

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration  
New Delhi

## **Eighteenth Foundation Day Lecture**

### **National Education**

by

**Padma Shri Sushri Nivedita Raghunath Bhide**

*All India Vice-President, Vivekananda Kendra  
Kanyakumari*



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# National Education

**Padma Shri Sushri Nivedita Raghunath Bhide**

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*Kanyakumari*

**Eighteenth Foundation Day Lecture, 2024**

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# National Education

**Nivedita Raghunath Bhide\***

It is a moment of great happiness to stand before you and share some of my thoughts on national education on the Foundation day of National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration. You are all experts in the subjects with respect to education therefore whatever I am trying to share with you, I am sure it would be easier for me to communicate with you.

When we think of educational planning of course it is for different duration may be even a class, a unit, a year, a course and ultimately for life. But when we want to think of national education, it is planning for generations. Generally national education refers to minimum criteria and standards that must be met by education providers and units in the implementation of the education within a country. It also means that up to a given level, all students, irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex have access to education of a comparable quality. But this description of national education is only a part.

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The important part of national education is all that is noble in the nation and required for the further evolution of mankind should be reflected in education. Indian civilization which has survived for thousands of years and has contributed in various fields for the good of the humanity, naturally must be having some such world view, principles and dimensions which need to be understood to make our education a national education. The children born in our nation have right to it. There should not be short-termism approach to education. The short lived ideologies should not be the guiding principles of education. A long view of the requirements of society has to be taken into account like what our society should be, after say ten generations.

I would like to share my thoughts on national education in that sense. But before that I deem it necessary to note that Indian concept of nation is different than the Western one. The concept of nation-state is only five centuries old. In the world history, nation-state is viewed negatively by some thinkers because it tends to dominate others, it is exclusive and self-centered. India is not nation-state as in the West. India is a civilizational nation. Thus 'Rashtra' is not violent or exclusive concept like nation-state.

Each civilization has something unique to contribute for the overall development of human

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society. Learning from other civilizations what is good in them and incorporating it is also a part of national education for us. India has always welcomed the noble thoughts, ideas, principles and methods. But we as a nation certainly have some characteristics which are required for the all-round development of human being in present complex times. Therefore, knowing those characteristics becomes an obvious task for educationists and also devising ways and means to inculcate that, a challenge for creativity and sincerity of purpose of educationists.

### **Oneness of Existence**

Swami Vivekananda was a person who aroused national consciousness and reminded India that her existence has a purpose. India has to contribute greatly to whole world in spirituality. He says very remarkably.

Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to Truth or die. Societies should be moulded upon truth, and truth has not to adjust itself to society. (CWSV, Vol. 2, p. 84).

What is the truth? The truth is, the whole existence is interconnected, interrelated and interdependent. Today ecology, and various branches of science are realising this oneness of

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existence. Because the whole existence is interconnected, interrelated and interdependent, a person cannot just live for one self or think of only one's own happiness. He has to think about others because others are not 'others' but his own extended self. Man's life has to be a contributing life. This world view of seeing the world as one, and also cherishing one's own various identities as part of that whole is the basis for sustainable development and peaceful co-existence.

The Indian civilisation rests on the foundation of Oneness of existence. Rabindranath Tagore in one of his remarkable article written in Bengali and later translated in English, 'History of Bharat Varsha' says,

....Amongst the civilizations of the world Bharatavarsha stands as an ideal of the endeavour to unify the diverse. Her history will bear this out. Amidst many travails and obstacles, fortunes and misfortunes Bharatavarsha has been seeking to experience the One in the universe as well as in one's own soul and to place that One in the variegated, to discover that One through knowledge, to establish that One through action, to internalize that One through love, to exemplify that One through one's own life. When through the study of her history we would be able to realize this everlasting spirit of Bharata, then the rupture of



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our present with the past will disappear.  
(Tagore, 'The History of Bharatavarsha', 2003).

