

Sardar Patel Memorial Lectures 1988

Integral Education

by

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Preface

All India Radio instituted a series of lectures in 1955 in memory of our illustrious leader, and architect of India's political consolidation, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was also the first Minister for Information and Broadcasting in addition to Home and States Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Independent India. An annual feature, the Patel memorial lectures are aimed at adding to the body of knowledge to the subjects of public importance and promoting awareness and generating discussion on contemporary subjects.

In the current lectures the theme enlarged upon is the integral approach to education. Education, in order to be effective, has to cover four distinct dimensions of the human personality beginning with the physical body, the development of intellectual and aesthetic sensibilities, the development of socially desirable moral values and finally, the inner dimension of spritual growth.

Dr. Karan Singh is a well known poet, writer and a scholar and his life long devotion has been to the field of art, culture and Indology. He was also Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Health and Family Planning, and Education and Culture in the Union Cabinet.

Dr. Karan Singh was for many years Chancellor of Jammu and Kashmir University as well as Benaras Hindu University, besides being associated with many other cultural and academic institutions. He has been awarded several honorary degrees including doctorates from the Benaras Hindu University, the Aligarh Muslim University and the Soka University, Tokyo. Dr. Karan Singh is the author of over a dozen books including writings on political science, philosophical essays, travellogues and poems in English. Recently he founded the International Centre for Science, Culture and Consciousness which is emerging as an important centre of creative thought.

Integral Education

Part-I

Introduction

THREE MEN DOMINATED the last phase of our freedom movement—Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Their roles were in a very extraordinary way complementary, Mahatma Gandhi providing the moral and spiritual impetus and overall guidance; Jawaharlal Nehru the visionary, the revolutionary mass leader; and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel the statesman, administrator, consolidator.

It is this trinity of leadership that was predominant in those critical years, when after centuries British colonialism disappeared and India emerged as a free sovereign country. Of course, there were other leaders of great stature and talent also. There was Maulana Azad, who for so many years was President of the Indian National Congress and our first Education Minister; there was Dr. Rajendra Prasad, our first President; there was C. Rajgopalachari—"Rajaji"—the first Governor General; there was Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the father of the Constitution and so on. But the way in which the movement finally came to its culmination, found these three people playing the critical roles.

The Sardar's role in our modern history was of crucial importance. During the freedom movement he was the pillar of strength to Gandhiji. In fact from the Bardoli Satyagraha, where he first gained the title of Sardar or leader, right upto the achievement of freedom, Sardar Patel was Gandhiji's right hand man as far as organisational matters were concerned. His unwavering fortitude, his tremendous courage, his tireless perseverance and organisational skill made him absolutely indispensable in the many ups and downs of our freedom movement.

Delivered at National Museum Auditorium, New Delhi on December 15 and 16, 1988 and later broadcast by All India Radio.

After freedom Sardar Patel lived for only three years. He was Deputy Prime Minister, Home Minister, and Minister of Information and Broadcasting, and he tackled the immense task of building a shattered nation. Let us not forget the situation that actually existed in 1947. With the partition of the sub-continent, millions of people had been uprooted and one of the largest mass migrations in human history was taking place. Hundreds of thousands of people on both sides of the border were being killed, and in that tremendously volatile situation Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru strove tirelessly to put the new born nation on its feet. Despite their temperamental difference, they had the highest regard and respect for each other, and made a team which was unique at that particular juncture.

The main achievement after independence for which Sardar Patel will be remembered, of course, was the integration of the Indian States, a saga in itself into which I cannot possibly go. It has been extensively documented. I was looking through some books, and I saw a parallel drawn between Bismark's unification of Germany in the 19th century and Sardar Patel's unification of India. But the Sardar's task was far more difficult because in size, diversity and complexity, the Indian situation was much more difficult than the German situation a century earlier. It needed a leader who combined firmness, tact, a deep knowledge of human psychology, administrative and legal acumen, and capacity for untiring work. As Gandhiji wrote to someone during that period, there was not another man in India at that time who could have done what Sardar Patel achieved.

The integration of India must rank as one of the great achievements in world history and, as I see it, free India itself is a permanent memorial to Sardar Patel. I must also add, although it may not be fashionable to do so that the peaceful integration of the States was a tribute to the good sense and patriotism of the Indian Princes themselves. They did not have very much of an alternative, but nonetheless they were also patriotic Indians and they coordinated and cooperated with Sardar in this important task of national integration.

Coming as I do from what at one time was the largest princely States in India, and certainly the most complex and complicated. I had the privilege of coming in touch with Sardar Patel at a very early age. I have written about this in my autobiography so I will not go into details, except to say that while Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was dealing directly with Jammu and Kashmir, it was Sardar Patel who carried on the correspondence with my father which ultimately led to a smooth political transition in Jammu and Kashmir. In fact the first volume of the collected correspondence of Sardar Patel edited by the late Lala Durgadas is entirely about Kashmir, and contains many letters written by him to my father, my mother, and to me.

