

Suvidya

JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION



- ❁ *Mohanty's Theory of Person and Modernity in India*
R.C. Majhi
- ❁ *Nature of the Qur'anic Universe in Knowledge, Space, Time Dimensions.*
Masudul Alam Choudhury
- ❁ *Transformative Philosophy*
Jose Elambassery
- ❁ *Imagination of the Scientist- Mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin S.J.*
S.Vanathu Antoni
 - ❁ *Dynamics of Mind and Contextual Philosophising*
A.S.Dasan
 - ❁ *Philosophy and Values in School Education of India*
Desh Raj Sirswal
- ❁ *Why is Global Reduction not Possible in Testimonial Knowledge?*
Biswanath Jena
 - ❁ *Delineation of Zoroastrianism and Parsi Culture in the Fiction of Rohinton Mistry*
P.Vetri Selvi
 - ❁ *Creative Problem-Solving in Ethics by Anthony Weston*
Review by V.Prabhu
- ❁ *Selected Episodes from Raghuvamsam of Kalidasa by G.C.Nayak*
Review by R.C. Pradhan

A Bi-annual Journal in Philosophy and Religion

Suvidya College
Bangalore, India

EDITORIAL BOARD

Chief Editor

Dr. Emmanuel Uppamthadathil msfs

Dean, Institute of Philosophy and Religion

Suvidya College, Electronics City P.O., Bangalore - 560 100

Email: emmavaranasi@yahoo.com, uppamthadathil@gmail.com

Associate Editors

Dr. Thomas Kalariparambil msfs

Suvidya College, Bangalore

Dr. George Panthanmackel msfs

Suvidya College, Bangalore

Dr. Joy Mampally msfs

Suvidya College, Bangalore

Editorial Board

Dr. Antony Mookenthottam msfs

Suvidya College, Bangalore

Dr. Jolly Chakkalakkal msfs

Suvidya College, Bangalore

Dr. Santhosh Kumar msfs

Suvidya College, Bangalore

Dr. Godabarisha Mishra

Member Secretary, ICPR, Delhi

Dr. S. Panneerselvam

Madras University, Chennai

Dr. Ashok Vohra

Delhi University, Delhi

Dr. R. C. Pradhan

Hyderabad University, Hyderabad

Dr. S. Vijayakumar

Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

Dr. Douglas Huff

Gustavus Adolphus College, USA

Dr. Bernard O'Connor osfs

De Sales University, Allentown, USA

Dr. Casian R. Agera

North Eastern Hill University, Shillong

Consultants

Prof. Ashok Kumar Chatterjee

Former Head of the Department of Philosophy, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

Prof. R. Balasubramaniam

Former Chairman, ICPR & Former Head of the Department of Philosophy, Madras University, Chennai

Prof. Ramakrishna Rao

Chairman, Indian Council of Philosophical Research, Delhi

Dr. Mathew Kozhupakalam msfs

Chairman, Governing Body, Suvidya College, Bangalore

Language Editor

Dr. David Fleming, SM, Deepahalli College of the University of Dayton, USA

Book Review Editor : Dr. Joy Mampally msfs

Circulation Manager : Fr. Bhasker Mendem msfs

Suvidya, a biannual Journal of Philosophy and Religion, concentrates on critical and creative research in Eastern (particularly Indian) and Western Philosophical and Religious traditions. This journal seeks to promote original research and cultivate a fruitful dialogue between classical and contemporary schools of philosophical thought.

Philosophy and Values in School Education of India

Dr. Desh Raj Sirswal*

Abstract

In this paper an attempt is made to draw out the contemporary relevance of philosophy in school education of India. It includes some studies done in this field and also reports on philosophy by such agencies like UNESCO & NCERT. Many European countries emphasise the above said theme. There are lots of work and research done by many philosophers on philosophy for children. Indian values system is different from the Western and more important than others. Education has become a tool to achieve efficiency in all walks of human life whether social, political, religious or philosophical. Every nation started developing its own specific set of educational values. For India it is very necessary to increase philosophical thinking, study and research. Philosophy could make significant contribution, particularly in relation to children's moral development, because the Indian curriculum currently neglects this aim. A teacher can play an important role in promoting this discussion because a teacher has the capacity to influence students with their thoughts and personality and to engage them in these activities. Philosophy needs to be included in the curriculum because it has demonstrated cognitive and social gains in children who were exposed to philosophy in their schooling.

