

## CHILD WELFARE AND EDUCATION

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While reading papers as usual yesterday and peeping into the pages of the daily "DAWN" (Saturday May 13, 2000), my eyes and mind all of a sudden captured a glimpse of a cartoon pertaining to 'Child Labour'. (5, p-11) Expertly perception of the great cartoonist perhaps, put up a true picture of the innocent child that while going in search of education, goes *crooked* under the burden of the bag of books, lunch box even the water flask (drinking water is also to be carried from home if he is to get education). This is just one side of the picture. Don't know what happens to him in the packed class rooms, heavy shower of teachers instructions in the mornings, and later in the Madrassah after taking lunch, and then in the evenings with the private tutor. Perhaps, *learning* is there, but *Welfare* some where else. The other aspect of the cartoon shows that the child who is selling tea, takes kettle of tea and cups, goes with his *straight* backbone, sells tea (he would have also been free to enjoy a sip of tea and a glass of water whenever he so desired at the cost of the hotel-walla), earns a few rupees for him and his family and feels proud of his rightful earning instead of stealing or begging). Anyhow, looking at the present plight of costly education and hard chances of getting employment, the parents look compelled to push their children into the world of work, better called the hell of '*child labour*' right from the school-going age. As such adults exploit the young, naive innocent, weak,

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vulnerable and insecure young ones for their personal profit. The child labour is deeply engraved in the historical and social culture of South Asia. Poverty, illiteracy, urban-rural migration, discrimination against the girl child and weak implementation of the child protection laws have allowed *the child labour* to increase<sup>(6, p.5)</sup>. For parents, to take the trouble of sending their children to schools, they prefer to have a few rupees that could provide more earning hands for the family". (Ibid, p.5.)

Along with the nuisance of child labour, illiteracy, poverty, disease, hunger, sex abuse, captivity and such other problems are yet other hindrances in way of the *welfare* and *education* of the *child*. All such nuisances, against the innocent child, remind us to take fresh cognizance of his *innocence*, *sanctity* and *welfare*.

We all know that the century recently past was the '*century of the child*'. The year 1979 was celebrated as '*the international year of the child*' and the first Monday of every October is declared as '*the universal day of the child*'. Looking at the present poor plight of the child, it is quite appropriate for us to talk about the *child*, his *Welfare* and his *Education*.

*The child* is a human-being. He is born of human-beings, brought up by human-beings, passes his life, survives and dies amongst human-beings. He has personality, individuality, self-respect, senses, feelings, abilities, capabilities, attitudes, aptitudes, potentialities, interests, and limitations, too.

*The child* when born is very weak, very feeble and cannot survive if left alone. The society takes care of him, and by the individual as well as combined efforts and endeavours, care and contribution, schooling and

education, he is ultimately made able to stand on his own and is required to come back and to contribute to the sustenance of the society. Now, this whole period of life from birth, till late adolescence could broadly be termed as 'childhood', though the periods of infancy and adolescence can easily be treated as separate from child-hood. Today's feeble, weak and innocent child has to pass through the periods of infancy, early childhood, late childhood, puberty and adolescence so as to become an able adult citizen of tomorrow. During this whole period, he is mostly dependent on his parents and other members of the society. During his childhood period of growth and development his mind, body and inner powers develop under the influence of the surrounding environment. He gains control over his limbs, acquires mental as well as physical growth. He learns how to walk and how to talk, gathers vocabulary and learns language, gets schooling and education, learns manners and develops habits and character.

'Home' is his first environment and first school. Home atmosphere is the first teaching environment. Hence it stamps very great impact on his growth, development and learning. Then at the age of 3 to 5 years he goes to his second home, which is 'school'. Here he passes through pre-primary, primary, middle and secondary stages of education. The school, as we all know, plays an important role in shaping, moulding and channelizing the human personalities.