If I may strike a personal note, I owe him a deep debt of gratitude for three particular matters. Firstly, for insisting that I be sent abroad for treatment. I was ill at that time and confined to bed, and I do not think my parents would have sent me abroad had Sardar Patel not, on one of his visits to our home in Jammu, very clearly told my father and my mother particularly (I was an only child and she was very attached to me) that if they did not send me abroad for treatment I would probably remain in bed for the rest of my life. I was confined to a wheelchair and it was Sardar Patel who insisted that I go abroad and was good enough to organise the plane and other arrangements for my treatment in New York. The fact that forty years later I am fit and standing here talking with you is, in a way, the direct result of the Sardar's intervention.

The second point for which I will remain grateful to him is the fact that it was he who suggested a matrimonial alliance with Nepal. I will not go into details except to say that my wife was the grand-daughter of the last Rana Prime Minister and Sardar Patel thought that a matrimonial alliance with Nepal might be a good idea. The alliance took place and by God's grace, is going strong even today.

Finally, he was also responsible for smoothening my appointment as Regent of the State. It was a complex issue and there were acute problems with my father. But Sardar Patel tackled them with

great finesse and dignity and as a result at the age of eighteen I was appointed Regent and then went on to become Sadar-i-Riyasat, Governor and so on.

I had the privilege of being his guest for three weeks in Dehradun in April, 1949. Mani Ben was there at the time, and she looked after me with great affection. I remember that although the Sardar was very ill, in fact he had gone to Dehradun to convalesce on doctor's orders, he was always meticulous and very alert. We had long talks about the situation in Kashmir and the various personalities concerned with Kashmir problem, upon which he gave me the benefit of his frank views and guidance.

I have taken a few minutes to pay my tribute to the Sardar as this is an appropriate occasion to do so. Today happens to be the 15th December, the exact day upon which he passed away in 1950. And so it is but fitting that I pay my homage to this great leader today through the medium of All India Radio, which has always been such a powerful and important mode of communications in this country.

Having done this, I will now move on to the topic of my lecture. I have chosen to speak on INTEGRAL EDUCATION. I think it is important to define the term 'integral'. The dictionary definition is "necessary to the completeness of, whole, complete". Education is, of course, the most important activity that any civilisation can embark upon, because it is the medium through which a civilisation renews itself and passes down to generations yet unborn the quintessence of wisdom, the knowledge, and experience and the technology that it has received.

We in India are heirs to one of the most powerful, intellectual and educational traditions in human history. I refer, of course, to the first documented educational system in India, the Vedic-Upanishadic system. Although it may have been confined to a rather small section of the population, it was an extremely powerful and luminous system revolving around the method of passing on wisdom from the *Rishi/Guru* to the *Shishya/Disciple*. The students used not only to listen, but to ask searching ques-

tions. If you read the Upanishads, you will find many questioning minds. It was by no means a monologue on the part of the teacher. There were questions by the disciples, and it was in response to those questions that a lot of the teaching was given.

So, we have this very powerful tradition going back many thousands of years, representing one of the high water-marks of human intellectual endeavour. And then, of course, many streams joined in this great tradition. The Buddhist stream followed with the whole Buddhist system of education. Nalanda was one of the greatest Universities that the world had ever known, and they had their own system of teaching through the Sangha and through the lay disciples. Later there was the Islamic influx, and the Christian missionaries and their educational system. Then came the British system of "modern" education sponsored by Lord Macauley. So, our present educational system is the result of a long process of many thousands of years, in which even today elements are visible of all the various streams that came into our educational system.

I do not intend to undertake a detailed statistical study of our educational system, because that has been done by others and this is not really an appropriate forum to do that. What I will try to do today and tomorrow is to share with you some observations and perhaps some insights into the whole system, with emphasis on the integral aspect of education. The whole meaning of an integral education is that it must be able to cover the entire human condition and the totality of the human personality. It is not enough to look upon education simply as an academic endeavour which enables young people to pass examinations and then get gainful employment, or remain unemployed, as the case may be. It is much deeper, a much fuller undertaking.

Now that we are living at a juncture when there is a paradigm shift to a new holism, it is all the more important that our education should become integral. Before I go on to various dimensions of the educational system, I might perhaps dwell for a moment on this paradigm shift. As you are aware, for the last three or four centuries human thought has been dominated by a

dichotomous, materialistic philosophy, what I call the Cartesian-Newtonian-Marxist worldview based essentially on a dichotomy between matter and spirit, between science and spirituality, between body and mind. It was a dichotomous system of looking at the world and, by its very nature, involved conflict, competition and a great deal of hostile interaction.

