

Re-Emergence of the Aim and Objectives of the Vedic System of Education in Ancient India through the 'Four Pillars of Learning' In Delors Commission Report, 1996

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ABSTRACT

The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century chaired by Jacques Delors in 1996 recommended some valuable and relevant suggestions for the improvement of learning as well as teaching processes and systems. The Commission provided immensely important guidance regarding the principles and direction of the educational system. The 'Four Pillars of Learning' are among those principles which narrate basically how learning should lead the all-round development of a learner systematically through gaining knowledge, applying that knowledge in practical life, living in harmony with others and, above all, building a perfect humane character and personality.

Indian tradition since the ancient ages keeps believing that education or learning must build the character and personality of a human being noble if it claims to be called a 'true education'. The learning which is not capable of raising the level of humanity and spirituality within a person/learner, though it may raise the levels of intelligence and skills, is not considered as '*Vidya*' or genuine education in India. The noble aim and objectives of the Vedic system of education in ancient India, which aim at 'Self realization', emphasize upon the culture of '*Para Vidya*' or spiritual knowledge but not at all ignoring the culture of '*Apara Vidya*' or material knowledge, and scientifically establish the idea of 'oneness' (Non-duality) and 'togetherness' ('Unity in diversity'), set this tune in this pious land more than three thousand years ago.

In this connection, the underlying essence of the Delors Commission Report's 'four pillars of learning' seems to be very much harmonious, may not be throughout but certainly up to a considerable range, with the underlying philosophy of the aim and objectives of the Vedic system of education in ancient India. The present study attempts to unfurl the reflections of the age-old Vedic educational system's aim and objectives in the Delors Commission Report's 'four pillars of learning' through a purely qualitative research approach.

Keywords: Vedic, Vedic system of education, Delors Commission Report, Four Pillars of Learning

INTRODUCTION

The ancient India (*Bharatvarsha* or *Aryavarta*) is renowned to the whole world as the birthplace of great spiritual ideas and personalities. Educational philosophies, thoughts, processes and systems have always been moulded here under the influence of these grand ideas. More than three thousand years ago, the *Arya Rishis* laid the foundation of the Vedic knowledge and learning in this pious land. The great 'Veda(s)' has been the base of this education system. The Sanskrit word 'Veda' meaning 'wisdom' is derived from the root '*Vid*'- 'to know'. The Vedic philosophy and education teaches us to view the world and life with a spiritual outlook, and it's worth mentioning here that the spirituality which the Vedas bestows us, is scientific and rational at the extreme. Religion can be considered as the way or process to make these high spiritual ideas realistic in our life. Thus, the Vedic spirituality, religion and education advocates for a cultured and civilized lifestyle lived under the rays of spiritual ideas and values.

Education, today, is suffering from a lot of issues such as disparities in respect of gender, caste, skin colour, creed, physical and/or mental and/or cognitive disabilities, religious belief, language spoken and so on, increasing restlessness of mind and lacking concentration power especially under the influence of all-time exposure to the digital world, lacking interest for subjective learning especially associated with the learning of morals, values, ethics, peace and humanity, lacking quality of

teaching especially in school level, increasing habit of living insensitive and selfish within the parent community, and also teaching those negative things to their sons/daughters, increasing level of corruption and discrimination in the areas of educational access, enrolment, availability of proper opportunities, services, facilities and resources, increasing number of qualified but unemployed youths in the society etc. The 1996 report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Jacques Delors (popularly known as Delors Commission Report) deserves an important relevance in this connection. The Commission highlights many of these issues in its report with emphasis and also gives highly valuable recommendations for the solution of those. 'Four Pillars of Learning', viz. 'Learning to know', 'Learning to do', 'Learning to live together' and 'Learning to be' as enshrined in the Commission's report throw a bright light of hope here.

The Delors Commission has kept these four pillars of learning under the title 'Principles' in the Part-2 of its report. So, it can be stated here that these four 'pillars' at one hand, can be considered as 'principles of education' while at the same time can also be regarded as 'objectives of learning'. Learning or knowing is not that habit of storing a lot of information in the storage devices, also not the habit of memorising a lot of facts and information before the examination and then vomiting all those on the answer sheets, not also earning a lot of money, and possessing a lot of wealth and property, not nurturing the longing of being famous and popular too; rather it is a process of assimilating good ideas and becoming a 'true human by character' with which one can do good for his/her own, for his/her family and community, for his/her society and nation, and also for the whole world and humankind.

