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IMAGES OF MAN

A Philosophic and Scientific inquiry

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This is indeed a very unique publication in several ways and will be of immense value to educationists, men of thought and men of action.

The central concern of the book is education. As the authors write, "To become a unique, free, responsible human being and to create a better world by constructive social change are the central concerns of education for us". However, the authors realise that each culture continues to look at man from its own angle, in spite of the great efforts made by philosophers from the most ancient days up to the modern times and the efforts of the scientists in the last two centuries, to think objectively of man, his limitations and his assets. This is because, as the authors put it, "Culture enlarges as well as limits man's knowledge of himself since each culture has its own way of knowing man and other realities".

Right through, the aim of the philosopher has been to consider every problem from a rational and universal standpoint. The aim of the scientist is to study the problem by accumulating facts and setting up hypotheses concerning the problem and verifying them objectively. Thus, between the philosophers and the scientists, we have now a vast body of knowledge on man, on the basis of which we can evolve a system of education which will help us to enable human beings to grow up as individuals with a rich inner life and compassion for all human beings and build up a society with opportunities for each human being and with concern for the development of other societies in the world. However, education has always been conditioned by a limited outlook of man and his abilities based on the social heritage and the beliefs and customs of the given group.

The aim of the authors is to survey the "images of man" down the ages and provide the philosophic and scientific basis for

education so that it can discharge its function on the basis of reflection rather than custom, on the basis of knowledge rather than assumption.

This task they have tried to achieve by dividing the book into three parts. In the first part they survey the ancient Indian, Chinese, Greek and Judeo-Christian views of man. One sees in this part the conspicuous absence of the Islamic view of man. After surveying the past and the philosophico-religious views on man, they have attempted in the second part to present the results of scientific studies of man in the modern age. In the final part entitled "Toward a New Synthesis", they try to indicate the lines on which education must proceed in the future to build up a new man who develops his self and personality on the one side and a universal outlook on the other.

An important problem facing the developing countries today is to work for economic development as well as for the spread of education to build the new man. As the authors write, "Formerly education and self-development were benefits accruing from one's economic status, and educational development followed economic growth. Today, on the other hand, for the first time in history development of education on a world-wide scale is tending to precede economic development". (p. 236). Human development and economic development are closely related, each acting on and reacting to the other. Economic development on the basis of borrowed capital and borrowed technology leaves the vast majority of the people in the country unaffected and increases the gap between the affluent section and the rest of the people as the economic and social history of India since Independence has clearly demonstrated. Unless the citizens become motivated and competent, all economic planning will be futile. The success of economic planning depends on the type of educational programme adopted. If education is man-making, national development can take place.

The authors draw attention to the two movements pulling man to opposite directions: one to retain unity and identity and be where he is; and the other to break open the boundaries and reach out for a higher universality. What should be the goal of man? Should it be status quo by endless repetition or should it be the realization of the potentialities in oneself? A static society is merely reproductive, functioning mechanically and automatically. But a dynamic society, with the image of man that emphasizes his potentialities and possibilities, has to function consciously and aspire for growth. Modern science as well as ancient philosophic thought emphasizes that each human being has great potential-

ties. But social tradition looks upon people of some races, castes and tribal groups as inferior and incapable of responding to the demands of modern society and modern life. This is an area in which the image of man of the traditional society has to change in consonance with the results of philosophic reflection and scientific investigation. Such a change will enable it to operate the newly set up democratic institutions and progressive economic institutions with success. As the authors point out, "The modern period began with a renewed importance placed upon the individual. In order to secure freedom for the individual various chains of bondage were cut off one after another". (p. 171). However, this emphasis on individuality leads to the problem of alienation. So the most difficult task of the modern society is to see that each individual has the full scope to develop his potentialities while seeing that he retains warm relations with other members of the society. As the authors points out "The paradox of human existence is that man needs others in order to be himself" (p. 172). This is clear from the findings of Gullivan, Rogers, Fromm and other psychiatrists.

The vital necessity of maintaining interpersonal relations with others in order to avoid isolation and alienation emphasizes the importance of communication at the personal level, and the sharing of innermost feelings and thoughts with others. Here the authors refer to the findings of Fromm who reports how love is the binding force and how love enables a man to overcome the sense of isolation and separateness. It is the task of education to help them to experience a sense of oneness with the humanity as a whole. The authors show how the Indian philosopher Sri Aurobindo and the American psychiatrist Maslow agree on this point. But this universal outlook, the realization of the oneness of mankind is not mere mysticism. It is the result of a deliberate effort as in the ancient system of yoga. This is the difficult task that man has to accomplish; to liberate himself from the restrictions and inhibitions of the small group in which he grows up so that he can realize his potentialities, to realize his sense of oneness with the mankind as a whole and to look at his fellowmen from this angle rather than as members of this or that particular group while yet retaining warm relations with other human beings; in short, to be himself and to look upon each human being as a member of his family.

"Images of Man" is a timely publication since every country in the world has to think seriously about the type of man who will be able to meet the problems arising from rapid technological changes and the drastic changes in social relationships. These

problems are common to the developed as well as the developing countries. They cannot be solved with the help of the cultural traditions which each group has inherited. There is an urgent need to critically examine cultural traditions with the help of knowledge from philosophical and scientific studies in the light of the future needs which are likely to arise. The authors have done their best to help the educationists and the policy-makers understand these problems.

It is, however, necessary to point out that the chapter dealing with "Man in Indian Philosophy" is not of the same level as the other chapters in Part I. As already noted, it will be useful to insert here a chapter dealing with the Islamic view of man.

Finally, it may be pointed out that a list of books referred to in the text and an index will enhance the value of the book when a new edition is called for.

—Prof. B. Kuppuswamy.