Now this way of looking at the world certainly brought great achievements. There is no doubt that the achievements of modern science, the tremendous growth of science and technology have brought great gifts of economic progress, medicine, communications and a hundred other aspects of life. But at the same time this way of looking at reality has brought about the most awesome destructive power that the human race has ever known. The nuclear age in which we now live came into being on the 6th August, 1945, the day on which the atomic bomb was thrown on Hiroshima. That atomic bomb, as you know, obliterated half a million people. I happened to be in Hiroshima last year on the 6th of August, where every year people assemble in the Hiroshima Peace Park at the very spot where the bomb fell, and I gathered some idea of the sort of destruction that took place. Today a single nuclear warhead carries destructive capacity equal to one thousand of the bombs that obliterated Hiroshima, and there are at least fifty thousand such nuclear warheads now on planet earth. Thus, although science and technology have given us tremendous power, that power can be used both for good and for evil. The equivalent of one trillion US dollars every year in all world currencies is spent on weapons of mass destruction. There is enough fissionable material today to destroy the earth and all its inhabitants and all forms of life. Therefore, the old pattern of thinking is now simply no longer adequate.

What we have to do is to move into a new, holistic paradigm that stresses convergence rather than conflict, cooperation rather than competition. And any educational policy to be effective today must also be holistic. We can no longer divide education into different levels or the human personality into various compart-

ments. It has to be holistic, and along with this there has to be growth not stagnation.

In India we have had a constitutional directive to universalise elementary education by 1960. We are now going on to 1989, but we are nowhere near achieving even that basic target put forward as a constitutional imperative by our founding fathers. There are still vast disparities, submerged areas and communities and although a great deal of growth has taken place, it is a lopsided growth, it is not yet an integral growth which would cover all areas, regions and classes.

Physical Aspect of an Integral Education System

As I said, what we need is an integral approach to education, and I will deal with this in four different categories (the importance of physical growth, the importance of intellectual growth, the importance of social growth and the importance of spiritual growth) in the context of the holistic view that I have put before you.

Let me start with the physical.

शरीरमाद्यं खलु धर्म साधनम्।

(Shareeramadyam Khalu Dharma Sadhanam)—The Vedas say very clearly that the basis of all *dharma* is the body. Unless the body is properly trained and looked after, no other development is really possible. Our children have to be taught how to sit properly. I go to schools and see children slouched all over their chairs. They are not even taught how to sit properly, how to breathe properly, how to walk. It may sound very simple, but it isn't really. I remember many years ago when I was in Health, we had worked out a graded syllabus of Yoga for schools, so that we could introduce simple Yogic systems into the school level at a very early age. It is wrong to say that we need expensive equipment in order to train the body. If we can introduce Yoga, proper posture, proper breathing in schools at the grassroots level, we will find a new development taking place.

Nutritional inputs and immunisation must be made part of the school programme. The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) was one such programme which was attempting this, but it has still not fully taken off. When the child is at school, that is the time to put in all the inputs that are required. You will be astonished to learn that only two spoonfuls of Vitamin A a year can prevent thousands of children from becoming blind. Sight is a fabulous gift, and yet thousands of Indian children lose their eyesight every year because we are not able to give them one spoon of Vitamin A syrup twice a year.

Unless we are able to integrate the nutritional programme, the body-strengthening programme into the school system, it is no use talking about integral education. There is, of course, mass drill and sports, PT and NCC, but there does not seem to be any national commitment to physical fitness as such. We often lament our poor performance in the Olympics although we are one-seventh of human race. The reason is that there is no commitment to physical fitness as a people. I once said when I was looking after Family Planning that in addition to birth control we need girth control also.

Our food habits are often undesirable. We have a malign racism in our food habits in our curious obsession with white rice, white sugar and white bread, all three of which are weak from the nutritional point of view. There is no reason whatsoever why in a country like ours, which is still suffering from massive malnutrition where nutritional inputs are amongst the lowest in the world, we should have these absurd food habits and throw away precious nutrients as a result of this strange desire for white edibles. This may not appear to be directly connected with education, but from the point of view from which I am talking it is relevant, because we are aiming at developing the entire body. For this posture, sports, Yoga, nutritional inputs, food habits are all important. And now education regarding tobacco and alcohol, drugs and promiscuity, also have to form part of the system if our younger generations are to be spared these scourges that have become such a ghastly menace in the West.

So, the first element of our integral education must be the carefully structured programme of physical fitness and well-being. And it must involve all the various dimensions that I have mentioned including the education of the parents, because many of these elements are to be found not only in the schools but in the homes. When children go to school there must be some way of ensuring feedback to the parents, so that they can get involved and can also get educated in the process of the education of their children.