Here lies a sense of similarities between the core idea of the Commission's 'four pillars of learning' and the underlying idea of the aim and objectives of the Vedic system of education in ancient India because both these point towards such an educational philosophy and system which bears not only the capability of making 'qualified scholars and skilled professionals' but most importantly, has the strength to develop 'virtuous, righteous, unselfish and humane-charactered jewels'.

Research Questions:

- Is there any similarity we can find between the core idea of the 'Four Pillars of Learning' in Delors Commission Report, 1996 and that of the aim and objectives of the Vedic system of education in ancient India?
- Can it be stated that the core educational philosophy of the Vedic system of education in ancient India is once again re-emerging through "Learning: The Treasure Within"?

Objectives of the Study:

- To find out the aim and objectives of Vedic system of education in ancient India
- To find out the recommendations of the Four Pillars of Learning in Delors Commission Report, 1996
- To find out whether there is any similarity between the core idea of the 'Four Pillars of Learning' in Delors Commission Report, 1996 and that of the aim and objectives of the Vedic system of education in ancient India

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study is purely a qualitative one and applies a historical, philosophical as well as comparative approach. In this respect, it is based on some qualitative research methods, principally on study of related literatures and analyses of the information, concepts, views and ideas found there. The study applies basically an analytical-cum-descriptive method of research.

There have been two types of data-sources taken into consideration in case of the present study— Primary and Secondary. "Learning: The Treasure Within", Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (Also known as Delors Commission Report), 1996 acts as the primary source of data here, whereas relevant book and research articles are the secondary sources of data in this study.

Subjective, qualitative, logical comparison and analyses of facts, concepts, views and ideas along with assessing the similarities between the core idea of the 'Four Pillars of Learning' in Delors Commission Report, 1996 and the underlying philosophy of the aim and objectives of the Vedic system of education in ancient India are the major techniques of data analysis and interpretation in this present study.

Reflection of the Central Idea of the Ancient Vedic Educational System's Aim and Objectives in the Four Pillars of Learning in Delors Commission Report, 1996 —

Reflection in the First Pillar of Learning, i.e. 'Learning to Know':

The innermost, true 'Self' of human being is the '*Sat-Chit-Ananda*' which is also the real 'self' of all other living beings and even of the non-living ones too. But, the expression of this 'Ultimate Self' is, by far, more intensified and emphatic in human beings than in all other living ones. Because of this '*Chit*' self which means the 'Ultimate Knowledge', human being has an intrinsic quest for knowledge, a curiosity to know, since its very origin. This is this curiosity which has brought human being to this unbelievably developed and modern stage, and hopefully, it will surely be effective for the advancement of human beings more magically in future. Education provides us that space where learners get the opportunity to quench their thirst for knowledge and to increase this thirst more and more. This is education again which provides a space to the teachers/instructors also for sharing their knowledge with the learners which, in turn, makes the teachers more interested to know more. Thus, education is and should be a lifelong process of knowing or learning. But, transformation of this system of learning producing 'educated persons' into a mere system which produce 'qualified persons' with no assurance of true nature of education poses some serious threats against the ideal nature of education or learning.

"Learning: The Treasure Within" (1996) points to the idea that learning should be for gaining knowledge in its first level, i.e. the first pillar of education in the afore mentioned report, by combining a sufficiently broad general knowledge with the opportunity to work in depth on a small number of subjects. This also means learning to learn, so as to benefit from the opportunities education provides throughout life ("**Learning: The Treasure Within**", UNESCO, 1996). Learning to know doesn't mean gathering or storing numerous and varied information only, may be in mind or, in modern era, in digital devices; rather it is about developing the human mind in such a way through the habits of concentration, memorising and thinking so that mind can not only store information but can assimilate those, analyse those, build concepts, internalise ideas and create its own unique 'knowledge'. Knowing the physical facts about the material world or 'worldly matters' only is not that which the 'first pillar of learning' assures as knowledge; rather, it emphasizes upon the synthesis of 'knowledge of world' and 'knowledge of the Self'.