The national education in India should inculcate this vision of Oneness in students. Whatever may be the subject, in the context of it, Oneness should be discussed till it gets internalized over the years in the student life. Generally, it is easy to see the differences because they are obvious and tangible but it is difficult to see the interconnectedness which is intangible and therefore more inputs and training are needed to inculcate the oneness.

Vision of Oneness is ecologically sound and scientifically true. It is being increasingly realized by Man that if he eliminates any species there will be an adverse effect on nature, ultimately affecting Man himself. Whether it is insects or animals, reptiles or birds, sand or stone, plants and trees, everything is important. Modern Man thought he is separate from nature and that nature is for his enjoyment. Therefore, man exploited nature. In the process, destruction of nature has taken place. Man being part of nature, this exploitation or destruction of nature ultimately affects the very existence of man.

Today, human being has realized this interconnectedness with nature. That is why there is talk of protection of environment, preserving our bio-diversity and ecological balance etc.

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The connection of man with nature is now part of the educational, political, social and environmental discourse.

In India, we look at ourselves as part of nature and are taught not to exploit nature. We respect nature as our mother. Over the centuries in all parts of India, various traditions and practices were adopted to protect nature. The national education should help students to understand and practice those traditions. These are not outdated but actually are the most advance ways of protecting nature.

Nowadays in the West, there are many movements for the protection of environment as the need is felt by all. But the western view of environmental protection is utilitarian. They think, 'For my use it is required so I should protect it.' Indian view is, 'It is my own extension. Nature is part of me. It is sacred.' We take care of our body. Nobody needs to tell us that there is an insect biting the hand and it has to be removed. We feel the pain and therefore we protect our hand. Similarly, it is out of sensitivity, out of the feeling of oneness, of *aatmiyataa* that we protect the environment. It was this feeling of love, oneness that protected the environment in this densely populated land for thousands of years.

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But, if this feeling of oneness, this vision is lost from our practices and only the outward practices remain, we will be unable to protect the environment. We may worship trees, mountains, or earth but we may not protect them if we cease to feel them as part of ourselves. Unfortunately, a student thinks that modernity means to mock, to be irreverent of such practices. But national education would empower the students to understand and practice this advanced way of protecting nature.

Today, science too has discovered the oneness of existence. The search of science for the building block of the universe led it to the atom. At first, atom was considered as indivisible i.e. the smallest building block of the Universe. Later it was found that an atom can be further divided into proton, electron, positron, neutron etc. The smallest particle in electron etc. is quark. Quark is of six types (some say it is of eight types) and is made of preons. When scientists started studying quark and other sub-atomic particles and the movement of these particles, they discovered that the experiments were no more objective. The experiments became subjective. To put it in layman's language, they found that the mind of the scientist and the smallest sub-atomic particle are interconnected. The subject that is, the experimenter and the object of experiment i.e. the sub-atomic particle impacted each other. Scientists realized that hereafter, if they want to understand

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sub-atomic particles they have to understand consciousness. Philip Ball (2017) writes in an interesting article, ‘The strange link between the human mind and quantum Physics’,

Quantum mechanics is the best theory we have for describing the world at the nuts and-bolts level of atoms and subatomic particles. Perhaps the most renowned of its mysteries is the fact that the outcome of a quantum experiment can change depending on whether or not we choose to measure some property of the particles involved.

When this "observer effect" was first noticed by the early pioneers of quantum theory, they were deeply troubled. It seemed to undermine the basic assumption behind all science: that there is an objective world out there, irrespective of us. If the way the world behaves depends on how – or if – we look at it, what can "reality" really mean?

Some of those researchers felt forced to conclude that objectivity was an illusion, and that consciousness has to be allowed an active role in quantum theory. (Ball, 2017)

In another experiment, scientists found that a sub atomic particle communicates with the all other sub atomic particles anywhere in the world.