Training of the Mind and the Aesthetic Sensibilities

The second element of our integral education is intellectual growth. I am not here talking only of the purely academic area where, as is well known, what is needed is the universalisation of primary education, the vocationalisation of secondary education and the rationalisation of higher education. Those are the three tasks that we must set before us. Primary education has to become universal, because we cannot talk of a functional democracy if millions of Indian citizens are illiterate. This is a travesty, and with the Eighth Plan set to begin very shortly it is to be hoped that necessary provisions for this will be made.

As far as secondary education is concerned, we have got to vocationalise it at some point of time. The ten-plus-two formula, I am afraid, has not worked because the vocational stream that has been brought into the plus-two is simply not enough to provide for what the framers of that scheme has expected. The idea was that after taking the vocational stream large numbers of students would be siphoned off into vocations, and the aimless draft from school to college would cease. This has not happened. As against an expected fifty per cent of students who were supposed to be siphoned off, hardly two per cent have taken up to vocational institutions.

The present scheme has failed, and therefore, it has to be reorganised. If we have to vocationalise, we must have at least a three-year course after the tenth standard, so that the young men

and women who pass it can go into their vocations and this drift to college can be prevented. And then in higher education also we have to rationalise the whole system, because at present there is aimlessness and lack of direction. I meet a number of young people, and many of them feel that it is a waste of time when they go to college because there is no serious commitment either among the teachers or among the students. And one of the reasons is that every one wants to drift into college. In the developed nations you may be the son of the richest person there, you simply cannot get into college unless you pass those entrance examinations. But here, for want of anything better to do, everybody drifts to college. Naturally, the atmosphere in the colleges is devoid of any real commitment. These are some of the tasks we have in the academic sphere, plus, of course, reorganisation of teachers' education, strengthening adult education and reviving the library movement by trying to encourage young people to read.

But more important than the academic elements are the intellectual inputs. More important than *what* we learn, is whether we are developing the capacity to learn or not. Most of what we learn is often obsolete even before we leave college. All the chemistry that I learnt at school, for example, the physics and the mathematics, are out of date. The explosion of knowledge is such that every five years a new generation of knowledge is born.

So, the question is whether our education is able to develop among our young boys and girls the quest for truth, the capacity for awe and wonder at the marvels of nature, the capacity to respond to the glory of the sunrise, and the grandeur of the starry heavens on a moonless night. It does not cost anything to teach children to look at a tree, or a flower, and realise the beauty that is in those objects. How many of our children are taught simply to look up at night at this starry firmament in which we live. Do we tell them that there are hundreds of billions of stars in our own galaxy, and hundreds of billions of galaxies in the observed universe? Do we give them any sense of the wonder at the sheer mystery of being alive and conscious?

People talk about miracles. What greater miracle can there be than that from the slime of the primeaval ocean four billion years ago, a creature has emerged with a brain which can become aware of itself, which can become aware of being. None of these things are taught to our students. We de-mystify and uglify all our knowledge, and put it into such a boring and unattractive format that even the great insights of the human race are reduced to common place things.

The point that I am making is that when we talk of integral education we talk of the flowering of the intellect, and we have to develop these intellectual capacities. We have a tremendously rich heritage of music, of dance, of art, which can introduce students to this aesthetic dimension. The study of the classics has unfortunately virtually disappeared. This study is extremely important, not so much for the classics themselves as for the intellectual discipline that they involve. Whether it is Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian, the classics had a very special role to play in framing the mind, the sensibility. Once you have been exposed to a glorious language like Sanskrit, for example, your aesthetic sensibility is refined.

The three-language formula again, like the ten-plus-two formula, has not worked. I travel throughout the length and breadth of India and I find it is not working. I have been suggesting that we should give a fresh choice in the three-language formula. In the Hindi speaking areas we should have Hindi, English and, as a third choice, either Sanskrit or Urdu. And in the non-Hindi speaking areas there is regional language, there is English, and along with Hindi we should introduce Sanskrit, because it will make it easier for the South Indian students to learn Hindi if they can go through Sanskrit which is generally the base of their own language. These are important elements in the development of the mind, because if you cannot communicate you cannot grow, and how you can communicate except through language. One of the great tragedies in India today is that language is now looked upon just as common currency. There has been a devaluation of language. The concept of the sacred word, the Logos, the *Shabda Brahma* has disappeared, and language is now used in the most horrific ways.

The need to recapture the inner beauty of language, of reinstating the elements of intellectual inquiry and of intellectual thought is very important. I am not so worried about language our people learn, but about whether or not they have learnt to develop their minds. Because if one thing is predictable, it is that everything is going to change. In our own lifetimes we have seen human civilisation change beyond our wildest dreams. I remember when I was in school, if an aeroplane flew over we would all run out of our rooms and eagerly look up, hardly able to believe that there was such a thing as an aeroplane. Television did not exist at that time. Within our lifetimes there have been these multiple revolutions, and how do we know what else will happen in the decades to come. Therefore, the youth of India had to be prepared, intellectually, to deal with the new knowledge that is developing.