Vedic system of education in ancient India, more than three thousand years ago, designed the educational curriculum of the then Indian society in such a way where learning and application of the '*Apara Vidya*' (worldly knowledge) was firmly based upon the philosophy of '*Para Vidya*' (knowledge of self), or for the sake of our simple understanding, which we may call '*Dharma*' or spirituality. Pupils aimed to realize the 'Self' through an extremely systematic and synthesizing approach in which the nature and approach of worldly learning, affairs and professions were determined by the core philosophy of '*Dharma*', and here it should be mentioned with a clear voice that '*Dharma*' is not performing some rituals only; rather, it is that humane philosophy which guides an individual along the true path of humanity throughout his/her life. Ancient Vedic sages (*Rishis* and/or *Gurus*) realized the fact truly that ignoring the worldly needs, one cannot attain the ultimate knowledge, and at the same time, without an aim and effort for the ultimate realisation or 'Self realisation', worldly knowledge can only bind an individual more in 'the bondage of sorrowful world' and cannot provide the ultimate peace and pleasure. Hence, as there's need and provisions of spiritual and religious practices, there's need and provisions of worldly professions as well. Sequential processes of *Shravana* (Effective listening), *Smarana* (Memorising), *Manana* (Thinking) and *Nididhyasana* (Unwavering concentration) have been given the utmost emphasis as the practices and process of unfurling the 'levels of knowledge' one after another to attain the ultimate stage of knowledge, i.e. the knowledge or realisation of the true 'Self' or the ultimate '*Para Vidya*'.

Reflection in the Second Pillar of Learning, i.e. 'Learning to Do':

Learning is generally given and taken within the formal education system through two approaches or paths, viz. theoretical and practical. This is actually an effective approach of teaching and learning where theoretical knowledge should be idealised and internalised through practical applications. But there lies a misconception also in this case because many times, learning is provided in such a way in the formal educational institutions to the learners that they intake a wrong conception that there is a clear distinction between theoretical papers and practical ones which they have to prepare separately and hence, they cannot synthesize the theoretical knowledge with its practical application. Besides, there's another misconception going on through generations that literature papers are only theoretical papers which have no practicality and the papers of science knowledge domain have only practical applications. Actually, this type of wrong idea is built among the learners mainly due to the unwillingness and inability of the teachers to make them comprehend the practical sides of literary knowledge and its integral relation with the knowledge domain of science.

Learning to do in Delors Commission Report, 1996 exhibits that learning should advance to the stage of 'doing' from the stage of 'knowing' and most importantly, it doesn't mean that learning should leave the stage of 'knowing' for advancing to

the stage of 'doing'; rather, it needs to be clearly stated here that the practice of 'knowing and 'doing' should run hand in hand simultaneously.

Learning to do refers to acquiring not only an occupational skill but also, more broadly, the competence to deal with many situations and work in teams. It also means learning to do in the context of young peoples' various social and work experiences which may be informal, as a result of the local or national context, or formal, involving courses, alternating study and work (**"Learning: The Treasure Within", UNESCO, 1996**).

If a learner in a school is asked a simple question - "What do you want to be?" or "What is your aim in life?", generally the answers come like these - "I want to be a Doctor/Engineer/Teacher/Professor/Cricketer/Businessman etc." and so on. Thus, learning, from the very primary level of the learners, remains not only linked but targeted also to some formal profession(s) generally. No doubt, getting employment along with acquiring the capability of earning is one of the important objectives of education or learning. The second pillar of learning in Delors Commission Report, 1996 also highlights the point of vocationalization of education. Learners should be vocationally trained, eligible and capable besides being theoretically knowledgeable. Again here comes the point of synthesis of 'theory' with 'practical' previously discussed which has also been recommended by the Commission. Here 'theoretical knowledge' forms the base upon which 'practical application' can be organised.

Now if we look into the ancient Vedic system of education, we can find there that the pupils residing in the pious abode of their *Guru* were to perform routine duties besides attending and culturing lessons everyday following '*Brahmacharya*' disciplines strictly. These duties included works like collecting fuel woods and water, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, guarding the cattle, maintaining the cleanliness of the *Ashrama* campus, begging alms and giving wholehearted service to *Guru*. This was how the theoretical lessons of the '*Veda(s)*' came into practicality. Vedic educational curriculum was framed in this way so that pupils could be capable and eligible not only to know but also to realize the lessons which they learned from their *Guru* with the underlying reasonings, logics and philosophies through their practical application in real world situations. This systematic synthesizing nature of education has now been re-emerged with a freshness and relevance through the recommendations of Delors Commission Report, 1996.