The current education system in India is highly effective in developing individuals who can be successful in situations where they have an authority to follow, but is not so effective in preparing individuals to deal with situations, where they need to exercise their own judgments. The present paper concentrates on whether philosophy could make significant

* Assistant Professor (Philosophy) , Post Graduate Govt. College for Girls, Sector-11, Chandigarh

contribution, particularly in relation to children's moral development, because the Indian curriculum currently neglects this aim. Philosophy needs to be included in the curriculum because it has demonstrated cognitive and social gains in children who were exposed to philosophy in their schooling.

The NCERT (2005) in the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education*, mentions ethics and philosophy as fields that students will have to know about and understand through the curriculum. “*Ethics* is concerned with all human values and with the rules, principles, standards and ideals which give them expression. In relation to action and choice, therefore, ethics must be conceded primacy over each of the forms of understanding. Ethical understanding involves understanding reasons for judgments-for what makes something and some acts right and others wrong- regardless of the persons involved. Furthermore, such reasons will be reason for anyone; reason, equality and personal autonomy are, therefore, very intimately connected concepts. *Philosophy* involves a concern, on the one hand, with analytical clarification, evaluation and synthetic coordination of the aforementioned forms of understanding in relation to life, and on the other hand, with the whole, the ultimate meaning and the transcendent.”¹

It also puts special emphasis to stimulate the ethical development in students. In this context ethical development “calls for devising means and ways of helping children to make choices and decide, what is right, what is kind, and what is best for the common good, keeping in view the border implication for personal and social values.”²

Research in the area of assessment and enhancement of thinking skills in general, and socio-moral reasoning in particular, in India not are done properly. A report of the 5th *All India Educational Survey*, conducted by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), says, “More research is being done in the area of moral development than in the area of moral education. . . .existing value patterns have been surveyed but research on the inculcation of values through educational intervention is limited. Our suggestion is that while doing research work, more stress

should be given to formulation of educational objectives, preparation of instructional material and trying out the materials through experimental design research.”³

We should always know that education is not merely a matter of special science, but it presupposes an all-embracing view, that is, philosophy. It is because humanity is history and it reminds us that we began with childhood that we can understand childhood and find the paths along which to lead it. Education is no more than the positive representation of the history of humanity. It should keep in mind that, “The teaching profession has taken a new turn- it has become interestingly challenging. Education now would do well to keep in mind the three I’s – Innovate, Interest and then Impress. With the first the attention is captured. The second sparks the child’s curiosity. The third enables the child to retain.”⁴

In a study on Indian students, it has been found that the environment with which children deliberate philosophical issues necessitates mutual respect, empathy and cooperation resulting in moral conduct. Philosophical questions and reasoning about values and beliefs encourages more sophisticated moral decision-making. It relates to cognitive enhancements not only in the area of intellectual intelligence, but also in the area of moral and social intelligences. As Lipman suggests, “Children will learn that all ethical acts must have reasons and that it is well to think of the reason before one engages in the act, because if one does not, one must face the moral censure of one’s peers. This is not decision making by mere consensus. The guidance we receive is from a critical community that weighs the reasons for actions and not just the actions in isolation.”⁵

When we are doing discussion on philosophy for school children, one question generally arises, “Are children capable for philosophical thinking?” The answer is that there are many researches done in this field. Jean Piaget’s well known theory of cognitive development suggests that prior to age 11 or 12, most children are not capable of philosophical thinking. This is because, prior to this time, children are not capable of “thinking about thinking”, the sort of metalevel thinking that characterise philosophical

thinking. Philosopher Gareth Matthews goes further and argues at length that Piaget failed to see that philosophical thinking was manifested in the very children he studied. Matthews provides a number of delightful examples of very young children's philosophical puzzlement. For example, Tim (age about six years, while busily engaged in licking a pot, asked, "Papa, how can we be sure that everything is not a dream?"⁶ Examples of this kind you can find in his book and also there are many philosophers and departments who are engaged in this field and their sources are available on the internet.

