

CHAPTER I

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research study is entitled:

'An Approach to Art Education : a survey and tryout of a renewed programme for art education".

The attempt, in this chapter will be to place this independent (and hence) restricted study in a wider context. It was the wider contextual considerations that directed and motivated this study.

As the title of this research endeavour suggests the focus of this study draws upon numerous disciplines such as; educational philosophy, art, curriculum development and methodology of educational research. The significance of this inter-disciplinary study will be discussed under the following headings:-

- Significance of Art Education in Democratic India.
- Significance of Art to Education.
- Significance of this research to the field of Art and Education.

The discussion under the above headings will serve as an explanation of the perspective taken by the investigator for this study. Research especially in education is necessarily subjective, and in order to make it relevant for future research, the investigator has tried to explain the

perspective and ideological background utilized in this study to enable other researchers to comprehend the significance of the work in its contextual background.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ART EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC INDIA.

The survey of policies for Art Education in Indian Schools described taken-up in this study deals with the period 1947-1979. This period can be seen as a transitional phase in the history of India, for the introduction of the democratic system of values is associated with the attainment of Independence. The period under study reflects how the democratic values were incorporated during that transitional period. The democratic value system was substantially different from the system of values it hoped to replace, and necessarily required a simultaneous transition in the supportive political, socio-economic systems. However, the introduction and acceptance of democratic values has not yet been completed in all these spheres and hence this period records a transition of values, systems and the organization of social institutions. The historical reasons for this lengthy transitional period are numerous, yet it can be said that the political system adopted during Independence also legitimized a different yet highly selective stratified society and for this reason democratic ideals have been introduced in an uneven manner.

The effect of the introduction of democratic values on educational institutions and research have been substantial. For example the notion that "some people are intelligent and

academically inclined" had to be replaced by such notions as "all human beings, given the opportunity, can develop their intellectual abilities". Such a shift in emphasis and value brought changes in numerous areas such as, schooling, school management, employment, social mobility, and economic opportunities etc. The shift in emphasis from "few" to "some" also brought into contradiction the capitalist system and its necessary social stratification with the implications of democratic ideals. The contradictions have led to the uneven adoption and penetration of democratic values in all social institutions.

However imperfect this transitional period may seem, major changes have been made possible in such spheres as educational research. Terms such as "education" and "intelligence" have been redefined to encompass more human abilities and capabilities. Social mobility, that is, theoretically afforded by a democratic system has put to question such notions as "inheritable intelligence". Today educational research under the democratic principle lays more stress on "the environmental effects on education of human abilities".

Furthermore, finer differentiations within educational terminology have been established, and 'literacy' is no longer equated with 'intelligence'. The possibility of including skills in other media apart from the verbal and numerical as a form of intelligence is also a feature of the democratic era,

and the impact of humanistic philosophy.

It is against this contextual background that this research has been conducted. It is hoped that by such research democratic ideals will become a feasible proposition in practical terms. The effort has been to highlight through the survey which areas of education are still not conceptualized on democratic principles and to find means to bridge this transitional period with reviews, theoretical arguments and practical evidence.

#### DEMOCRATIZATION OF THEORIES OF ART.

The period associated with the introduction of democratic ideals has put to question many theories related to art, artists, art appreciation etc. For example, where once the terms 'artist' or 'genius' were explained by either references to "divine intervention" "inspiration with a capital I" or "inherited talents", these no longer are consistent with democratic values. It is now possible to consider the question whether all human beings, given the opportunity, can participate in the artistic endeavour which includes art-making and art appreciation. Such a possibility stands in direct opposition to a prevalent notion that "true art" was made by a few for a few people who could afford it. The democratization of Art theories now demand that education provide the necessary opportunity for all human beings to participate in the artistic endeavour.

The significance of this research study on this issue is that it hopes to bring together findings of recent research that point towards the conceptualization of the artistic endeavour as a universal human capability. Such a concept is necessary for the development and acceptance of democratic values.

In order to make democracy a viable proposition it is essential to establish through research that all cognitive abilities and forms of knowing are equally important i.e. that mathematical thought is equally complex and demanding as visual thought. Equality in the economic sphere is not possible unless the work of the scientist and the artist and others are given an equal value, first on the level of the cognitive complexity implied and then on their economic status. Furthermore, the cognitive functioning of the human mind appears to be inter-related hence a scientist would benefit by developing modes of visual thinking, and a designer by developing mathematical precision. It is towards this re-definition of the cognitive process and artistic process and the appreciation of the role of art in the present educational system, that this research offers it's contribution.