Another wonderful characteristic of the Vedic system of education is worth mentioning here that this system considered and granted the differences in capabilities of learning, differences in the aptitude levels and diversities in the fields of interest of the learners. That's why the curriculum was framed so brilliantly that time by the then thinkers, philosophers and sages that there remained diversification of learning-specializations as well as a common ground of general-learning. We can match this system of Vedic era with today's concepts of common core curriculum and differentiated curriculum. We can also match this with the Delors Commission's recommendation which states, ".....but specialization, even for future researchers, must not exclude general knowledge. Today, a really well-trained mind needs a broad background and the opportunity to study a small number subjects in depth. Both need to be encouraged during the whole of a person's education" (**"Learning: The Treasure Within", UNESCO, 1996**). Well-thought and well-planned systematic framing of the curriculum along with its well-implementation in the field of education at Vedic period succeeded to develop firm knowledge base, both general and specialized, and competency in specialized vocational fields within the learners. This reflection we can observe in the system of '*Varnashrama*' which was originally a system of diversification or division of labour, and not at all, division of castes. We can find a similarity here with the Delors Commission's statement - ".....Instead of requiring a skill, which they see as still too narrowly linked to the idea of practical know-how, employers are seeking competence, a mix, specific to each individual, of skill in the strict sense of the term, acquired through technical and vocational training, of social behaviour, of an aptitude for teamwork, and of initiative and a readiness to take risks" (**"Learning: The Treasure Within", UNESCO, 1996**).

Lastly, after the above discussion, an incident related with Lord Buddha can be mentioned here. Though, it seems not to be relevant in this study as it belongs to the post-Vedic, specifically saying, of Buddhist era, it is worth mentioning here for the sake of better understanding of the principle of 'learning by doing', or in other words, how practical experiences make us realize the core ideas of theoretical knowledge. Kisa Gotami was the wife of a wealthy man of Savatthi. Her story is one of the most famous ones in Buddhism. After losing her only child, Kisa Gotami became desperate and asked if anyone could help her. Her sorrow was so great that many thought she had lost her mind. An old man told her to see the Buddha. The Buddha told her that he could bring the child back to life if she could find white mustard seeds from a family where no one had died. She desperately went from house to house, but to her disappointment, she could not find a house that had not suffered the death of a family member. Finally the realization struck her that there is no house free from mortality. She returned to the Buddha, who comforted her and preached to her the truth. She was awakened and entered the first stage of enlightenment. Eventually, she became an *Arahat* (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kisa_Gotami).

Reflection in the Third Pillar of Learning, i.e. 'Learning to Live Together':

'Learning to live together' can be achieved by developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence – carrying out joint projects and learning to manage conflicts – in a spirit of respect for the values of pluralism, mutual understanding and peace ("**Learning: The Treasure Within**", UNESCO, 1996). This third pillar of learning in Delors Commission Report, 1996 seems probably one of the most important and necessary aspects of education for today's world which sleeps on the bed of 'nuclear weapons made for the destruction of humans by the humans'. The most necessary factor behind the formation of the United Nations Organization in 1945 just after the end of World War-II was for the re-establishment and preservation of peace and harmony in the world. Hence, recommendation of such a learning by one of the UNESCO's major initiatives, i.e. "Learning: The Treasure Within", 1996, in the field of education holds crucial importance and relevance. Acknowledging the differences and diversities among individuals, groups as well as nations with a positive outlook and respecting these diversities only can establish an environment of effective collaboration, cooperation, harmony and thus, peace. In a single term, we can say that the Commission envisions an 'homogeneity within the heterogeneity' through the 'third pillar of learning'.

Now looking back to the Vedic lessons, we get a very emphatic and popular *shloka*- "*Ayam Nijah Paro Vetī Ganana Laghuchetasam / Udaracharitanam Tu Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*". The verse appearing from the Chapter-6 of '*Maha Upanishad*', also found in '*Rig Veda*', means as Jeffrey Moses (2002) in "Oneness" quotes, "One Is A Relative, The Other Stranger, / Say The Small Minded. / The Entire World Is A Family, / Live The Magnanimous." Thus, we can clearly comprehend that thousands of years ago, the Vedic sages realized the 'Non-duality', the 'Oneness' which they imparted to their disciples.