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Matthew Francis writes in his article, ‘Quantum entanglement shows that reality can’t be local’,

Experiments have definitively demonstrated entanglement, and ruled out any kind of slower-than-light communication between two separated objects. The standard explanation for this behavior involves what's called nonlocality: the idea that the two objects are actually still a single quantum system, even though they may be far apart. That idea is uncomfortable to many people (including most famously Albert Einstein), but it preserves the principle of relativity, which states in part that no information can travel faster than light. (Francis, 2012).

One of Swami Vivekananda’s speeches in Madras starts with these words, “One atom in this universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it.” (CWSV, Vol. 3, p. 269). Why is it so? It is because we are all interconnected, interrelated and interdependent. Swamiji’s speeches on Vedanta in the West triggered the thinking of many scientists. Scientists like Nikola Tesla, Sir William Thompson later known as Lord Kelvin, Prof. Helmholtz were much impressed by the concepts of Aakaash, Praana, etc. from Saamkhya and Advaita philosophy

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We are all part of one cosmic mind. Today this is being increasingly realized the world over. For example, Tania Kotsos writes in her article, 'You are One with the Universal Mind'

There is a single, intelligent Consciousness that pervades the entire Universe - the Universal Mind. It is all knowing, all powerful, all creative and always present. As it is present everywhere at the same time, it follows that it must also be present in you - that it is you. Your mind is part of the one Universal Mind. This is not simply a philosophical ideal passed down to us through the ages. It is an exact scientific truth. Know it, believe it, apply it and you will see your life transform in miraculous ways.

Albert Einstein told us that "everything is energy"; that "a human being is a part of the whole called by us [the] Universe". His words echoed the most ancient of spiritual and philosophical teachings and still underpin today's cutting-edge scientific discoveries. The Universal Mind goes by many names. In the scientific world we know of the Unified Field; in spiritual philosophy we refer to The All or Universal Consciousness and in religion we call upon God who Himself goes by many names - Jehovah, Allah and Brahman to mention but a few. The name is relevant only in so far as it resonates with you.

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Each and every one of us is a manifestation of this single Universal Consciousness. There is profound truth in the ancient teaching that we are all One. We are all connected - not only to each other but to all of Nature and to everything in the Universe. This is the Law of One. What you do to others, you do to yourself. The way you treat Nature, you in fact treat yourself. The separateness you "see" is an illusion of the personality ego. The true nature of reality is non-dualistic, meaning that while things may appear distinct, they are not separate.

You are able to create your ideal reality because you are already connected to everything you want. Nothing and no one is separate from you. You can experience happiness, true love, perfect health, abundance, wealth and anything else you intend. All you have to do is bring yourself into vibrational harmony with the nature of that which you want to experience through the creative power of your thoughts. To become the master of your destiny, you must master your thoughts.

In a nutshell, there is a single Consciousness, the Universal Mind, which pervades the entire Universe. It is all knowing, all powerful, all creative and always present everywhere at the same time. Your consciousness is part of it - it is It. All is One. You are connected to everything and everyone.

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You are already connected with what you want. To the degree that you truly comprehend and internalise this Truth, you will be able to become the master of your mind and the director of your life. (Kotsos, 2021)

Science has come to the oneness of existence but it lacks a system at experiential level. That is where understanding and practicing Yoga Shastra becomes imperative in education. Yoga is not just Asana and Pranayama but a complete system that moderates our outer behaviour and inner thoughts and ultimately helps us realize the oneness.

### **Mutual Respect for Diversity**

The second important point to be part of national education is what India as a nation has stood for thousands of years - mutual respect for diversity. The tremendous diversity of languages, Gods and Goddesses, ways of worship, ways of dressing, housing, religious practices, communities, political units is seen only in Indian civilization. How could India with all such diversity survive as a nation for all these years? It is because, mutual respect for diversities was the inculcated value. I may be different from you but I respect your tradition, and you respect my tradition.