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DEMOCRATIC PRIVILEGES AND ART EDUCATION:

One of the most important privileges afforded by the democratic system is the Freedom of Expression. The democratic system is sustained by the involvement of all it's citizens who improve the system by being it's guardians and exercising their right to free expression. The ability to

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exercise this privilege assumes the mastery over the tools, modes and vehicles of expression and knowledge of the channels of communication that render the expression as effective and relevant. Amongst the modes or vehicles of expression, mastery over the written, spoken word has been given a dominant status. Those who can read and write and know the channels by which their expression can be communicated, (eg: the press) have exercised their right and have even gained political power. In India, however the percentage who are literate are less than 50% which does not suggest the democratic ideal. In order to make more people literate i.e. gain mastery over the written word, the government hopes to provide universal schooling up to the age of 14 years.

However, the written or spoken word is only one of the numerous modes of human expression. The question raised in this study is: why doesn't the school develop the other modes of expression such as the musical, visual, theatrical, etc.? These nondiscursive modes of expression are as potent and important as the discursive mode both for communication and as vehicles of expression. Furthermore, when literacy levels are so low it is important that citizens are able to communicate in whichever form they are proficient, which then also becomes the most powerful mode of communication for them.

This research attempts to re-emphasise the need to provide educational facilities for all people so that

9th Logic

they may be able to attain the proficiency over different modes of expression so that they may ultimately exercise their freedom in the mode they find most appropriate. In a society which has a rich tradition of a variety of expressive forms of communication, it is suggested that these should be utilized to bridge the gap for those who have no access to mass media and the press. Jatras, the language of dance, music and painting are all powerful expressive forms, which like the written word require that both the audience and the communicator have an effective command over the language form. It is suggested, that an educational system that gives education only in words and numbers limits the modes of human expression which may be suitable to different people. If this issue is not taken cognisance of, the political system can be blamed for restricting the free expression of it's citizens.

#### POLITICAL DOMINATION THROUGH CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS

It is said that those who own the means of production are those who exercise political control. In the same way those who control the means and forms of communication are in a position to politically dominate others. Very simply, the argument is, that a person who cannot count is more easily cheated by one who can, and those who control media such as radios, T.V., films, advertisement and the press can use them for political propoganda against an "uneducated audience". Education, in a democracy then has to include the opportunity for all students to be able to comprehend the

cultural symbols that are prevalent so that they may be discerning participants in society. Cultural symbols are value-laden. The inability for large audiences to discern and critically examine the films and cultural programmes they are subjected to, will lead to their ultimate ineffectiveness as participants in a democracy.

#### CULTURAL ENHANCEMENT

The privilege to preserve and develop one's cultural traditions is afforded in the Constitution of the democratic and secular country of India. In order to do so, opportunity for cultural education, the understanding of various and personal traditions must be provided in the most dominant forms of education. The significance of this research is that it reveals through analysis of the prevalent school curriculum that no opportunity for cultural education is provided. Such an oversight on the part of the educationalists since the time of Independence may be said to be partially responsible for the communal disharmony and destruction of traditions that is facing the country today. The need then to review this aspect of cultural education, in the light of inculcating a sense of unity with respect to cultural diversities seems to be more significant and urgent for the development of democracy.

Above a few considerations have been mentioned out of a host of others, which are significant arguments for the importance of art education to the development of a democracy.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ART TO EDUCATION

As has been suggested above, the democratic system necessitates the need to expand the connotation of education so as to make it more relevant, and available to more people. Education, deals with that process associated with the transmission of knowledge. Formalized education refers to the transmission of a body of knowledge that is socially acceptable. The form or method by which formalized education is provided is also one that has a social legitimacy. The form refers to what is now called the "hidden curriculum" whereby students not only learn a content unit but also how it should be learnt eg, by memorizing, through neat work, by being punctual etc. Thus formal education refers to the process of acquiring an understanding of socially acceptable content in a particular form.

An important question facing education today is "how can education be made more relevant". The investigator feels that it is of paramount significance that the relevance of education should be evaluated in the context of the future. It is quite clear that every year there is a substantial expansion of knowledge, and formal schooling cannot hope to include in it's syllabus all this knowledge at any given point in time. Therefore numerous educational theories have begun to lay emphasis on the form and method of the educational process rather than on content acquisition. "Learning by doing" of Unesco, "Learning through a craft" by Mahatma Gandhi, "Learning through experience" by Dewey and American progressives educationalists are all

examples of the recent trend to shift the emphasis of education and schooling from content to "learning how to learn", and the process of acquiring skills for knowledge extraction. The form and method of 'learning how to learn' is made possible through art education. This is the main argument of this research and that is why it is of significance to the educational process.

The skills that are related and necessary for "learning how to learn" are numerous and inter-dependent. Some of these skills are :

- observational skills
- experimental skills
- problem solving skills
- deductive reasoning
- performatory skills and so on.

It is argued in the course of this research study that art education provides an opportunity where the acquisitions of skills necessary for learning can be developed.