'Veda' stands on the 'Ultimate, Non-dual Self' which is named as '*Brahma* or *Parabrahma*', and proves scientifically that 'all' including humans and other living beings, including living and non-living beings, including animate and inanimate beings which we see in multiple existences are none (or nothing) but the multiple and varied reflections of the 'One Non-dual Self', just like the varied reflections of the one and the same Sun we can see in different bowls containing water of different colours. This unimaginably great ideal of oneness was there within the Vedic system of education, meditation of which made the learners realize the omnipresence of that '*Brahma*' as human beings, as animals and birds, as trees, as rivers, as soil, as mountains, as air, as fire, as rain, as storm, as Sun, as Moon, as stars and so on. Learners were instructed to practice considering others as the same as his/her own 'Self' and behave accordingly but with an intelligent consideration of the varied expressions of that 'Ultimate One'. Thus, India in that ancient period already established the idea of 'unity in diversity' in the society through a collaborative, cooperative learning system which had also been successful to foster the uniqueness of individual learners. We can find a similarity here of Delors Commission's recommendation regarding its third pillar of learning with this age-old ideal of Vedic education as the Commission states, "The task of education is to teach, at one and the same time, the diversity of the human race and an awareness of the similarities between, and the interdependence of, all humans" ("**Learning: The Treasure Within**", UNESCO, 1996).

Reflection in the Fourth Pillar of Learning, i.e. 'Learning to Be':

The Vedic system of education in ancient India upholds the salvation or realization of the true 'Self' or '*Brahmajnana*' as the ultimate goal of education which the learners aim to attain. Continuous development of character and personality through persistent learning, practicing and applying practically what is learnt is the 'objective' here for attaining such 'aim'. With these aim and objective, which are really ethereal, Vedic *Rishis* planned and implemented the educational curriculum in such a way so that all-round development of the learners could occur, i.e. development in terms of physical, mental, cognitive, emotional, intellectual, moral, ethical, behavioural, skills, vocational, aesthetic and spiritual aspects of human life and they can gradually acquire the capability and eligibility to realize these ethereal subjects. Synthesis of '*Para Vidya*' and '*Apara Vidya*' with core emphasis upon the culture of '*Para Vidya*', but not ignoring the culture of '*Apara Vidya*' at all, is of crucial importance in this respect in which judgements of thought, speech and activity should be done on the basis of the core philosophy of '*Para Vidya*'.

Thus, the ancient Vedic educational philosophy and curriculum emphasized immensely upon the 'character and personality development' of learners. Human beings are 'thinkers' and can judge as well as control their thoughts, their speeches and their actions, unlike other living beings. That's why the aspect of character and personality development is only associated with the human beings as they deserve excellent characters featured with genuine humanity, those special qualities like compassion, selflessness, unworldly love, truthfulness and so on. The Vedic system of education fosters these humane qualities throughout with immense importance so that a person can be noble by his/her character and personality, and can spread his/her excellence into others also for the progress of humankind.

The ultimate knowledge or '*Brahmajnana*' stays covered and hidden under numerous layers of knowledge. Education is that process of human life which possesses the power of unfolding these layers one after another. Hence, everyone should make best efforts to undergo this process, and at the same time, everyone has that right also because the same '*Brahma*' or the ultimate knowledge is core underlying '*reason*' for each and everyone's existence, and that's why everyone has the equal right to 'Know' the 'Ultimate Knowledge'.

Recommendations of Delors Commission regarding its fourth pillar of learning show a good deal of accordance with the above discussed educational philosophy of the Vedic era. The Commission recommends that the nature and approach of learning should be such so as better to develop one's personality and be able to act with ever greater autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility. In that connection, education must not disregard any aspect of a person's potential: memory, reasoning, aesthetic sense, physical capacities and communication skills ("**Learning: The Treasure Within**", UNESCO, 1996). The Commission also emphasizes that education or learning should approach towards the stage of 'Learning to Be', towards the transformation of a 'biological human being' into a 'morally and culturally developed humane being' having the genuine humanity as the most significant characteristic of his/her character and also having the capability to eradicate the 'animality' and 'brutality' from his/her character. But, unfortunately, this aspect or 'pillar' of learning is the most overlooked one.

DISCUSSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Delors Commission's recommendations for the nature, approach and target of education for the 21st century are of utmost importance and relevance in today's world scenario. Development of learning through the 'four pillars' is, no doubt, an extremely brilliant concept as well as recommendation, and it holds its own uniqueness especially in respect of its thoughtful presentation in the report with reference to the present issues and concerns of the society. The Commission reports some crucial tensions existing in the contemporary world, viz. tensions between the global and the local, between the universal and the individual, between tradition and modernity, between long-term and short-term considerations, between the need for competition and the concern for equality of opportunity, between the extraordinary expansion of knowledge and human beings' capacity to assimilate it, and lastly between the spiritual and the material. All the stated tensions are very much relevant in today's 'all time running' world-society, and important here to mention that we often face confusions to opt any one between the two in case of each tension.

The 'four pillars of learning' provides an effective solution to this problem. These 'pillars' as shown by the Commission refer actually to the process of development and fulfilment of education or learning which should occur in a learner's life. A learner in primary level of learning needs to assimilate basic information and ideas about his own health, both physical and mental, and about his neighbourhood, environment, community, society, nation and this world to which he/she belongs. Gradually with the development of maturity level, both of body and mind as age and experience advance, he/she has to progress from the basics to the more complex and from the concrete to the abstract knowledge domains. With the enriching level of theoretical knowledge, learning standard of practical applications of those theoretical lessons also gets intensified. This is effective for the development of skills and competencies within the learners which, in turn, makes them vocationally capable, and eligible for professional jobs.

The first two 'pillars of learning' in the Delors Commission Report thus, refer to such a learning which is capable of developing the 'knowledge base' and 'competency base' of the learners. But, a learner who is sapient and competent in his/her specialized field doesn't ensure that he/she is morally enriched and humane too. Intelligence can be a factor of consideration in case of academic qualifications whereas skills can be in case of professional success; but none of these two can be an indicator of an enriched developed humane character. Almost all of the devastating wars have been initiated, waged and continued by the well qualified and 'so-called educated' leaders and rich people. Here comes the worth of the last two 'pillars' of learning as reported by the Commission. These 'pillars' emphasize mainly on moral teaching and learning which can awaken the humane qualities like compassion, righteousness, tolerance, sense of unity and oneness, selflessness, spirituality etc. within the learners. In a single word, we can name it 'character and personality development' of the learners which is highlighted by 'learning to live together' and 'learning to be'. "Learning: The Treasure Within", 1996 envisions the development of a learner undergoing the 'four pillars of learning' in such a way so that there occurs "manifestation of the perfection already in man" as stated by Swami Vivekananda in a letter written to Singaravelu Mudaliyar (Kidi) from Chicago, United States of America, dated 3rd March, 1894. Unfortunately, in today's ongoing education system, the aspect of character and personality development is the most neglected one.

Vedic system of education in ancient India put its most emphatic focus on this aspect. Education without character development can make a person 'qualified' only, but not 'educated' at all and this type of person is generally for no 'good' of

the society, but may be, for 'bad'. Hence, Vedic education system keeps the 'highest truth', i.e. '*Brahma*' as the 'ultimate aim' of education which would guide a learner along the 'correct life-path' always, would always remind him/her about his/her responsibilities and 'aim', would make him/her all-time focused upon the attainment of the 'aim', and very importantly, would always prevent him/her from being deviated from the right path or true education. This is how a 'great aim' works for the continuous progress of an individual and also of a group or nation. One of the most impressive characteristics of Vedic education system is that it presents such a 'great aim' near the learners. We can surely match this philosophy regarding the aim of education with the underlying philosophy of the fourth pillar of learning, i.e. 'Learning to Be', in the Delors Commission Report, 1996 where the Commission also recommends that the 'all-round development' of a learner should obviously be the aim of education where a 'simple learner' will be transformed into a 'role model'.

