

## Education at Crossroads

Kireet Joshi

Kireet Joshi's observation is that the road on which education has been running in the country, practically unchanged in both content and form, for over one hundred and seventy five years has reached dead-end from several points of view. The costs of education are increasing unbearably and higher questions of human development, of human destiny and human fulfilment impose on education new directions and goals that seem impossible of achievement. The question is whether there is something beyond the dead-end which we must still pursue, or whether a new road is being opened up or whether we should design and engineer a new road. This question has been answered convincingly by Kireet Joshi in the collection of his recent papers which have been put together in a book form in the publication *Education at Crossroads*.

Kireet Joshi's thesis is that we do not have to look far for finding the directions, for re-engineering the education in general and the teacher education in particular. In the last half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries there was a spurt of thinking on the educational system in ancient India and rediscovery of its relevance for meeting the challenge of the present. Directions for putting education on the new road are available in the educational thoughts of Maharishi Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. These thinkers provided contemporary relevance to the ancient Indian education developed by Rishis that was put by them in a form understandable by modern mind.

Sri Aurobindo in his great book *A National System of Education* emphasised that purpose of education is not mastery of subject alone but development and chiselling of mental faculties. The integral development of faculties based on Aurobindo's concept of education has been experimented since 1943 when a school came to be established at Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry. Kireet Joshi has described this experi-

ment in this book in the chapter "An Experiment in Education for Tomorrow". This experiment is based on three principles of teaching laid down by Aurobindo. The *first principle* is that nothing can be taught; that the teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster but he is a helper and a guide, and that his business is to suggest and not to impose. The *second principle* is that the mind has to be consulted in its growth. The *third principle* is to work from near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be. In other words, education must proceed from direct experience and that even that which is abstract and remote from experience should be brought to the ken to experience. The free progress education, the hallmark of the experiment in education at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre, is based on these principles of teaching.

The need of the hour is to open up the road of education from its dead-end and clear the path that will lead to a learning society. If this is to happen a new orientation in the teachers' education programmes has become inevitable. Consequently upon the explosion of information, increasing relevance of education to all domains of the world of work, increasing stress on the themes of unity and integration, international understanding and peace, individual and collective excellence new demands are being made on the teacher. The role of the teacher as a taskmaster is fading out of the educational scene and the teacher is being increasingly looked upon as a guide and an inspirer. In addition teacher is expected to contribute to integrating education with development, be an innovator and inventor of dynamic methods of education, be able to impart value-oriented education and be a leading agent of change in the fashioning of a learning society. It is against this background that major changes need to be introduced in the aims, methods and contents of programmes of teacher education, both pre-service and in-service.

Kireet Joshi has suggested in his book *Education at Crossroads* a three-pronged

strategy for making curriculum for teacher education for preparing teachers who can with confidence shoulder the responsibility of school education for meeting the challenges of the 21st century. Firstly, the teacher education programmes (TEP) must be made so inspiring that teacher looks upon the task of teaching as sacred. Secondly, the curriculum of TEP should have the component of the theory of value education, both in terms of the foundations of fundamental duties and of the values that lie beyond the domain of duties. It should also have a component of practical art of the practice of exploration of values in real life situations. And thirdly, the duration that is normally assigned to teacher education programmes should be appropriately enlarged. Kireet Joshi has proposed that integrated teacher education courses of duration 4 to 5 years of the type innovated and tried by the Regional Institutes of Education of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) could be started by degree colleges that also conduct a secondary teacher education.

Kireet Joshi has based his papers included in this book on his direct experience as a teacher of the free progress education and on research work of the Mother's Institute of Research. The book *Education at Crossroads* is an important publication that provides an Indian perspective to the issues in education for the 21st century similar to those that were recently raised in the UNESCO publication *Learning: The Treasure Within*. *Education at Crossroads* will be found useful by educationists and researchers in redesigning school curriculum and teacher education curriculum. Now the challenge of education is to help children in becoming lifelong learners and to be able to live effectively in a world that has become a global village because of the developments in information and communication technologies.

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