At the middle stage the child is between the age of 10 to 13 years, he desires to handle various articles, tries to understand how they are made and how they are functioning. He is interested in their constituent parts and in separating and regrouping them. He is happy to undertake various activities as exploration of the world around him. His power of concentration is not yet

developed or has yet acquired any strong and stable likes and dislikes. (3, p. 23)

At secondary stage the pupil passes through adolescence and acquires specific likes and dislikes for certain types of mental or physical work. His power of understanding and judgement improves. His special aptitudes and interests are considerably stabilized and he is able to select his courses of study according to his aptitude. (3, p. 24)

A human *child* has different aspects of his personality - religious, moral, social, educational, vocational, physical, psychological, recreational and aesthetic etc., which are to be developed through education. Hence importance of *education* is very great for proper channelization and development of the different aspects of his personality. Here, the influence and impact of the in and out of school environment cannot be overlooked or under-esteemed. He is a human being, therefore, he is definitely entitled to the *Human Rights* as declared by the General Assembly of U.N.O. It assures the same vide its articles, as given below:

#### ARTICLE - 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

#### ARTICLE - 2

Every one is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. (7, p-17)

Not only this, but every human being has a 'Right

to Learn' which means the following:

- the right to read and write;
- the right to question and analyse;
- the right to imagine and create;
- the right to read one's own world and to write history;
- the right to develop individual and collective skills; and
- the right to have access to educational resources. (1, p. 67)

After this brief description about 'child' and his 'rights'; we will now turn to understand the term 'welfare'.

'Welfare' is a simple word, very easy to understand. We all know this word and its meaning. We all strive for our own welfare and seemingly welfare of others too; yet we do not exactly know what it means and how it affects ourselves as well as others in a community or society. Let us first see, what is meant by this simple term 'welfare'.

The word 'welfare' means "*the state of doing well, especially in respect of good fortune, happiness, well-being or prosperity*". (8, p. 1339) Broadly speaking welfare may be said as a state which helps an individual to help himself to come out of certain difficult situations and to stand on his own. As such, from 'child welfare' we aim at the creation of such conditions and provisions of such amenities and activities, which can help the child to go through the different processes of his life such as social, educational etc. with the most suitable channels resulting in being fortunate, happy and prosperous citizen of tomorrow.

'Welfare work' minimizes the tortures and tensions of the children, increases harmonious conditions and healthy atmosphere. It increases their

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understanding of their own, of their mates, of their parents and teachers and of the genuine conditions and situations they are living in. The organized *child welfare* programmes increase the opportunities for the betterment and prosperity of the children, who are to be the leaders and burden-takers of tomorrow's living. It refers to the *well-being* of the present day children who are to become future members of the society.

Now, we will turn our attention to an important endeavour called '*Education*' since it plays indispensable role in the upbringing, moulding and shaping of the personality of the child.

Actually it is very difficult to understand what exactly '*Education*' is. '*Education*' in simple words means: "*The action or process of educating or being educated*". (8, p. 361) It can also be termed as "*the knowledge and development resulting from an educational process*". (8, p. 361) According to its modern concept "*Education is life*", hence education should develop the whole man instead of his intellect only. That is why it is said that '*Education*' should be concerned with the *whole* and *wholesome* development of an individual. Education leads to full, efficient and happy life. Educationists say "*Education is democracy*" i.e. it should be for all the intelligent ones as well as those of average ability. Even to-day there is more premium on the education for every child. All children, of any ability or even disability must be brought within the realm of education - *Education for all*, the universalization of education - the *democratic right* of every child.

According to Mrs. Tanvir Khalid "the word '*Education*' has been derived from the Latin words '*Educare*' and '*educatum*' or '*Educere*'. '*Educatum* and '*Educare*' means 'to train', to bring up and to

nourish, while 'Educere' means 'to lead out'. The former implies that education is something external to be imposed or put in from outside. The latter indicates 'to grow from within'. (4, p.3) Aristotle defines 'education' as: 'a process necessary for the creation of sound mind in a sound body'. (4, p. 3)

In the words of George E. Myers, "Education is a process of development which takes place within an individual under the influence of environment. Whether or not the individual is aware of it, this process goes forward throughout his life. Some times it proceeds rapidly and sometimes slowly, but it never halts completely, till life itself is done". (2, pp. 44 & 45)

This process of development takes place within an individual and is continuous throughout his life. Such a continuity of education throughout life is not a new thing for us - the Muslims.

"Seek knowledge from cradle to grave" is an injunction, which was given to us some fourteen centuries ago.