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Why is there no struggle seen in India to make others conform to one's way? Margaret Noble, famously known as Sister Nivedita writes very beautifully in the 'Introduction' to the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,

If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realisation. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid. (CWSV, Vol. 1, p. xv)

Diversity should be there but unity should not be lost sight of. In a growing foetus, the cell diversifies but if one Praana does not underlie all, then it would be a dead baby. Unity is not uniformity. If the cells in foetus do not diversify but just multiply uniformly, then it would be just a piece of flesh. All cannot be exactly the same. Enforcing of uniformity creates problems. The Unity comes from the vision of oneness and values of life. Practices will and should vary. We cannot say, 'Puja should be done in Tamilnadu, exactly the way it is done in Assam.' There was never any insistence on forms but the internalization of vision of oneness is achieved and thus India has mutual respect for diversity while maintaining

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oneness. Mutual respect for diversity is different from multi-culturalism.

In contemporary times, the technology has brought the world physically together. But that does not necessarily mean that it would make us one. On the other hand, in the absence of proper philosophy and understanding to view the diversity, the proximity enhances hostility. That is what is being seen the world over.

The West has awakened to the need of diversity and inclusion in this century, but for the lack of the world view of oneness and experience, it's discourse of diversity and inclusion is neither promoting mutual respect for all nor is really leading to inclusion. India can play a great role in that. But unfortunately, more we lose our national moorings instead of contributing positively for the discourse we are imitating the worse part of the discourse. As Sri Ravindranath Tagore has said if we learn to see One in many, the problems faced by us can be solved easily.

### **Unshakable Self-Confidence**

Howsoever help others may give to an individual or a community or a nation, unless there is tremendous confidence in oneself, one cannot really make a mark in life. Such confidence our nation exuded till 17<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> century. That is how

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Indian culture went to various lands not to destroy their local cultures and traditions but to enrich them. Our ancestors could tell confidently that, 'Let us make whole world noble'. The purpose of India was clear to them and they were confident. Today, we lack the confidence even to solve the problems of our own life. Most of the youth after getting education are hardly confident to take on challenges of life or face the tough situations.

All power is within. Man is not just body-mind-intellect but he is *Aatmchetana*. It is this conviction in the potential divinity of man, immortality of the Atman that India became immortal, invincible in spite of continuous and terrible invasions for almost thousands of years. Basically, man is good. All the wrong things he might do is because of ignorance of his real nature and capacity. Today judiciary recognises it. In the field of education too it is being accepted, that teacher cannot really teach, he facilitates. All knowledge is within. The teachers only create right atmosphere, they provide a trigger and the knowledge within is manifested. The Montessori system of education is completely based on it.

'The Biology of Belief: Unleashing the power of consciousness', a remarkable book by Bruce H. Lipton a cellular biologist brings out the fact that happiness is in our hands. We keep looking for happiness outside when we are in reality

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*Aanandaswaroop.* We think peace is somewhere outside but it is within. We see the whole nature bubbling with life and want to experience it but it is actually the expression of the divinity within. That is what the Upanishads say, ‘Thou art That – *Tat Tvam Asi.*’ *Kanchi Paramacharya* gives a beautiful explanation for *Tat Tvam Asi.*

When we look afar at the horizon it seems to us to be the meeting point of the earth and the sky. Suppose there is a palm-tree there. We imagine that if we go up to the tree we will arrive at the point where the earth and the sky meet. But when we actually arrive at the spot where the tree stands, we see that the horizon has receded further. The further we keep going the further the horizon too will recede from us. “We are here under the palm tree but the horizon is still far away. We must also go further to overtake it.” Is it ever possible to overtake the horizon? When we were at a distance from the palm, the horizon seemed to be near it. But when we came to it, the horizon seemed to have moved away further. So where is the horizon? Where you are there, it is, the horizon. You and the horizon are on the very same spot. What we call “That”, the Lord, who we think is far away, is by your side. No, he is in you. “That thou art, “declare the Vedas. He is you (or you are He). (Sri Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, 1996, p.243)