We have the capacity to do so. If you go to the United States, Indian nuclear scientists, computer engineers, medical professionals and other intellectuals are at the top of the ladder. The Indian mind is second to none in the world, in fact we have this continuing intellectual heritage of many centuries which is quite unique. What we have to do is once again to reorient our inner perceptions. We are so obsessed with the outer that we have neglected the inner, intellectual re-orienting, without which there cannot really be any substantial and sustained growth.

Today, I will leave with you these thoughts regarding the physical and intellectual elements in an integral approach to education. Tomorrow, I will talk about the social implications of education, which are extremely important, and then culminate in the dimension of spiritual growth which, to my mind, is the most important adventure that any human being can undertake.

Development of Socially Relevent Moral Values

Part-II

WE SPOKE YESTERDAY about the physical and the intellectual aspects of an integral education system. Today, I will turn to two other aspects which are equally important, and I will begin with aspect of social integration. But before I come to actual social values, I would like to point out the dimensions in which we must now consider this problem. Humanity is in the throes of a transition more fundamental than any of the earlier ones it had undergone, in some ways more important than the transition from the caves to the forests, from the forests to nomadic living, from the nomadic to agricultural civilisations and from there to industrial and then to the post-industrial society.

What is happening now is that we are transisting into a global society. We may be too close to the event to realise the immensity and the magnitude of the change, but the fact is that humanity is entering an entirely new kind of civilisation. It is global in many ways. Politically, there is no longer any such thing as bilateral issue. Every issue in the ultimate analysis becomes multilateral, as has indeed become very clear in the last few months. Even the most difficult bilateral issues ultimately become internationalised, because the world in fact has become one. Even though there may still be a hundred and fifty different nationalities, the world is very much becoming one unit politically. For several years now there has been a world economic order. Economic decisions are no longer taken by individual countries. There is a vast global economic network which functions with its own inner momentum, and what price a developing nation is going to get for a particular primary product no longer depends upon that nation but upon decisions taken thousands of miles away.

Similarly in communications we have entered a new era. The advent of television has been one of the most revolutionary changes in human civilisation since the advent of agriculture. The fact that today, simply by switching on a television set, people from any part of the world can simultaneously see and hear an event that is taking place thousands of miles away—whether it is a political or a sports event, a music or a dance festival—is something that has never happened before in human history, and this has knit the whole human consciousness together in an extra-ordinary manner. Space travel, the use of satellite technology, all this has developed only in the last few decades.

Even in culture, there is a trend towards globalization. Certainly there is a cultural diversity in this world, but as I travel constantly around the globe I find that young people today are dancing to the same rhythms, whether it is Bombay or Beijing, Moscow or Madras, New Delhi or New York. They tend to wear the same sort of clothes, their food habits are beginning to converge. So what is happening is a globalization of consciousness. And, therefore, when we talk of social integration, we must remember that every Indian child is also a global citizen. Let us not get caught up in the old Chauvinistic trap. Certainly we have a very great culture, and we are proud of it. But we are now very clearly part of the emerging world culture, and that is why when I talk of social values I will start with the family which is the basic unit of social life, then the village or the urban community, then the city, then the State, then the nation, but not stop at the nation but go on to the entire world.

No amount of mere individual development is sufficient to create a viable and dynamic society. Human beings are essentially social beings, and it is only if socially desirable values are transmitted at an early stage in the educational system that we can hope for a peaceful and integrated society. We live in an age of unprecedented social turmoil and violence. The last forty years in India have seen the emergence of vast sections of society which previously remained virtually submerged. The old basis of Indian society under British rule, which was largely feudal and hierarchic-

al, has collapsed and in its place new class and caste alignments have thrown national life into a continuing turmoil. Some of this, of course, is to be expected and even valued, because an equitable social system can never emerge unless there is a vast democratisation of national consciousness. And certainly our democracy in the last forty years has brought political consciousness to the mind of every Indian citizen regardless of where he or she lives. Today in the remotest hamlet of Ladakh, Bastar or Lakshdweep, people are aware and alert. But in this turmoil, the one fact which stands out starkly is the rapid erosion of what are called moral and social values.

The traditional value system has collapsed, but its place has not been taken by any viable alternative. This is the tragedy. Traditional systems have to change. I am not at all making a plea for the reintroduction of outmoded traditional values. That is not possible or desirable, because as we move towards a global society we will have to move into a new set of values, a new dynamism which would enable us to survive in this nuclear age. But unfortunately, with the collapse of the traditional values no coherent value system has taken its place. In the result, the nation has been reduced to a moral wasteland, in which personal greed and sectarian interests take precedence over the larger social good.

