

## The Meeting Pool Where Education Makes an Interface with Philosophy

Rajiba Lochan Mohapatra

### CHAPTER

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#### Rajiba Lochan Mohapatra

Ph.D., Department of Education, The  
University of Burdwan, West Bengal,  
India

#### E Mail:

[rlmohapatra@edu.buruniv.ac.in](mailto:rlmohapatra@edu.buruniv.ac.in)

**Keywords:** interface, purpose, platform.

#### Abstract:

Education and philosophy are intertwined on a common platform called purpose. The purpose defines a human being and their life afterward. Our lives have been chiseled and hammered and thus given shape. This chiseling and hammering are called education. This gives shape to our lives. This shape is called philosophy.

Philosophy is the destination, and education is the process of reaching it. People are differently educated and therefore have different destinations. Why do people have different destinations? This is because people have different purposes in life. Hence purpose is the common platform where both education and philosophy meet. This writing is a humble endeavor to show how different purposes are met through education to reach our destination, which is the ultimate philosophy of life. Some of these purposes are ethical purpose, economic purpose, social purpose, and spiritual purpose, and they purpose to deal with the uncertain future.

#### Prologue:

For ages, education has needed philosophy for its growth and survival. The very essence of education lies in philosophy. When a mother teaches her child language and etiquette, she uses the philosophy she adheres to. When a father educates his child about the social and behavioral milieu, he uses the philosophy he believes. When a teacher trains a learner and prepares them for a larger role, s/he uses philosophy as her base. When a neighborhood uncle lectures while passing on a street, he uses the philosophy he practices. When a priest in a temple or church gives sermons, he disseminates the religious philosophy he is brought up with. When a political leader mesmerizes people with his speech, he also dwells in political philosophy. Every learning and interactional platform one comes across is loaded with some kind of philosophy. And the learners have to face them day and night. Come learn and make their own, and many forget or neglect. But they have to be influenced by some kind of philosophy. It is up to them whether they are choosing the right one or the wrong one. The role of education, more specifically formal education, is to help the learner guide towards the correct path one needs to follow. Therefore, every education setup sticks to some kind of social, national, or economic philosophy it thinks is useful for survival.

Now the question is, why does education need philosophy every time it wants to propagate something? The answer is education is not a random activity. It is not even an activity of

compulsion. It is an activity of volition. And every volitional activity is purpose-driven. Philosophy gives that purpose to education. It is the purpose that drives education from head to toe. From the beginning of education, parents set a purpose for their children. In school, some change their purpose by being influenced by teachers. When they come to work field, some also change their purpose with the environment. So every human activity is purpose-driven. It is the purpose that makes the meeting between education and philosophy happen.

### **The Meeting Place Called Purpose:**

Philosophy gives purpose to education. Education chooses a purpose according to its convenience. Let us discuss some of these purposes in detail.

**The Ethical Purpose:** Philosophy provides the moral base for every human activity. People have always asked the question of ‘why we do what we do before any meaningful activity. One of the many reasons people provide education is to use it as a platform for teaching moral values. Human society differs from every other society because of its rule and order. These rules, orders and principles are the core of morality. Maintaining individual morality will help to maintain universal morality. The Vedas call it ‘Ritah,’ and the Puranas call it ‘Dharma.’ Any society at the collective level detaches itself, and an individual at a personal level, if detached from that moral principle, is bound to fall. Many civilizations have fallen because of this. They had everything, but somehow, people became devoid of that moral code and suffered. Therefore the Bhagavat Gita says, “Yato Dharma Tato Jaya.” It means where there is dharma (universal order), there is victory. *Manusmriti*, another ancient Hindu scripture, speaks, “Dharma Rakshyati Rakshitah”. It means dharma protects its protector. The *Atharva Veda* says, “Pruthivim Dharmana Dhrutam,” meaning Dharma upholds the world.