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Know the immortal nature of Atman and let us not dwell on our mistakes or shortcomings but focus on our sublime, noble, loving, immortal Self. Children born in India have the right to know this great knowledge of Upanishads extolled by thinkers and scholars the world over. The aim in life should be to realize 'Who am I'. Whether I am a puppet which some others control by their words and deeds or I have my inner strength to keep calm and focused on whatever needs to be done? What is it that does not change even if everything goes wrong? That Unchangeable me is my real nature. I must be rooted in that Unchangeable me. Swami Vivekananda says,

And then comes the most differentiating, the grandest, and the most wonderful discovery in the realms of spirituality that has ever been made. Some of you, perhaps, who have been studying Western thought, may have observed already that there is another radical difference severing at one stroke all that is Western from all that is Eastern. It is this that we hold, whether we are Shaktas, Sauras, or Vaishnavas, even whether we are Bauddhas or Jainas, we all hold in India that the soul is by its nature pure and perfect, infinite in power and blessed... This is one great point to understand, and, my friends, my brethren, let me tell you, this is the one point we shall have to insist upon in the future. For I am firmly convinced, and I beg

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you to understand this one fact -- no good comes out of the man who day and night thinks he is nobody. If a man, day and night, thinks he is miserable, low, and nothing, nothing he becomes. If you say, yea, yea, "I am, I am", so shall you be; and if you say "I am not", think that you are not, and day and night meditate upon the fact that you are nothing, ay, nothing shall you be. That is the great fact which you ought to remember.

We are the children of the Almighty, we are sparks of the infinite, divine fire. How can we be nothings? We are everything, ready to do everything, we can do everything, and man must do everything. This faith in themselves was in the hearts of our ancestors, this faith in themselves was the motive power that pushed them forward and forward in the march of civilisation; and if there has been degeneration, if there has been defect, mark my words, you will find that degradation to have started on the day our people lost this faith in themselves. Losing faith in one's self means losing faith in God. Do you believe in that infinite, good Providence working in and through you? If you believe that this Omnipresent One, the Antaryamin, is present in every atom, is through and through, Ota - prota, as the Sanskrit word goes, penetrating your body, mind and soul, how can you lose heart? I may be a little bubble of water, and you may be a mountain-high

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wave. Never mind! The infinite ocean is the background of me as well as of you. Mine also is that infinite ocean of life, of power, of spirituality, as well as yours. I am already joined -- from my very birth, from the very fact of my life -- I am in Yoga with that infinite life and infinite goodness and infinite power, as you are, mountain - high though you may be. Therefore, my brethren, teach this life - saving, great, ennobling, grand doctrine to your children, even from their very birth. (CWSV, Vol. 3, pp. 375 – 376).

This principle of innate divinity of human beings needs to be internalized in our education so that the youth face life confidently and purposefully.

### **Self-Expression Through Action**

India was known as *Karmabhumi*. Even the simple work like weaving the towel or making a chappal was done artistically and as an offering to the Virat (God manifested in the form of society). But now that is not there. Avoiding work, shirking the responsibility, doing work shabbily is prevalent. We have forgotten the great principle of Karma. That what we are today is because of our past actions and what we would be tomorrow is in our hands now. Our destiny is in our hands. Through Karma alone we can rise in life,

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externally as well internally. Karma is our link with the happiness within and should not be based on expectations from others.

In a contemporary workshop for topmost CEOs in America the Karma theory is very popular. They say tensions get built up because of expectations. Our work should be our self-expression. If we do our work based on the principle of oneness then the company, the industry or the organization for which we work progresses very fast.

Corporate America is embracing Indian philosophy in a big way. Suddenly, says Businessweek magazine in its latest issue, phrases from ancient Hindu texts such as the Bhagavad Gita are popping up in management times and on websites of consultants. Top business schools have introduced ‘self-mastery’ classes that use Indian methods to help managers boost leadership skills and find inner peace in lives dominated by work. (*Rajghatta, 2006*).