Attainment of the 'Ultimate Truth' or 'Ultimate Knowledge' or '*Brahma*' will unfurl all the mysteries and all the knowledge of the universe in front of that scholar (In the Indian tradition whom we call a '*Rishi*') who attains that. Needless to say, this attainment is not at all a get-at-able subject. Hence, the ancient Vedic sages or *Gurus* framed the educational curriculum with a brilliant planning and, most importantly, they implemented that planning real educational field with extreme effectiveness. The Vedic system of education provides us two domains of knowledge— one is the worldly (*Apara Vidya*) and the other, spiritual (*Para Vidya*). These two theoretical knowledge domains with their practical aspects create such a synthesis in combination which has been proved to be genuinely effective for the all-round development of learners including the development of their unique talents. In the 1996 report of Delors Commission, we also get the impressions of synthesis of theoretical and practical knowledge areas, of synthesis of material and spiritual aspects and of development of specialized knowledge on a broad base of general knowledge which we can trace back to Vedic era, over three thousand years back. Moreover, when the Commission's report recommends the importance of practicing concentration, memorization and thinking in respect of 'learning to know', we can remember the practices of *Shravana* (Effective learning), *Smarana* (Memorization), *Manana* (Concentrated thinking) and *Nididhyasana* (Meditation or utmost concentration upon a particular subject) as enshrined within the Vedic philosophy of education.

'*Gurukula*'— the educational institute in the Vedic era formed a very vital part of the whole education system in that period. Residing together in a pious environment of *Gurukula* and most importantly, in the vicinity of the *Guru* who not only imparted lessons to his pupils, but also extended his 'selfless love' into his disciples, 'established a sense of togetherness, unity and above all, of a family within the learners. This sense made a learner heartily feel his *Guru* as his father and other disciples as his brother. Pupils, in this environment, felt obliged if they got an opportunity to serve his *Guru* by any means; may be that through keeping the *Ashrama* campus clean everyday, or through collecting fuel-woods, drinking water and begging alms for supporting all of the *Ashrama* residents, or through serving the pious feet of *Guru* at night with a true feeling of the sameness of *Guru* with the God. This sense of togetherness which the pupils learnt in *Gurukula*, gradually instilled into the character of them in such a way that a time arrived when they realized the oneness or non-duality of the whole universe with himself/herself and the sameness of of his/her own self with the 'Ultimate True Self'. This is the stage when a person can actually 'live together' with others irrespective of the differences and diversities as well as acknowledging and respecting those differences and diversities. The 'third pillar of learning', i.e. 'learning to live together' in the Commission's report intends to highlight this point of togetherness which has already been emphasized scientifically in the Vedic system of education in ancient India.

The present study only focuses upon the drastic similarities between the essence of the 'four pillars of learning' as recommended and reported by the Delors Commission in 1996 and the underlying philosophy of the aim and objectives of the Vedic system of education in ancient India. "Learning: The Treasure Within", 1996 is an immensely valuable resource in the field of education today. It provides some outlooks of the nature of education against the backdrop of present day situation, some principles of an ideal education and some directions for the education in the 21st century in its three parts. The present study only focuses upon one the principles, i.e. the 'Four Pillars of Learning', mentioned in the Delors Commission's report. On the other hand, only the aim and objectives of the Vedic system of education in ancient India have been taken into consideration here for study. This ancient education system can absolutely be considered as an ideal for all existing education systems throughout the world because of its unbelievably enriched philosophy, culture, curriculum and success.

Hence, at one hand, there remains a vast scope for scholars and researchers of further studies regarding the different areas of the Delors Commission Report, 1996 and, on the other hand, different aspects not only of the Vedic education system, but also of the other education systems in ancient India, such as post-Vedic, Buddhist and Jain education systems are of immense need and importance today for in-depth research studies. Thus, there may appear aspects of inter-relation, inter-influence and interdependence between the education systems of the 'East' and the 'West', of the 'past' and the 'present'.

CONCLUSION

Education in today's world is seen as an 'investment' on 'human capital' as well as a 'consumption' by human capital. How far education has proved to be beneficial or effective for an individual and/or the society, is judged by the 'rate of return'. The concepts of 'spill-over' and 'externalities' have been added to education for understanding its 'benefits', or may be better to say, its attained 'profits'. In a world society which is principally governed by and judged under the light of lifeless 'materialistic ideas', such 'economic' outlooks to education or learning is very normal. Education and human beings in front of this type of world are nothing but 'products' and 'capitals' which possess 'economic values'.