I know that there are a large number of people in this country who are working selflessly. But by and large, it is now generally accepted that corruption has become a sort of way of life, no longer something which is out of the usual. And the result is that the value system up on which our whole society has been based has begun to erode. It is here that the Indian educational system has registered its greatest failure. Despite the fact that our national movement was led by such outstanding and creative thinkers as Sri Aurobindo and Lokmanya Tilak, Rabindranath Tagore and Maulana Azad, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, our education has totally failed in making the ideals of these great visionaries relevant to the consciousness of post-independence India.

This is a very curious phenomenon. In no other national movement have there been people of such high moral, spiritual and intellectual qualities as they were in the Indian national movement. And yet, for some strange reason, those values have not even remotely been translated into our educational system. Whether it was Sri Aurobindo's flaming patriotism or Gurudev Tagore's aesthetic humanism, Gandhiji's stress on non-violence and moral values or Jawaharlal Nehru's deep concern for the welfare of the oppressed and the backward, none of these seem to have had the slightest impact on our educational planners. Gandhiji and Gurudev, as you know, set up institutions to test their educational ideas—the Nai Talim movement and the Vishwa Bharati movement. But these have languished and whatever innovative thinking was done has been lost amid the dreary desert sands of inertia.

We find ourselves in a situation where socially desirable values and compassion find no place in our system. Despite a series of high level recommendations over the last three decades for the introduction of moral education starting from the Sri Prakasa Committee and coming right down to the Kothari Commission, we seem to be totally incapable of incorporating any concrete elements into our curriculum. Even such an elementary matter as obliging students to keep their institutions clean is not accepted. The usual quota of Safai Karamcharis is inevitably introduced, thus accentuating class and caste divisions instead of overcoming them. Despite Gandhiji's stress on the dignity of labour, to which we all pay lip service, hardly anything is actually done to introduce elements of socially beneficial activities in our educational structure.

Let us remember that social and moral values will not come to a child automatically, the child will either learn these through example or they will have to be taught. The best way, of course, is to teach by example—as the Gita says, whatever great people do, the example they set, will be followed by others. So either you teach by high moral example which has now become rare indeed, or through our educational system.

Now what are the sort of values in which we are interested? Cleanliness is a very basic and very important value. Individually we are a very clean people, we constantly bathe at every possible opportunity. But collectively we are one of the dirtiest civilisations on earth, because while we have been taught individual cleanliness we are not taught the social value of cleanliness. We will take the dust and the refuse from our compound, and throw it on to the road. As long as we are clean, it is all right, it does not really matter if the road is dirty. This sort of attitude is something which has to be changed.

Then there is punctuality. We are supposed to be very punctual, because our tradition is that in the 'Mohoortam' not even one second can be changed. And yet in this country we seem to live in the eternal. There is no idea of time. I remember when I came to Delhi twenty years ago and I used to go to functions on time, there was often hardly anybody there, because there was a tradition that a Minister will necessarily arrive at least 45 minutes late. This is an absurd situation. It is against all the norms of our own cultural tradition, and even of the western tradition where punctuality is an extremely important element.

Then take politeness. What does it cost to be polite? Nothing. Japan is a country of several small islands, very heavily populated. Every time I visit Japan I am astonished at the politeness with which the Japanese greet each other. They are constantly bowing to each other, greeting each other and smiling at each other, because they are taught from childhood that this is the way that you should treat others. Here to get into an airlines, far less a bus, is a traumatic experience. And with all our much vaunted commitment to the dignity of women and looking upon them as Durga and Shakti, the way women are treated in crowded enclosures is something which is disgraceful.

These are all matters which have to be taught to our children. Respect to teachers, parents and elders is not a feudal virtue. Even in China today, the elderly are respected. Then there is helpfulness. I remember in my childhood I was a member of the Boy

Scout Movement and we had to perform one good deed everyday. That is a very good idea. Children must be taught to help the less-favoured, weaker ones. If a child falls other should come and help him get up, not adopt the attitude that we simply look after ourselves and it does not matter what happens to the others. This is the sort of social environment that we have to create, and we cannot create it unless these are taught in our educational system.

The family has its importance, the parents have their responsibility, the teachers have their responsibility. But the educational system has also to impart a social ethic, a work ethic. There is a lot of talk about the 'Protestant' work ethic which is supposed to have been responsible for the development of western civilisation, or the Japanese work ethic. The Japanese work so hard that one has to force them to take leave. We also have a work ethic in India:-

योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्

(Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam)—Yoga is skill in works, that is the definition of Yoga in the Bhagwadgita and the work should be '*Suchir Dakshah*'—neat, clean and perfect. We have the ethic, but do we live up to it? Do we reflect this ethic in our educational system? Are our children even taught of these values that are embedded in our cultural background?