So, every learner needs to know what dharma or the moral principle is. At the individual level, every learner should be taught four dharma—swadharma, samaja dharma, rastra dharma and viswa dharma. Doing one’s own duty perfectly and regularly is swadharma. An action for the neighborhood is samaja dharma. Contribution towards the nation is called rastra dharma. And duty for the betterment of the whole world is called viswa dharma. To fulfill this ethical purpose, education needs the guidance of philosophy. And we know philosophy is the sourcebook of ethics. So, all the scriptures, in a way, are philosophical by nature. So, we should learn those scriptures to understand the ethical purpose of education.

**The Economic Purpose:** it may seem unlikely that education needs philosophy for economic purposes. But this is true. For every economic activity, there should be an ethical base. Economic activity devoid of dharma is bound to fall. Therefore, in the order of four *purusarthas* Dharma comes first. It means the other three *purusarthas* have to be according to the principle of dharma. So the order is *Dharma, Artha, Kama, Mokshya*. To earn or to generate wealth, ethics can never be abandoned. To enjoy life, ethics cannot also be abandoned. Therefore we have ‘vivah samskara’ (marriage ceremony). And to achieve liberation or *mokshya* the path of dharma is a must. As our concern here is about ‘*artha*’ or the economic

purpose of education, we can say with certainty that it must have dharma in its base. Otherwise, it would bring a sudden downfall. Indian *puranas* and *dharmasastras* are filled with stories where immoral economic activity brings downfall and disaster to the character. Modern management theories now understand this concept. One of the great writers of our times Arthur Miller in his play ‘All My Sons’ has beautifully depicted this concept. In that play, a character called Joe Keller, in his greed to amass wealth through unfair means has committed the crime and later on found his own son dead. Therefore learners from the very beginning should be taught how to generate wealth but through fair means. And education here meets philosophy to guide it so that the process of generating wealth should be fair and just.

### **The Social Purpose:**

Humans are social beings. Socialization, therefore, is an aspect of education. A term in sociology called ‘enculturation’ means socialization through education. Previously parents used to socialize with their children. Nowadays, with the changing social fabric, where both parents are busy in their daily work schedule, schools are increasingly taking this responsibility. But socialization is not an easy process. It requires a thorough knowledge of cultural understanding and national philosophy. Therefore we find different kinds of socialization in different countries. As per the cultural and national requirements, children are socialized. Maharishi Kashyapa had two wives—*Aditi* and *Diti*. *Aditi* was the mother of the demi-gods, who were known as *adityas*. They were brought up with the *samskara* of *devas*. So they became *devas*. *Aditi* installed the qualities in her sons to become godlike. And they became like that. On the contrary, *Diti*’s training of her children was completely opposite. She trained them with all the devilish qualities that the universe had ever known. And her sons became like that. They became *Daityas*. The puranas beautifully showed the conflicts of these half-brothers. Having been born from the same father, the *devas* and the *daityas* were found to be characters of opposites. This is because of their different socialization. Therefore, the best socialization can make the worst learner better. The ancient kingdom of Sparta socialized its children to be great warriors. And it had produced some of the greatest warriors. But, ancient Greece socialized its children to be great thinkers. And lo, it produced some of the greatest thinkers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

### **The Spiritual Purpose:**

Every human is a divine creation. Once their basic and social needs are fulfilled, they strive for more. That something more is nothing but a spiritual quest. Abraham Maslow’s theory of ‘need hierarchy’ has depicted it beautifully. We evolve with the fulfillment of our needs. Our journey starts with fulfilling physiological needs, and the need for self-actualization comes last. In between, we have safety needs, psychological needs and esteem needs. Each need is to be satisfied via certain elements. For example, to meet basic or physiological need we need food, water, clothes etc.; to satisfy safety need we require health and wellness, financial security, safety against accident and injury; to fulfill psychological need we need friendship, romantic