*Karma* Our duty, our destined work is our path to reach perfection. There is no high and low in work. The attitude with which you perform the work and how you perform your work makes it elevating or degrading; rewarding or meaningless.



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Animals do not have freedom of action. In the language of computer, they are programmed. For example, a donkey is programmed to kick, a dog is programmed to bark. Man has freedom of action. It means he can choose how to perform any action. We know what will elevate us and what will pull us down. Generally, we exercise our choice of action only for selfish interests, for benefits but we have to exercise our choice of action primarily to evolve ourselves as better human being. Animals do not have freedom of action; they cannot think beyond what their instinct permits.

The word ‘work culture’ does not denote the spiritual significance of doing one’s work whole heartedly and always being engaged in fruitful work. Every moment we have to be aware that, ‘Will I elevate myself or degrade myself? If I work with a lot of expectations, then I am inviting unhappiness’. The more one expects, the more frustrated one gets in life. The problem in all relationships is because of expectation. We have to work happily putting our whole heart to the assigned or destined work without any expectation. Ishvara takes care of everything else. Every time, you are unhappy, you have to sit and observe what is it that you expected because of which you are unhappy. If you give your whole heart to contribute towards existence, the existence wholeheartedly takes care of you. That is the Law of Karma. The real satisfaction in life comes when

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one performs one's work with love and as an offering to the larger whole. In one's duty, in any work undertaken for the good of all alone man can express himself. National education should inculcate this passion for work, doing work excellently and finding joy in expressing oneself in work.

### **Thirst for Knowledge**

The greatest success of any system of education is that it creates in the students the thirst for more knowledge. The student studies, seeks knowledge not for the examination and certificates but for the joy of knowledge. Only then, the society really becomes a knowledge society.

In today's world of social media, advertisements and goggle searches, the habit of going to roots, studying original books, sources and then forming one's opinions is rare. The youth get carried away, are exploited by various ideological movements, by the time they realize it, the prime years of their education are lost. The thirst for knowledge, the training of mind to discriminate, going to the roots of any topic, conviction in our civilization and its noble contributions are essential to protect our future generation from getting uprooted and lost.

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## The Four-fold Aspirations of human life

What should a student aspire for in his life? All the legitimate aspirations of man worth striving for, which in the ultimate run help him to realize Atman, are classified into four as *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kaama* and *Moksha*. Understanding of Purushaartha-s should be part of national education. *Artha* and *kaama* are natural in all living beings. *Artha* is not just money. It stands for all that which lead to security for body and its needs and desires, material security, and material well-being, and means of enjoyment for fulfilment of our desires, etc. *Kaama* stands for all types of legitimate desires such as one should get a good job, have name and fame, should be a respected teacher, should score good marks, business should thrive, should be a good parent, should get a good job, etc. All living beings have desires. They strive for security and strive to procure the means to fulfil those desires. Animals too pursue *Artha* and *Kaama* the natural Purushaartha-s.

Animals become quiet after satisfying their basic hunger and other needs but man wants to accumulate wealth for the next ten generations, in the process he exploits others, nature and degrades oneself. To temperate this, our Rishis revealed that the basis of *Artha* and *Kaama* has to be 'Dharma'. If we follow 'Dharma' while striving for *Artha* and *Kaama* we would become worthy of striving for

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‘moksha’ i.e. enjoying the inner freedom and happiness in due course. Thus, Dharma becomes the primary Purushartha.

Swami Vivekananda had said Dharma is the soul of India. Unfortunately, today our understanding about Dharma is clouded. But Dharma is not religion. Dharma is not some religious activities like prayers, fast, Japa etc. Dharma is not certain injunctions to be followed dogmatically. Dharma is not related to any specific God or Goddess. All Gods and Goddesses have place in Dharma. and even those who believe only in formless God or no God have to practice Dharma. Dharma is based on the Truth of existence i.e. oneness of existence and thus it is to be followed by all.