When we talk of socially desirable values, we have to take a positive decision to introduce them into the schoolroom, either through direct teaching of moral education or indirectly. Let us remember that no nation can become great unless it has a coherent *dharma*, a fairly clear scale of values to which it is committed. In India this has now become confused and diluted. The early impetus of the freedom movement has evaporated, leaving us in a sort of intellectual wilderness from which there seems to be no escape. Certainly there has been tremendous economic growth in the last forty years, but whether as a nation our moral fibre and intellectual calibre has really risen is open to serious doubt. If it has not risen, the responsibility for this is squarely upon our educational system.

One of the reasons for this is a distorted and anti-religious view of secularism. Secularism has never meant that we should banish all moral or spiritual values from our country. Secularism means the total freedom of all religions in the country, the total equality of all religions and the fact that the State as such has no religion. But it does not mean, and should not be taken to mean, that any value which is desirable but also happens to be a religious value should, therefore, be neglected. I think the time has now come when we must rethink this whole issue and see what we can do to re-establish certain moral principles in our educational system.

We have before us the examples of Germany and Japan, two nations which forty years ago had literally been flattened after their defeat in the second world war. In Berlin there was not one single structure standing at the end of the war after the bombing. How is it that within these four decades they have so rebuilt their nations that today they are in the very forefront of development? How did their civilisations produce the discipline, dedication and capacity for sustained work, whereas we with all our great cultural heritage have failed to do so? Why is it that in India we always go for soft options; we want all the advantages of democracy but are not prepared to accept the discipline and responsibility that this involves. Why do we speak constantly about fundamental rights but conveniently forget that fundamental duties are also part of the Constitution? Our rights of course we want, fair enough, it is a democracy and we should have our rights. But why do we forget that rights and duties are two sides of the same coin, and that ultimately if we keep insisting on our rights and keep forgetting our obligations and duties, we will get into an extremely difficult situation?

The answer to these questions is complex, but surely a large part of the problem lies in the total collapse of any value orientation in our educational system. Unless this dimension receives urgent and effective consideration, we will not be able to pull ourselves out of the negative syndrome into which we seem to have fallen, and we will not be able to build the India of which Sardar Patel and other great leaders dreamed. Therefore, as my third point in this

presentation, I would like to stress the prime necessity of reintroducing social and moral values in our educational system. It can be done if there is clear cut desire to do so, and in a manner which will not offend anybody and which, I am sure, will be widely welcomed throughout the country.

The Inner Dimension of Spiritual Growth

Finally, I come to what is perhaps the most fundamental dimension of any educational system, the spiritual dimension, involving the inner recesses of the human personality and the highest reaches of human consciousness. I am aware that this is generally looked upon as the preserve of the individual or the family rather than part of the educational system itself, and it is true that under our Constitution it is neither possible nor desirable for the public education system to undertake direct religious education. Nonetheless, the system must at least provide some introduction to our vast and varied religious heritage. The Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi, and the framers of our Constitution, were by no means anti-religious. As I said, what secularism in the Indian context really means is that there is no state religion and that there is no discrimination on the basis of religion. It does not mean that the religious and spiritual values should be outlawed from our educational system. It means equal respect for all religions, not equal neglect of all religions.

I think this is an important point that we have to understand and we have to work on this. Let me give you some examples of universal values drawn from the Vedanta which could, in their own way, be incorporated into our educational system. I will give you five concepts from Vedanta. The first is the fact that this entire universe, not only the tiny speck of dust which we call the earth but the billions upon billions of galaxies of which I spoke, all of them are permeated by the same indivisible force. This is something now which the scientists are also beginning to accept. After the Eienstinian revolution, with Heisenburg's Uncertainty Principle, quantum mechanics, extra-galactic cosmology and other

dramatic developments, scientists are now looking for that one unifying principle. They now realise that the dichotomies between matter and energy are artificial, not inherent in the nature of reality. And they are now beginning to veer round the view, expressed many thousands of years ago, by the *Rishis*, that there is only one power that permeates the entire universe.

Then take the Vedantic concept of the divinity of each individual, that the Lord resides in the heart of every individual. Individuals are referred to in the Upanishads as '*Amritasya Putrah*'—Children of Immortality. What a great, noble concept this is. If God exists, of course God is divine, there is nothing unusual about it. But our *Rishis* had postulated the inherent divinity of each individual, hence the dignity of each individual, hence the fact that each individual has got to be respected and given the freedom to develop, to fan that spark of divinity within him into the blazing fire of spiritual realisation.

Let us move onwards from that to the concept of '*Vassudhava Kutumbakam*', the world as family, Parliament is our highest forum. On the first gate when you enter Parliament the great *Shloka* is written.

अयं निजः परोवेति गणना लघु चेतसाम्
उदार चरितानांतु वसुधैव कुटुंबकम्

This is mine, this is yours, the divisive view is a small and narrow way of looking at reality. But for those of the greater consciousness, the world is a family. What a marvellous concept this is for global society that is emerging. These are the sort of values that we have, inherent in our culture.

