

“The Philosophy of Education”, A Book Release function at IIT, Madras.

Pujya Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati released the book, “The Philosophy of Education”, a collection of writings by the late Prof. M.S. Srinivasa Sarma, an eminent philosopher and educationist, written during 1930-55 on 18th December, 2009 Indian Institute of Technology, Madras.



Prof. Sarma was a student of Sarvapelli Radhakrishnan and one of the founding members of the Indian Philosophical congress. He participated in the Indian cultural renaissance and was shaped by stalwarts like Sri Subramanya Bharathi, Sri Aurobindo and Sri J. Krishnamurti. He served as Principal of National College, Trichy, and was well known for his discourses on the Bhagavad Gita. The book is edited and compiled by R. Swarnalatha, his granddaughter, who teaches at IIT Madras.

The essays in this collection speak in a contemporary voice and open up vital questions in education like:

What is the primary goal of education?
How does an educator’s philosophy impact his student?

How can an educator ensure that teaching brings about learning?

Are there multiple ways of assessing achievement?

Are there ways to accommodate the dichotomizing paradigms of education?

Can the instrumental and intrinsic aims of education be jointly implemented?

These essays attempt to arrive at a holistic answer to these questions by synergizing the insights from the fields of psychology, religion and ethics. These essays capture the zeitgeist of the birth of a new nation and the deep philosophical enquiry that went into the envisioning of the educational system during the period of rubric building in post independence India. They forcefully argue the case for marginalized discourses like women’s education, better pay for



elementary teachers, rural school reforms and the introduction of the midday noon scheme to underprivileged students. These essays retain their relevance for any modern society and approach philosophy both as a wisdom tradition and also as critical Socratic enquiry, thereby providing valuable tools for decision-making and analyzing debates in education.

His Holiness Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati released the book and delivered a special address on “The Value of Values” as a tribute to Prof.Sarma.

His Holiness emphasized the fact that values are intrinsic to human beings and spoke evocatively about the one basic value from which all other values are derived - namely the abstinence from the desire to hurt others in thought, deed and action. His Holiness engaged the audience with the following thought-provoking questions: “A human being has values. I don’t say they must have values. What value is important?

Is the value common to all living organisms?”

Pujya Swamiji spoke about how the basic programming in all living creatures is centred around survival and the tendency to protect itself from getting hurt. Therefore the knowledge that one does not want to get hurt and that others also do not want to get hurt is basic knowledge which is innate. Pujya Swamiji pointed out that as human beings endowed with a free will, the responsibility to use freedom is even greater. Human freedom is all about using the discriminatory power and exercising the freedom to do an action and also the freedom to avoid an action. Therefore the age-revered maxim of “Ahimsā paramo dharmah” is the basis for human interaction because whatever we do to others we also do to ourselves. This basic dharma does not require to be preached since everyone knows it.

His Holiness cited the example of Duryodhana's words from the Mahabharata to illustrate that man's problem is not the ignorance of value systems. "I know what is good but I am not inclined to do it; I know also what is bad, but I do not refrain from doing it." Pujya Swamiji emphasized that if there is a doubt regarding what is right and what is wrong, then talk to someone who is well-informed. The touchstone of conduct is that it should not hurt or disturb others.

Education is the values of values, the idea being not to tell or preach to students but to make them aware of the potential for perfection that they carry within themselves.

Pujya Swamiji ended his special address with a unique mantra for the occasion which succinctly summed up the gestalt of his lecture: "A value is a value when the value of a value is valuable to you and not to someone else."

The first copy of the book was received by Prof. M.S.Ananth, Director IIT Madras. The book was felicitated by Prof. R. Balasubramian, Former Chairman, ICPR and student of Prof. Sarma and Prof. V.R.Muraleedharan, Head of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Madras.

*Report by
Asst. Prof. Dr. R. Swarnalatha
IIT, Madras.*

