have experienced it is to enable others also to realized it. With spectacular growth in communication, the world has become a global village today. Just as all the best of empirical knowledge and technology are being shared by one and all, the supreme knowledge of the self must be also shared with everyone as the time has come when it can no longer remain the prerogative of a few. But this must not be made a religious compulsion and there is no need to proselytize. One has to make an effort to seek it. The path is very simple paradoxically its very simplicity makes one miss it. Just as a person picks up all the skills necessary to live in the world, self-knowledge is essential to understand one self and lead a fulfilled life.

What liberates ultimately is education. What leads a man nearer to his soul, nearer to the truth, is education. Real education makes the learner conscious of the fact that he has evolved out of the Absolute or Supreme self, and thus helps him to manifest the godliness that is latent in him. Perfection of man and development of human qualities are the main aims of education. Education teaches man to accept what is good and beneficial and to reject what is lewd and base. To know the unknown is not the sole aim of education. The aim lies in inspiring man to do and act what he should do as a human being. Self-realization is the chief aim of education, according to the Idealists. Man can become a man only by education. India – the cradle of civilization, - where dawned first bright Moon, preached the gospel of enlightenment of the Atman and naturally the aim of education was the realization of self. Paravidya was the ultimate

knowledge – the knowledge – leading to the manifestation of the inner perfection. Buddhist education also attached importance to the attainment of Nirvana. Trishna or thirst for worldly pleasures was sought to be annihilated through the practice of Astangic Marga or eightfold path. Buddhist education thus laid emphasis upon the liberation of the individual in and through the society.

The Education is a process of control of Mind, to drive it down to its deeper layers, its subterranean depths, not ruffled by the ripples of the surface, the infinite distractions of the material world by which the mind wears itself out in fatigue.¹³

Each day you have to purify your inner gold in fire and let the impurities burn so only the pure gold remains. One has to rise above one's own self continuously. The education that teaches this process becomes liberating.

Whatsoever misery, darkness, hatred and violence are born in this world or man are due to understanding false knowledge to be knowledge. If we really want to transform the life of man, a clear distinction between false knowledge and real knowledge will have to be made. Whatsoever teaches the means and methods to earning a livelihood is false knowledge. Whatsoever teaches not livelihood but life is knowledge.

Education provides new knowledge and differing perspectives and empowers mind to think critically and formulate its own perspectives and ideas. Nelson Mandela said Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. The more educated a person is more liberated they are in their thinking and having more intellectual freedom can lead to further physical freedom, so the more educated a person is, the more will and power they have to pursue their own freedom, becoming more educated and more free can allow you to help others do the same.

Swami Vivekananda defined education as the manifestation of the perfection already in man.¹⁴ Education is a lifelong, deliberate, dynamic and telic process. Education is life itself. It is as natural to a man as flying to a bird or swimming to a fish. Education shapes the physical, mental, moral, social and spiritual elements of an individual as education functions always with some purpose behind. Through guidance towards a desirable goal, education will ensure the well-being of an individual's life.

‘Asotoma Sadgamayah Tamasoma Jyotirgamaya’ (Brihadaranyaka Upanishads – 1.3.28). Lead me from the unreal to the real, from the darkness to the realm of Enlightenment’ – is the eternal prayer of an individual.

‘Tamaso ma Jyotirgamaya’ that is exactly the meaning of the ‘education’. Tamaso ma Jyotirgamaya – from darkness to light. Education is to bring us from darkness to light. So the clarion call to all is : come and be glorified with the light of education.

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