

**PHILOSOPHY IN PRACTICE :
MAKING SENSE OF HUMAN EXISTENCE**



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Philosophy and Values in Public Affairs: An Appraisal

• Desh Raj sirswal

In the recent past, especially in the last quarter of 20th century, changes have taken place. People all over the world, started feeling the pinch of "rate of change" in emerging contemporary society. It has influenced all aspects of human life. It also influenced the ancient conception of philosophy that it seeks to understand the mysteries of existence and reality. It was also influenced by present scientific development which raised philosophical speculations towards linguistic analysis, mental content and later on cognitive science studies. It is true that philosophy tries to discover the nature of truth and knowledge and to find what is of basic value and importance in life. It also examines the relationships between humanity and nature and between the individual and society. Philosophy arises out of wonder, curiosity, and the desire to know and understand. Philosophy is thus a form of inquiry--a process of analysis, criticism, interpretation, and speculation. It is contributing in the process of human development since ancient times. The process of human development begins with the conceptions and continues throughout life. It takes as many different courses as every human being develops in a unique way, embedded in the context of his or her environment. In the light of above assumptions, we are going to study the role of philosophy and values in public affairs and how philosophy is shaping the human life with its continuous progress. According to Stanford philosophers John Perry and Ken Taylor,

and guests Brian Leiter, Jenann Ismael, and Martha Nussbaum on the 200th episode of *Philosopher Talk*, finding a new basis for common sensibilities and common values is one of the most important issues in the 21st Century. According to them, "The world is more economically interconnected than it has ever been. But it still seethes with divisions and social fragmentation. Can we find a new basis for shared values that will bring us together rather than tear us apart?"

Ian Ravenscroft rightly said, "Philosophy would be of little interest if it did not help us live without betraying our values and die without fear. One way it does this is by example. Diogenes, Socrates and Voltaire, for examples, spectacularly refused to compromise their values. Alexander the Great, drunkard, murderer and warmonger, is said to have asked Diogenes the Cynic if there was any favour he could do him. Diogenes, who was sunbathing at the time, replied "Please get out of my sun." And again he said, "Many philosophers have died without fear. The ancient paradigm is Socrates calmly drinking the hemlock after an evening of philosophical conversation. Amongst the moderns, David Hume's equanimity in the face of death frustrated and shamed his ecclesiastical detractors." (Ian Ravenscroft (2010) *How To Be A Philosopher, Philosophy Now, Issue 81* http://philosophynow.org/issues/81/How_To_Be_A_Philosopher)

Education for Inculcation of Values

UNESCO has long promoted a humanistic vision of learning based on principles of respect for life, human dignity, and cultural diversity, as well as social justice and international solidarity. This vision has been outlined in the two landmark publications, *Learning to Be* (1972) and *Learning: The Treasure Within* (1996). UNESCO is now building on these reports to rethink education in the current context of change, complexity, and uncertainty.

There has been sudden shift in the perception of man as a consequence of fast and sudden changes in human societies all

over the world. Emerging society led to formulate a new framework of education as the current one, became obsolete to meet the human needs. The international community drew a lead and envisioned education in a new paradigm. As a result an International Commission on Education for the 21st Century was established in the beginning of 1993. Jacques Delors was the Chairman of the commission. The aim of the commission which was established by UNESCO, is to study and reflect on the challenges facing education in the coming years and to formulate suggestions and recommendations in the form of a report. The concept on which the UNESCO report entitled, "Learning: The Treasure Within" consists of nine chapters. The most important part of the report, "Four Pillars of Education" is described in its chapter no.4. The four pillars of learning are fundamental principles for reshaping education:

Learning to know : to provide the cognitive tools required to better comprehend the world and its complexities, and to provide an appropriate and adequate foundation for future learning. While interacting with self, society and nature, an individual gets new awareness, knowledge, understandings, reflections and perceptions. Thus knowledge and learning enables the individual to meet his curiosity as well as his needs. The first pillar is a basic requirement of every human being to live meaningfully. "Learning to Know" is both a mean and an end in itself. More is the knowledge one draws through education, the more meaningful and happy life one can live.

Learning to do : to provide the skills that would enable individuals to effectively participate in the global economy and society. It implies to translate the knowledge under first pillar into action. The natural sequence in the order, can be "Learning to do." As first pillar is the source brings awareness, knowledge and mental clarity in education, the second pillar forms the application

of learning in one's practical life. It implies the application of knowledge into practice.

Learning to be: to provide self-analytical and social skills to enable individuals to develop to their fullest potential psycho-socially, affectively as well as physically, for an all-round 'complete person. This third pillar of education emphasises on one's social life, his living, his interaction with other and becoming sensitive to social needs of people around. The focus of education here is, to bring social efficiency in human society with regard to living in a social group or family with all satisfaction, harmony and peace with all shades or category of people. The Delors commission places special emphasis on this pillar as it implies to develop the following values in social behaviour and social relations:

- Knowledge and understanding of self in relation to others.
- Appreciation of beauty in diversity in social traditions and practices.
- Awareness about the similarities, comparison and interdependence between human beings.
- Empathy, compassion, cooperation, caring, sharing and sacrifice for the needy, poor and deserving in social situations.

Learning to live together : to expose individuals to the values implicit within human rights, democratic principles, intercultural understanding and respect and peace at all levels of society and human relationships to enable individuals and societies to live in peace and harmony. The fourth pillar is most personalistic in nature. It leads to one's distinct growth in the process of education. To be means "to become" which has not been attained so far in one's life but at the same time has the potential of becoming "to be" or "to become" or "to realise".

The connotation of the term earlier historically referred to, in the Report of UNESCO in 1972, "Learning To Be" (EdgerrFouré et al) has been that a human being needs to be a better person in

relation to his environment. The basic spirit behind it was perhaps due to the fear that otherwise the world be dehumanised as a result of technical changes all around. Therefore, the goal of education should be to make human being a better and refined person with good qualities which can be instrumental for his effective adjustment in life.

It can be said that due to over emphasis on material development and fear of competition and its harmful effects, learning should remain under four pillars for creating depth knowledge in learners, preparing them for correct and right action, creating in them a human understanding for social living and thus prepare him as Nobel human being. These four pillars are foundation which can prepare good human beings for the twentyfirst century.

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1. Ian Ravenscroft (2010) How To Be A Philosopher, Philosophy Now, Issue 81 http://philosophynow.org/issues/81/How_To_Be_A_Philosopher

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