Education can surely be dealt under the shadow of these economic terms, but as a result of this bizarre consideration, we are forgetting day by day the lively philosophical elegance of education. Overwhelming influence of materialism at the cost of generosity and with the increasing affluence of varied, attractive, consumable material commodities is causing a lot for keeping the minds of the people (including the learners) all-time restless and making their brains 'technically fit' but 'philosophically, culturally and ideally unfit — dull'. Side-effects of device-smartness and digitization aggravates this situation more where learning is 'stored' not by memory or by understanding, but by 'storage devices'. Digital access for the sake of learning is no doubt a great boon for the learners and scholars, but at the same time, it floods the society with numerous negative issues too.

Delors Commission in its 1996 report highlights this 'crisis-condition' of the present-day education system very emphatically. Not only it presents the areas of 'tensions' in the field of education, but it also appears as a torch-bearer showing the path of solutions. We can clearly notice the emphasis upon the development of concentration, memorization and thinking powers as well as upon the habit of regular learning by head (Refers to cognition), heart (Refers to humane feelings) and hands (Refer to practical application). Thousands of years back, the Vedic system of education in ancient India also made provisions of *Shravana* (One thing needs to be mentioned here that in Vedic era, as oral teaching was the principal way of teaching, that's why effective listening was the principal way of receiving those lessons. In today's perspective, hence, *Shravana* doesn't actually mean listening only, rather includes reading and other types of processes also which are used for the intake of lessons), *Smarana* (Refers to memorization), *Manana* (Refers to effective thinking) and *Nididhyasana* (Refers to utmost concentration) — a brilliant systemic approach for learning the 'unlearned', for knowing the 'unknown' and for enriching the 'learned and known'. Here comes the importance of practical knowledge which makes the learners realize which they have learnt and/or known theoretically and also makes them capable of performing their worldly responsibilities and duties (*Kartavyas*). The Commission highlights this point in the 'second pillar of learning, i.e. learning to do', whereas we can find similar ideas in the '*Karmakanda*' of the Vedic philosophy. The '*Jnanakanda*' of this ancient educational system emphasizes mainly upon the philosophical aspects of life and learning, whereas the '*Karmakanda*' cultivates mainly the ritualistic areas. Thus, the whole Vedic education system was designed with the combination of philosophical aspects and practical aspects of learning. The culture of '*Para Vidya*' or spiritual knowledge which is the most influential factor for the development of character and personality enriched with genuine humanity gets immense emphasis in Vedic education system. But it is worth remembering that the exercise of '*Apara Vidya*' or worldly learning is not at all disrespected, rather its shape gets moulded and nature gets purified by the golden touch of '*Para Vidya*'.

Thus, the ancient Vedic system of learning provides an enthusiastic, lively approach which holds the capacity of all-round excellence of learners with special emphasis on their character and personality development aiming at the great aim of 'Self-realization'. Ages later, in 1996, we can again discover the impressions of this ancient philosophical school in "Learning: The Treasure Within". When the Commission advocates for collaboration, cooperation, unity, harmony and togetherness along with respecting and acknowledging the importance of differences and diversities in its 'third pillar of learning, i.e. learning to live together', it reminds the idea of 'oneness' or 'sameness' or 'non-duality' enshrined in the Vedic philosophy. Thus, the spirit of 'homogeneity in heterogeneity' in 'learning to live together' finds a match with the spirit of 'unity in diversity', an age-old spirit of India. Lastly, regarding 'learning to be', i.e. the 'fourth pillar of learning' in the Commission's report, it is worth saying that both the Vedic system of education and the Delors Commission consider the 'becoming and being of a human being into a perfect humane being carrying a physically strong, mentally refined, intellectually sharp, morally resolute, attitudinally positive, behaviourally cultured and spiritually philosophical personality'. The duty of education is to guide a learner to this aim through the process of disciplined as well as generous learning. Hence, it will not be an exaggeration to state that the core educational philosophy of the age-old Vedic system of education in ancient India is once again re-emerging in recent centuries through the "Learning: The Treasure Within".

To conclude, here it is needful to make it clear that the present study does not intend to state at all that the Delors Commission copied the core ideas of the age-old Vedic system of education for preparing its report on education for the twenty-first century; rather the study attempts to discover the areas of similarity, of interrelationship and of inter-influence between the Vedic ideas and the Commission's thoughts in respect of the aim and objectives of the ancient Vedic system of education and the 'four pillars of learning' in the Commission's report of 1996.

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