There are two kinds of education, formal and non-formal. Formal education is always organized and systematic provided by the state or privately controlled agencies. Such sort of education has selected surroundings, provisions, curriculum, timings, examinations, and teachers, etc. In formal education, teachers, their preparation, attitude and interest, their trainings, their methods of teaching, school plant, and in-and-out-of-school social activities and environment play a vital role. When we delete what is 'formal' from the broad spectrum of 'education', there remains 'non-formal education'. Under non-formal media of education, one can learn from Radio, T.V., cables, dish

exposures, open universities and off-campus sort of programmes, correspondence, computers, webs, e-mails, mosques, churches, clubs, cinemas, visits, social contacts, social gatherings, on the play ground, on the street, on the farm and through wide variety of such components.

From all this brief description about the *child, welfare, and education*, we assume that every effort meant for the betterment of the child, would easily sit under the umbrella of '*the welfare of the child*' and we know that all the efforts from cradle till his return to the "world of work" are aimed at the *betterment* of the child. Parents, teachers and other members of the society like nurses, doctors and others concerned with his food, health, nutrition, education and care, are all responsible for the well-being of the child. The maternity homes, homes, schools and such other institutions more particularly NGOs, all have to share responsibility towards the *whole and wholesome* development of the child. Actually this is a great responsibility of us all, but obviously we hardly realize and accept this sacred duty towards the *welfare of the child*. The major responsibility lies with the parents and teachers. We agree that home and school play pivotal role in the well-being of the child, hence we cannot undermine contribution of good food, balanced diet, medical care, healthy surroundings for the sound nourishment as well as physical growth of the child. Through all such combined efforts and activities we can develop '*a sound mind in a sound body*'.

But we feel really shocked when we put a glance over the prevailing conditions that surround the child right from his birth. Look at the condition of our hospitals and maternity homes which are basically meant for the child care and child welfare . . . outwardly they look like a paradize, but inwardly they lack efficient

and particularly devoted nurses, doctors and other staff. Lack of milk, food and nutrition, funds and medicines is yet another problem. High fees and ever-increasing expenditure on account of medical care of the child, seems unbearable, for most of the people of any of the developing countries.

Let us turn to the condition of 'home', which is always found pre-occupied either with their money race affairs, or mostly mentally upset and under tension of these modern socio-economic and political conditions. Mostly they fail to provide required love, affection, food, clothes, care, shelter and education to their children. Majority of population lives in rural areas. Most of them are ignorant, illiterate, and incapable of taking proper care of their children. Lack of education along with population explosion, hunger, disease, and out-of-reach facilities are yet other factors, which ultimately affect welfare of the children.

When we look at the existing condition of our schools and the provisions of education and educational facilities we feel that Ivan Illich's "DESCHOOLING" is much better than this sort of schooling. Government as well as public efforts are there, programme and policies are there, improved means and methods are there, funds and aids for the purpose are there, teachers and the taught are there, but, alas! the standards of education are deteriorating day by day and ultimately affecting the healthy growth of the child. It is really a very sad state of affairs when we see that schools are there, but we dispense deschooling, funds are there but the misuse of funds is obvious, teachers are there but lack of interest and devotion is apparent, means, methods and technologies are there but the failure of standards is clear, curricula is there but the core is vanishing, playgrounds are there but the games and sports are

missing, and above all, the teachers and the taught are mostly found busy in fixing or catching hold of one another or they themselves look missing.

Socio-economic and socio-political conditions that are surrounding the child are quite known to all of us, therefore, cutting short, we are coming to the conclusion.

The children of any country are really the great national asset. If they are made literate, healthy and productive, they will turn to be the greatest asset to themselves, their family, community and the nation at large. Almighty Allāh has bestowed upon us all His unlimited favours. We have brains, we have potentialities, we have health, wealth, sources, resources, teachers, educationists, planners, policy-makers, doctors, nurses, schools, hospitals, libraries museums, almost everything in our beautiful country. Hence, it is duty of us all, to put our heads together and find out the right solution for the sanguine *welfare* of the child. In our humble opinion the root cause of all this chaos and deterioration is the "insincerity" alone. I think, we all are not sincere in the true sense of the word. Let us pledge to fling aside the cunning veil of insincerity, which we wear in the name of so-called 'sincerity' preventing us from 'real sincerity' towards the noble and sacred job of the welfare of the child.

Let us all-the parents, the educationists, programme and policy-makers, implementators, students, teachers and all other members of the society-pledge to-day, that we would be honest and sincere to our very existence. Then only we could be able to trace out the problems affecting *child and his welfare* and thus find out their solutions.

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