

Foundations of Education

Paper – 05

Meaning, Characteristics, Merit and Demerits of Idealism

Introduction:

Idealism is one of the oldest school of thought in the world of Philosophy, originating in human nature itself. Continuing from the primitive man to his present counterpart in some modified form or the other. From the idealistic standpoint it has overtone of spirituality since it believes that the ultimate existing element is spiritual in nature. The entire universe is an extension of the mind or soul. From the epistemological standpoint it is better called Idealism, implying there by that thought or idea has a greater validity than the physical object. From the normative standpoint it is equally represented by the term Idealism which means that the theory attaches greater importance ideals than to facts in this world. Obviously, the term Idealism connotes different concepts when placed in various context. Whatever the context, the word definitely represents a particular theory in Philosophy.

Meaning of Idealism:

As a school of Philosophy, Idealism stressed more importance on ideas, ideals and feeling than material object. Idealism is the result of Plato's "Theory of Ideas". According to this theory, ideas is supreme truth. So Idealism gives more importance on spiritual world than the material world, because the material world is destructible, transitory or mortal. On the other hand, Spiritual world which consists of ideas, ideals and feelings reveals the reality of mind and soul, and therefore, it is immortal, permanent and true. According to Idealism, human nature is more spiritual than material which finds expression through different areas such as mental, religious and aesthetic, which is absent in lower animals. According to Idealism human beings are endowed with brighter intellectual abilities and can mold and modify the surroundings and circumstances to meet their needs and requirements. The modern technological and scientific development is the result of men's mental exercise. Besides, man has created cultural and religious environment by his mental exercises, for the welfare of humanity as well as his own good. Thus, according to Idealism spiritualism is the ultimate truth on which the greatness and goodness of everything depends.

Definitions:

The meaning of Idealism has been defined differently by different eminent educationalist and philosophers. Some of them are listed below:

- 1. Ross:** "Idealistic philosophy takes many and varied forms, but the postulate underlying all this is that mind or spirit is the essential world stuff, that the true reality is of a mental character."
- 2. D.N Dutta:** "Idealism holds that ultimate reality is spiritualism."
- 3. Brubachar:** "Idealism points out that it is mind that it is central understanding the world. To them nothing gives a greater sense of reality than the activity of mind engage in trying to comprehend its world. For any thing to give a greater sense of reality would be a contradiction in terms because to know any thing moer real than mind would itself be a conception of mind.

Strengths or Merit of Idealism in Education:

- 1.** Idealism is the only philosophical doctrine where a detailed exposition of aims have been emphasized.

2. Idealism emphasizes the inculcation of higher values – Truth, Beauty and Goodness – among children.
3. In Idealism the role of teacher in Teaching-Learning process is highlighted.
4. In respect of discipline, Idealism emphasizes on self discipline which has lasting value in the life of an individual.
5. Idealism holds that the most important element in social culture is moral character. Therefore, it puts emphasis on the development of moral character of students.

Weakness or Demerits of Idealism in Education:

1. To some critics Idealism is an abstract and vogue doctrine. Therefore, it is outdated in the modern age of science and technology.
2. Instead of solving day to day problems of life, Idealism is concerned with the unforeseen that the ultimate end of life.
3. Many of the terms and concepts, frequently used by Idealists like spirit, mind, soul and the cosmos cannot be explained in the classroom. Therefore, they have little relevance in the classroom teaching.
4. Idealistic education is teacher centered which is not acceptable in the modern concept of child centered education.
5. Idealistic education pays less importance on physical, industrial, social and electronic environment of the modern age.