I will give you another example, the essential unity of all religions.

एकं सद्ब्रह्मैवाव्यक्तं बहुधा नमस्कृतम्

The Rig Veda says that the truth is one, although the wise may call it by many names. I take part now in many inter-religious, inter-faith dialogues. I come myself from a Muslim majority state,

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have worshipped at Muslim shrines from my childhood and have been educated in Christian schools. As a neighbour of the Punjab, I have worshipped at the Golden Temple ever since I can remember. I have visited many of the great churches of the world. It cannot ultimately be that all these great places of worship are devoted and dedicated to different divinities. Religions may have developed at different periods in humanity's history, but if one believes in an all—pervasive divinity, ultimately the goal has to be one.

Today when in the name of religion hatred is being preached, divisiveness is being preached, walls are being built to separate man from man, we must go back to the source of our tradition which tells us that these are all different paths to the same goal. In the same way as rivers and rivulets arise from different parts of the globe but flow ultimately into the same ocean, so do all the great religions of the world have different origins but ultimately move towards the same goal. This is borne out if you look at the mystic teachings, whether they are the seers of the Upanishads or Muslim sufis like Maulana Jallaluddin Rumi, great Christian mystics, like Meister Eckhart and William Blake, or the great Gurus of the Sikhs, they all sing of the same all-pervasive power, of love and of compassion.

That is what we should teach our children. We are so afraid of talking about religion now, that we have allowed the leadership of religion to go into the hands of essentially backward-looking and fundamentalist people. What we have to do is to recapture the spirit of religion to re-interpret religion in the light of the nuclear age, and to place before our younger generations the glory and wisdom of our ancient wisdom. That is the role that our educational system has to perform.

And a fifth concept of the Vedanta that I want to put before you is '*Bahujana Hitaya, Bahujana Sukhaya*'—the welfare of all sections of society. There are some philosophies which preach the implacable conflict between one class and another class, others preach conflict between one religion and another religion, or one

caste and another caste. But Vedanta preaches the welfare of all beings.

सर्वेपि सुखिनः संतु, सर्वे संतु निरामयाः ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यंतु मा कश्चित् दुःखं भाग् भवेत् ।

May everyone be happy, may no one suffer, that is the depth of compassion in our scriptures. And the Buddha and Mahavira have gone one step further, compassion not only for human beings but for all living creatures.

We talk today of environmental values, of the destruction of wild life and our eco-system. We have been taught in our heritage that the earth is sacred, the rivers are sacred, the forests are the abodes of the *devas*, because it is ultimately those forests that capture water for us and make civilisation possible. So through such great ideas and ideals, surely we can teach our children desirable values. These are not values which are dependent on or confined to any particular religion, these are universal values. Therefore let us not be so afraid of our heritage that we refuse to touch it. By neglecting the beauty and power of those thoughts we deprive our younger generations of any impact of such ideas. Today it is possible for a child to study from the primary to the Ph.D level-18 years of education—and not once to be exposed to these great ideas at any level. Are we justified in doing this? I would like to ask this question to my distinguished listeners, wherever they may be. Are we justified in imposing this sort of intellectual and spiritual deprivation upon our younger generations? It is because of this distorted view that we have taken of moral and spiritual values, that we find ourselves today, forty years after independence, struggling in this wasteland.

These, then, are the four dimensions that we have to incorporate into any integral system of education—physical wellbeing in the widest sense of that term; intellectual development along with the development of aesthetic sensibilities; social integration starting from the family and going outwards in widening concentric circles until we cover the entire globe; and, finally, nurturing that spark within us, the divine, which really makes us unique being

and which enables us to fulfil our destiny. It is only if these four elements receive adequate attention in our educational system that we can begin to call it integral, and that it can begin to face up to the tremendous challenges that we face today.

Forty years is a tiny span when we look at the vast millenia of our history stretching back into the mists of antiquity. But in this nuclear age time has telescoped and the growing aspirations of vast millions threaten to overwhelm us and our unimaginative structures. What is needed not only in education but in all spheres of national life is the capacity for clear and coherent thought, leading to a carefully interlocking series of policy decisions aimed at meeting the multiple challenges that we face. And education, dealing as it does with the very texture of human consciousness, is surely an area which must receive top priority.

Concluding Remarks

Let me conclude by saying that an integral education developed in India can, in fact, become a model for other countries if it succeeds in integrating science and spirituality, the inner and the outer. With our unique heritage in both these areas stretching back into the very dawn of history, we are in a unique position to develop this synthesis and present it to the rapidly emerging global community. That would be a lasting contribution, not only to the free India that Sardar Patel and his colleagues strove so hard to create, but to the broader world community of which India will always remain an integral part.



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