#### DEVELOPING SKILLS THROUGH ART EDUCATION

Observation, keen perception, heightened differentiations are all necessary for active learning. Art activities can be designed to develop skills of keen visual perception, observation, audio differentiations etc. Art activities can also provide another element that ~~it~~ is essential for learning, i.e. opportunity to observe, record, and to return for further observations to verify, remedy and expand the

previous observations. Both the scientist and artist find it necessary to make numerous successive observations while they work so that each subsequent observation builds on the last. An artist drawing a figure, may observe and scrutinize the object and then return after drawing the object to verify and expand the observed elements. Keen observation and the ability to expand one's observation, by moving from the details to the entire phenomena are essential for all learning processes. Observation, can also be internalized — an individual may study eg. different aspects of an idea or a concept, mentally using similar skills of observation, distancing, and a flexible movement of thought from details to wholes. Art education in this respect provides the opportunity for students to develop their skills of observation and to record their observation and to internalize these performatory skills.

Experimentation, is a very essential activity in art-making. Any form of art whether it is in the Plastic Arts or Performing Arts requires extensive experimentation for the acquisition of skills of mastery. Unlike science, art activities enables students to experiment with numerous elements and to study the consequences without fear of any drastic circumstances. Experimenting with gestures, colours, plastic forms enable students to acquire precision in their methodology of performing activities. The added advantage of experimentation is that it heightens observation with relation to the task, which is an opportunity offered in the

learning of science and art.

Problem solving skills deal with the ability to deduct from the given a larger set of information. In art education the objective is to provide students with the opportunity to develop qualitative problem solving skills that are as important as quantitative problem solving skills. In art the relationship between art and other disciplines is all encompassing. Using the historical method, the understanding of a culture is possible through deductions and studies of a few artifacts. The recreation of the 'whole' history and culture can be attempted by the study of any one art form and the historical information it provides. Learning about qualitative aspects enables the learner to re-integrate knowledge that has been artificially splintered into disciplines. The understanding of a tribal dance, for example, requires the integration of knowledge about the geographical, social, historical, technological aspects of that particular culture.

*As by?* ✓ Education without art activities is incomplete. For education must provide learning opportunities for the development of the necessary skills for future independent learning which includes qualitative problem solving and a synthesis of disciplines.

Once again it must be stressed that in order to facilitate the educational process it is necessary to

sensitize and develop the skills necessary for the collection of information. Information is transmitted from the external world into the internal world of the individual through the senses. Art education deals largely with the education of the senses and mental skills that enable a keen and precise observation. The world is as many ways that it is experienced and can be described and in order to understand the external and internal worlds of existence all human beings require the opportunity to develop their senses and the necessary related mental skills. It is towards this end that this research has focused attention.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS RESEARCH TO THE FIELD OF ART AND EDUCATION

This research study provides

- 1) a historical survey of major trends and policies for school art education for the period 1947-1979.

Such an investigation has not been undertaken before, as far as the investigator is aware. It was also felt that in order to initiate research in the field of art education, a historical survey was necessary. The Survey provides a background of philosophical trends related to the goals for development of the country at large.

- 2) a review of the present status of art in the school curriculum designed by the Central and State governments.

The arguments and considerations related to the importance of art education for a democracy have been

provided in this Chapter (I). It has been highlighted why art education is essential for the introduction of democratic ideals and for the attainment of educational goals. In this respect this research study is significant in providing the initial survey necessary for future research in this new field. The opening of the doors to a neglected area of education, is an attempt to contribute to democratizing the educational process and the institutions in which it is installed.

This research hopes to be significant by proving the importance of art by the use of educational research rather than relying on western aesthetic theories that belong to a bygone culture and a different age. Art can no longer be said to "entertain a few" or to "be an escapist activity". Modern research now provides substantial evidence that art, the development of related skills to code, encode different symbol systems are essential for the growth of the human mind. References to 'Beauty' 'Truth' to which art was usually associated with, are no longer valid arguments to provide art activities a place in the educational process. The attempt to provide art it's rightful place in the system of social education, has been the purpose of this research, and hence it's relevance.

The investigator also hopes that the content and methodology used in this research will enable other researchers to appreciate the use of qualitative analysis in research areas such as art education that are relatively new

and develop qualitative methods to conduct initial research into new areas.

3) A conceptual framework for art education in Indian schools that is based on the educational values and National objectives in education was developed and has been used to develop a curriculum unit for a tryout in one school. As this is the introductory work in this field and in using a renewed framework the tryout has been qualitatively described to provide clues for future research in this field. It is significant that no experimental tryout was conducted as the research, as the detection of variables, and an understanding of education in the arts is still in it's infancy.

#### SUMMARY

It may be said that though art education is not in anyway a new field for research, this study hopes to be relevant by reviewing art education in India in the context of present day needs. The review of policies and institutions of education are essential for the development of any country. In India, little work has been done in the field of art education, which is way this research study hopes to be significant.

Futhermore, society and social institutions are continuously undergoing a process of change and development hence the need for research and review become more significant in the light of recent needs and requirements. The concept of democracy is one that is supportive

of continuous change for the betterment of larger numbers of people, this research hopes to highlight the value of art education for the enrichment of human development and to pave the way to the establishment of art in education as a necessary component.