To put it in brief, Dharma has four components:

1. Behaving with all human beings, animals and nature with feeling of oneness, love.
2. As the whole existence is interconnected, interrelated and interdependent, the expanding form of an individual is family; the expanding form of the family is society; the expanding form of the society is nation; and the expanding form of the nation is the whole existence. Collectives like family, community, society, nation and creation are the expanded forms of an individual.

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Dharma is the duty towards each collective so as to maintain the harmony in these collectives.

3. Interest of the bigger collective takes precedence in case of clash between duties of two collectives.
4. A sacrifice - *Tyaga* is involved in these three components. Sacrifice, is another important component in the practice of Dharma.

Whenever one is faced with difficulty or *Dharmasankat*, then what is to be done and what is not to be done? At that time these four components of Dharma can guide: whether there is feeling of oneness, *Aatmiyata*, concern for others, whether the ordained duty is being fulfilled, whether the decision is taken in the interest of the larger identity, i.e., the extended form of oneself and not for a smaller identity and whether some sacrifice, cheerfully giving up, and undergoing sufferings, is involved in it.

Any civilization, anywhere in the world would win if people are ready to sacrifice the smaller entity (*Vyashti*) in the interest of the bigger entity (*Samashti*). An institute will prosper if the persons in it are ready to sacrifice their personal interest when required, in the interest of the institute. If everyone working in banks, offices, factories,

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etc. have this feeling of oneness and gives preference to the interest of the institute one is working in and even sacrifices one's time, comfort or interest, imagine how fast our society and nation would develop! That is why Swami Vivekananda said Dharma is the Soul of India. National education is India should reinstitute the commitment to Dharma in the minds of the students.

We may be performing a lot of religious activities but if practice of Dharma is not there, we shall not evolve spiritually. If sacrifice is there, if oneness is there, well-being of bigger collective is considered as priority then there will be prosperity. But if each one consistently considers his/ her self-interest first then we cannot prosper.

Dharma is also called *Sanatana* Dharma because it is based on the '*Sanatana*', eternal principles such as everything is imbued with the Divine; existence is interconnected, interrelated, interdependent; the One has manifested as family, society, nation and whole existence; we are part of these various collectives and therefore our duty is to nurture our larger self, if need be even by sacrificing the smaller entity.

Suppose, a diabetic man gets a wound on his toe and the wound does not heal, it becomes poisonous. If the foot is not operated upon, the

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whole body will get poisoned and his life would be in danger. What does the man say then? Though sad, he accepts to sacrifice his foot to save the whole body. If there is a need or if such a situation arises we have to sacrifice the part for the wellbeing of the whole.

Initially, one may feel that it is a loss in the context of money, time or conceding defeat in the context of relationship. But that is not so. Actually, it is a win-win situation. The gain of the expanded self percolates towards the individual self. The nurturing of the inner being takes place. This is the eternal truth. This is applicable anywhere and everywhere in the world. It is the truth on the basis of which one has to protect the society, protect the family or protect the nation and environment.

Dharma is also called Manav Dharma as it is applicable to all human beings. Why is it also called Hindu Dharma? But how did the word ‘Hindu’ become synonymous with ‘Dharma’ which is universal in its nature? Talking about our ancestors in his lecture the “Common Bases of Hinduism” delivered at Lahore, Swami Vivekananda says,

After all, sciences that can give us only bread and clothes and power over our fellowmen, sciences that can teach us only how to conquer our fellow - beings, to rule over

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them, which teach the strong to domineer over the weak -- those they (our ancestors) could have discovered if they willed. But praise be unto the Lord, they caught at once the other side, which was grander, infinitely higher, infinitely more blissful, till it has become the national characteristic, till it has come down to us, inherited from father to son for thousands of years, till it has become a part and parcel of us, till it tingles in every drop of blood that runs through our veins, till it has become our second nature, till the name of religion and Hindu have become one. This is the national characteristic, and this cannot be touched. (CWSV, Vol. 3, pp. 370 – 371)