Discussion on philosophy for children does not mean that we are dominating it, it is important for teachers to allow their students to develop their own ideas. And also the teacher will help students to develop an attitude to do the following obligations to society:

1. Actively support policies and programmes which promote equality of opportunity for all.
2. Work collegially to develop schools and centers which model democratic ideals.
3. Teach and model those positive values which are widely accepted in society and encourages learners to apply them and critically appreciate their significance.⁷

National Policy of Education (1986) states about the role and status of teachers in the following manner, "The status of the teacher reflects the socio-cultural ethos of a society; it is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers. The government and the community should endeavour to create conditions which will help motivate and inspire teachers on constructive and creative lives. Teachers should have the freedom to innovate, to devise appropriate methods of communication and activities related to the needs and capabilities and the causes of the community."⁸

Moreover, the process of philosophical inquiry leads to moral action and positive social conduct in the form of respecting others, accepting differences and behaving responsibly. These cognitive and social outcomes

have an impact on the individual's personality, resulting in self-esteem and confidence. Mehta and Whitebread concludes that "Moral reasoning and behaviour requires careful decision making, emphasizing with others and commitment to one's decision. Since moral education enters education of the complete personality (cognitive, social and affective)."⁹

If we wish to teach philosophy to school children, then we need to devise right kind of curricula. It is necessary to introduce philosophy to children with the help of stories, novels of particular issues and biographies of philosophers and their ideas. We can't teach student of primary level history of philosophy, serious metaphysical, epistemological issues, but start with ethics and introductory logic and to develop analytical reasoning by making them think on a particular issue. Thoughtful and insightful discussions should start in student's regular classrooms. Work of art, thoughtful experiments, or even the daily newspapers can be used to trigger philosophical discussion of moral concerns. Student's stories, novels, essays can also used and different kinds of study material also produced according to their needs. Philosophy for children is endeavors can be found in colleges, universities, and associations in more than 20 countries around the world, so we can find different methods and material for it.

On the occasion of the World Philosophy Day, UNESCO has officially launched a special philosophical study entitled, *Philosophy: A School of Freedom-Teaching Philosophy and Learning to philosophize: status and prospectus*, which focuses on the state of the teaching of philosophy in the world at pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education levels, emphasizing pedagogical and didactic orientations for the promotion of the teaching of philosophy in the world.¹⁰ The philosophy programme is an integral part of UNESCO's activities, since all these major issues, such as peace, justice, democracy, freedom, human rights, education, and so on, have a solid philosophical background, with an analytical and conceptual rigour. Infact, UNESCO was born out of a philosophical and ethical investigation into the conditions of the world, the philosophy programme was undertaken by UNESCO in 1946, and just one year after the organisation came into being.

ICPR obscures that one thing that appears not to have been done in India in recent times is to take a serious look on the teaching, study and research in philosophy. Philosophy itself has always been a very core area in the history and culture of our country. But, for all practical purposes, philosophy seems to have become just like any other routine academic discipline in the country, since its teachers appear to have lost the vision of its special place and role in the general scheme of things. This is an extremely unfortunate development. It is sad that philosophy needs to be rescued from some of those very persons whose duty it happens to be to nourish and promote it.¹¹ UGC Report (1966) on Philosophy says, “To the solution of various problems in a country such as India, which has set before itself certain national goals and is striving hard to realise them, Philosophy has certainly a positive contribution to make.”¹² It can make a significant contribution as an academic discipline in India today if certain new approaches are followed. Within these approaches it includes logic, critical evaluation of our own heritage, awareness of the impinging of philosophy on other subjects of study, philosophy as the matrix of the sciences and philosophy of education it should concentrate on the urgent issues which our country face today.