attachments, family relationship, community etc.; and to cater to our esteem need we require appreciation and respect. But after one experiences all these, s/he desires something intangible and immaterial. That is the quest for knowing the self, the creation and all the transcendental concepts. Then you do not require all the said needs. You require *shunyata* (loneliness) and *antardrusti* (introspection). Now you want philosophy to guide you and show you the right path. Upanishads are one of the best philosophical treatises for this. It is said, “*tyejet ekam kulasyarthe, gramasyarthe kulam tyejet; gramam janapadasyarthe, atmarthe pruthivim tyejet*”. It means for the cause of family. It is better to relinquish one member if the situation demands, for the cause of the village, you may leave your family; for the cause of the state, you may have to leave your village, and when the question of knowing the self comes, you can leave the whole world. Therefore, the Indian culture has seen *Yogis* and *Rishies* leaving everything and going to the deep forest for self-actualization. Philosophy is all happy to guide potential seekers to reach their destination. Ancient Indian education also has these categories. But unlike Maslow, it has only two—the *Apara Vidya* (that education which helps the learner to achieve material happiness) and the *Para Vidya* (that education which helps the learner in knowing the self). At first, *Apara Vidya* was taught to the learners. But in their later stages, *Para Vidya* was taught. So the learners, when they return to their household life, use their knowledge of *Apara Vidya* to sustain themselves in the world. Then, with time, when their mind gets fed up with the mundane life, they automatically use the knowledge of *Para Vidya* to experience that transcendental.

### **The Purpose of Dealing with the Uncertain:**

Human life is uncertain and unpredictable at times. Things may go on smoothly, but there may be a sudden halt, a mishap, or something unfathomable. This may completely turn them upside down. Natural calamities like tsunami, earthquakes and cyclones bring devastation. The onset of corona brought the whole world to a standstill. Many people lost their lives, many people suffered a loss of livelihood, and some millions went into a psychological depression. How to deal with this uncertainty caused by nature? Education, with the help of philosophy, would bring the solution. If we analyze the modern lifestyle, we will find the answer. Busy and selfish lifestyles, massive exploitation of nature, and non-concern over sensitive issues have brought this corona-like pandemic to us. Howsoever material the cause might look, the real cause lies in the collective human consciousness. We have to introspect now. Education needs to train the young mind to think critically and deal with the coming uncertainties of life.

Uncertainty is not only caused by natural and physical forces but also by innovation and technology. For example, in 1998, Kodak, which had 85% market control in the photo business, was virtually stopped now. All its 1 lakh 70 thousand employees are now jobless. Digital photography has wiped out this company from the market. The same fate happened to brands like HMT, Bajaj scooter, Konark TV, Phillips Radio, Nokia mobile phone, Rajdoot motorcycle

and Ambassador Car. These brands failed to match the time's need and vanished, as do the employees and logistics. New software and machines are taking human jobs massively.

In America, IBM-Watson software has drastically decreased the work of lawyers. Watson software's diagnosis of the disease is four times better than an average doctor's. MOOCs and other online platforms will kill teachers' jobs massively. Virtual platforms will be the reality of tomorrow. So the biggest problem of tomorrow's generation is harnessing technology and finding newer work options for survival. Moreover as we will get a lot of free time, mind management will also be a great challenge for tomorrow's generation. A sorry state of affairs is that the human mind is not evolving parallel with the change and evolution of technology. This would create a wide gap between technological evolution vis-à-vis human evolution. This might create a lot of chaos and anarchy in society. The role of philosophy is very important here. It must find out the solution for these coming problems of the future.

### **Epilogue:**

Both education and philosophy are two sides of the same coin. The former is the practical side, while the latter is theory-laden. A perfect meeting of both can give birth to a system of education that is complete and everlasting. Education without philosophy will be rudderless, and philosophy without education will be barren. Both need each other to make themselves complete. Without philosophy, more specifically dharma, education would lose its vitality. Therefore, the however effort may require must teach the principle of dharma among the learners. The Bhagavat Gita aptly says, "Swalpamapasya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat". It means even a little dharma practice would redeem you from great fear. Every education system must endeavor to install that seed of dharma among young minds. Then only it can become robust and long-lasting.

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### **HOW TO CITE**

Rajiba Lochan Mohapatra (2022). The meeting pool where education makes an interface with philosophy. ©International Academic Publishing House (IAPH), Somnath Das (eds.), Impact of Education in the Light of Different Pedagogical Subjects ,Vol. 1, pp. 41-45, ISBN: 978-81-957954-4-4. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52756/iieldps.2022.e01.002>