Hindu society understood, practiced and nurtured this ‘Maanava Dharma’ so well, that ‘Hindu’ became synonymous with ‘Maanava Dharma’ or Sanatana Dharma. The specific name sometimes becomes a common name. Xerox is a name of a specific company and photocopying is a common name. But the Xerox company popularized photocopying so much that Xerox became synonymous with photocopying. In the same way, Hindu society understood ‘Maanava Dharma’ so well and practiced it for thousands of years that Hindu and ‘maanava’ became synonymous. There were times when other brands were less in number, so, any toothpaste was



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Colgate or any soap was Lux, or any almirah was Godrej.

Whether people believe in God or not, whether the God they worship is the same or different, Dharma is to be followed by all. For example, Gravitation was discovered by Newton. Whether a person knows it or not, accepts it or not, gravitation is going to work on him. One cannot say, 'As I do not accept gravitation, I can jump from the 7th floor and nothing will happen to me'. We are part of existence and so the rules of existence will apply to us. Similarly, Dharma has to be followed by all ultimately, it leads to material well-being and inner development.

Man has to evolve; he cannot pursue the present life-style of self-aggrandizement, selfishness, individualism and exclusivism. If he does not change then the end of human civilization is certain. For that evolution, these fourfold aspirations are to be followed. Therefore, it should form part of national education.

### **Self-Restraint and Seva**

In India, the education was never theoretical, it always manifested in character, behaviour and action. What is learnt is to be practiced. The one focus that national education is India should strive for is the value of self-restraint and Seva.

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Apollonius of Tyana a Greek philosopher of second century described,

In India, I found a race of mortals living upon earth, but not adhering to it. Inhabiting cities, but not being fixed to them, possessing everything but possessed by nothing.

Max Muller's one remarkable book, 'What Indians can Teach us' praises Indians for their truthfulness by quoting from various historical sources. In last couple of centuries, we seem to have lost our characteristics. National education in India should strive to reclaim that identity back.

There are many instances in our own life when we get help from many persons unconditionally. There are many such people who are ready to help others whenever they see other persons in need of some help. This helping nature in human beings, spontaneous offer of help when someone is seen in need is the real outcome of 'Maanava Dharma'. Seva - the spontaneous help on regular basis, without any expectations was part of national life. We need to inculcate that through our national education for national regeneration. Swami Vivekananda said,

Our method is very easily described. It simply consists in reasserting the national life. Buddha preached renunciation. India heard,

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and yet in six centuries she reached her greatest height. The secret lies there. The national ideals of India are RENUNCIATION and SERVICE. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself. (CWSV, Vol. 5, pp. 228).

To make our education really national by incorporating these seven points as mentioned above is a tough task but it is the need for the survival of humanity.

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## Programme Management Committee for 18<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day of NIEPA

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- 2. Designing Architecture for a Learning Revolution Based on a Life Cycle Approach** {M. S. Swaminathan (2008)}
- 3. Universities in the Twenty-First Century** {Andre Beteille (2009)}
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- 5. Twenty Years After: The Countryside and Two Decades of 'Reforms'** {P. Sainath (2011)}
- 6. Children's Right to Education in Areas of Civil Unrest** {Shantha Sinha (2012)}
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- 8. Imagining Knowledge: Dreaming Democracy** {Shiv Visvanathan (2014)}
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- 12. The Poor B.A. Student: Crisis of Undergraduate Education in India** {Manoranjan Mohanty (2018)}
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- 14. Education and Social Opportunity: Bridging the Gap** {A. K. Shiva Kumar (2020); *(Delivered online)*}
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- 16. Globalising Compassion: Key to the Future** {Kailash Satyarthi (2022)}
- 17. Education – Life Long Learning** {Anand Bhalerao (2023)}



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