Recently *Yashpal Report on Higher Education* suggested that, “One way of improving the quality of teaching of these additional disciplines and stimulating students’ interest is to allow students for whom a subject is additional to study along with these whom the same subject is primary. For instance, a mathematics student should study and undergo evaluation in philosophy as an optional subject alongwith student for whom philosophy constitutes the primary subject. In sum, there is a need to expose students, especially at the undergraduate level, to various disciplines like humanities, social science and aesthetics etc., in an integrated manner.”¹³

Our education system, unlike the western, was religion oriented and philosophies were developed later. But over the centuries philosophy had taken the lead role in education, and science and logic were introduced in our educational curricula. As a result, western socio-religious and education values started entering into our social fabric. Now, education has become

a tool to achieve efficiency in all walks of human life whether social, political, religious or philosophical. Yet, every nation started developing its own specific set of educational values. It is time that India should also develop its own set of educational values to keep its own identity among the nations in the modern times as it did in the ancient past.¹⁴

Now it is time to take effective measures to introduce courses on ethics and logic at all levels of our education system, like those found in European countries, because one of the goals in intersectoral strategy on philosophy at UNESCO is to promote the teaching of philosophy at secondary and university levels. It is heartening to note that countries like Belgium, Norway, Australia and Brazil, have already taken decisions to introduce philosophy from primary school. Some British Universities offer M.A. Philosophy of Management, Philosophy of Biodiversity and the like. They run centers like Centre for Applied Ethics, Centre for Practical and Professional Ethics, Centre for Philosophical Counselling etc.¹⁵ There are several of this types of centers also in India like Centre For Philosophy And Foundations of Science, New Delhi, Centre for Philosophy and History of Science, Pune University, Centre for Philosophy, J.N.U., New Delhi, Centre for Philosophy, N.I.A.S., Bangalore, De Paul Institute of Religion and Philosophy, Bangalore, Pratap Center of Philosophy, Amalner etc.

In the end, we can sum up our discussion by saying that every person is destined to do a certain task in his life. He would serve society in some capacity, if not society, at least his own family. If he raises his children in a proper way, it makes them good citizens, that itself is a kind of service of society. If we wish to rely upon Indian intellect to create a good society, students should opt for philosophy. Researches by scholars are undertaken on a large scale. We need philosophical temperament in society and for that we should steer away from religious bigotry, Casteism, and superstitions. And for this we should try to acquaint students with philosophy from his schooling.

Notes & References:

1. *Summary of the Teaching of Philosophy in India*, Retrieved on 13-11-2009. http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/shs/Philosophy/Summary_of_the_Teaching_of_Philosophy_in_India.pdf, p.01.
2. *ibid*, p.04.
3. Nanda, R.T. *Contemporary Approaches to Value Education in India*, New Delhi: Regency Publications, 1997, p.403.
4. Sarkar, Vasavdatta, "New Roles of A Teacher" in *The Book Review* Vol.XXXIII, November 2009, p.11.
5. Lipman, Mathew, *Thinking in Education*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991,p.147
6. Mathews, Gareth, *Philosophy and the Young Child*, MA Harvard University, Press, 1980.
7. Padhan, Ananda, "Teaching Profession and Teacher Professionalism" in *University News*, 47(46) November 16-22, 2009, p.11.
8. *ibid*, p.22.
9. Mehta, S., & Whitebread, D. (2004). Philosophy for children and moral development in the Indian context. *First Global Conference on Philosophy with Children*. Retrieved May 7, 2009, p. 02.
From <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/ati/education/cp/cp1/mehta%20paper.pdf>
10. UNESCO Study- *Philosophy: School of Freedom*, Retrieved on 26-11-2009. http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12633&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
11. Circular of *National Symposium on The State of Teaching, Study and Research in Philosophy in India* by ICPR, 23rd to 25th October, 2009, p.01.
12. *Philosophy in Indian Universities* (Review Report), University Grants Commission, New Delhi, 1966, p.02.
13. "Yashpal Committee Report on Higher Education" in *Contemporary Academician*, July 1-15, 2009, p.10.
14. Rao, D.Pulla, "Philosophy of Valued Education in Andhra Pradesh" in *Relevance of Philosophy in 21st Century*, The Associated Publishers, Ambala Cant, 2006, p.194-195.
15. Md. Golam Dastagir, "Rethinking Philosophy today" in *The Daily Star*, 15-11-2007 from http://www.thedailystar.net/pdf_story.php?nid=11651, Retrieved on 26-11-2009, p.03.