



Education in India: Journey from Past to Present

Sucheta Bhuyan

The history of education in India is very interesting and at the very same time draws our immediate attention on its systematised philosophy. The journey began from Gurukul to University and witnessed many peaks and troughs. After the arrival of British the nation witnessed drastic change in the system. Today due to development of science and technology one sees the changes in society but education as a whole in India needs considerable improvement. The aim of this paper is to throw light on ancient education system, its different phases and how it reached its present state.

“Education according to Indian tradition is not merely a means of earning a living; nor is it only a nursery of thought or a school for citizenship. It is initiation into the life of spirit and training of human souls in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue.” The statement of Upanishad aptly define the aim of education in past and the true meaning of imbibing education whether it is giving or taking. In ancient times giving education or process was called ‘दीक्षा- deeksha’, the word come from ‘दक्ष- daksha’ means focus on skill development in ‘अङ्कुरम्- ankuram’ means bud-student where the knowledge sprouts from ‘नैम- नेम’ that is root and ‘नैमि- नेमि’ means the chord that connects and prepares the student. So philosophy of education is to impart knowledge at highest level. The aim of education is to train for totality of life.

The Indian way of education in past is very rich and unique of its kind. The method of teaching in ancient time in India was systematic. In olden days the Gurus imparted education orally till the development of letters. Later on palm leaves and barks of trees were used to write script and thus the education in written form made available. The ancient education philosophy is expressed in Katha Upanishad,

यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति युक्तेन मनसा सदा ।
तस्येन्द्रियाणि वश्यानि सदश्चा इव सारथेः ॥ 3rdvalli, 6thshlok

“He who possessed of supreme knowledge by concentration of mind, must have his senses under control like spirited steeds controlled by charioteer.” Thus, the aim of the education was the manifestation of divinity in man. The whole education system was based on simple living and high thinking and on an intimate relationship between the teacher and the taught and individual was given priority. The education of ‘Shishya’ began with religious ceremony called ‘Upanayan’ means to sit near Guru and thus imbibing the knowledge. The ‘Shishya’ lived with ‘Guru’ as family member and ‘Guru’ also treated him as his son. So, the intimate association between the ‘Guru’ and ‘Shishya’ was the utmost importance. All our ancient scholars like Vasishtha, Viswamitri, Vamdev, Bhardwaj, Atri ,Kanv and Gristamada developed the methods by which knowledge could be acquired, conserved and transmitted to the next generation.

If we go back to any civilisation and tried to evaluate the position of women the result, we found is unsatisfactory but in ancient India women enjoyed the similar status as their male counterpart and they were not legged behind in imparting knowledge as well for e.g. Romasa, Lopamudra, Aparas,

Ghosa, Paulomi, Urvashi, Yami, Indrani, Gaupayana etc. Rigved also notes that women equally drew attention in physical culture and military training and many joined even army in those days. The Mahabharat also notes that in those days 'Shishya' were used to come from different parts for getting knowledge on different subjects like 'Brahmasthan' the department for the Veda, 'Vishnustan'- the department for teaching Politics, 'Mahendrasthan' for Military training, 'Vivasvatastan' for Astronomy and 'Agnisthana' for fire worship and prayers. The school of Kanva was another centre for teaching Vedas, Art, Literature, Kalpasutra, Sabda, Nirukt and some logicians teaching the Nyaya. Bhardhvaj, Atri, Vashtha and Vishvamitra were notable Guru during the Mahabharat time. These Guru were universities in themselves and established institutions in different parts of India and finally with lapse of time these centres turned in to universities like Taxsila, Ujjain, Nalanda, Banaras, Vikramshila.

So ancient system of imparting knowledge was highly developed and completed in its sense. The discipline of learning whether it was philosophy, religion, logic, grammar, chemistry, medicine, surgery the art of painting or sculpture or dramatics or even dancing everything was reduced to a systematic whole for passing it on to the descendants. Our ancient education system aimed at said famous scholar of Vedas Swami Vivekanand "Education is not the amount of information that we gather but it is a manifestation of perfection in man."

Today there are many questions raised against the modern education method in the world in general and in India in particular. It is said that the modern education failed in imbibing the true meaning of education. There is clear lacuna between the man and the complicated modern society. At the one side the imbalance in environment and on the other side the present population is facing the very acute problems like poverty, unemployment, starvation and violence. So need of the hour is to change the attitude towards education. Gandhi rightly said "By education I mean an all round drawing out of the best in child and man's body, mind and spirit."

Modern day education is fashioned as per the western education models and systems. British left India in 1947 but more or less the education system they introduced remained. We inherited right from school system to higher studies with content also. Due to influence of colonial rule the focus shifted on sciences and popular studies. We know that Macaulay's Minute on Education in 1835 set out to explain his proposal for promoting English education in India at the expense of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian- the languages were being taught during colonial rule. Macaulay's intention was to create clerks and servants through his system and the irony is that we have not much deviated from that pattern till today. In the post- colonial period the government, educationists, social scientist and many leaders stressed on making the education India centric with focus on our culture and tradition. Today the Western model and Indian model got mixed up to shape into an altogether different entity. Thus, education in India got shape by influences throughout the history.

After independence few things have changed. Now we have excellent IITs, NITs and IIMs but only few students are beneficiary of such excellent institutions. Sometimes students encounter difficulty in getting admission in high-ranking universities due to the number of students securing more than 90% increase day by day and the irony is we have not opened up new colleges and universities giving the best education or of similar kind, results in frustration in students. There are some colleges and universities very much exist in these countries which do not meet even minimum standards. Every year UGC has to declare the list of universities which are faked or not recognised. Mushrooming of private universities and colleges cannot solve the present crisis of education in India. Ours is a country where stakeholders are not getting standard education and struggling to find employment of their choice. So, the knowledge that they should receive does not reach them.

There are certain reasons of failure. The first immediately comes to our mind is lack of skill based curriculum which was one of the key parameters of ancient education system which completely

neglected in present system. Our syllabus is not designed according to need of the hour. It emphasis on cramming the information and best crammers are awarded. It has plagued the entire system. The present system emphasises on competition and mindless rat race in which the students are crushed and sometimes brilliant frustrated students commit suicide. The education should manifest their inner urge and give way to the creativity. We never focus on teaching skills. It is very well said "Give a man a fish and you feed him one day, teach him how to catch fishes and you feed him for life time.

Our system does not focus on creativity, original thinking, reason and innovation which are considered as highest accolades. On the contrary in our system creativity and research and innovation are always neglected and sometimes even mocked at. Similarly creative and innovative teachers are also not appreciated rather become a laughing stock. Good teachers are not encouraged in terms of incentive which is a common practice in corporate sector. Every teacher is put on the same platform which discourages enthusiastic teachers. We need a teacher, who is a good leader, entrepreneurs in teaching, innovative, a true researcher and not safe, well-paying, risk-free salaried teacher. In the age of science and technology, instead of depending on out dated models, we should try hard which can actually take the wealth of human knowledge to the masses. The goal of our education system should be to create entrepreneurs, innovators, artists, scientists, thinkers and writers who can establish the foundation of knowledge-based economy rather than the low- quality service provider nation that we are turning into.

One should discard the mediocrity out of the system. How a stakeholder can compete with world in the age of globalisation when we compromise with mediocre system, mediocre teacher, mediocre student. If we want excellence mediocrity cannot be tolerated. One more negative point of present education system is the monolithic system in which intelligent, mediocre, and slow learner sit together and get formal education. In such cases fast learners are bored in the class and slow learners struggle to catch up but end up in frustration. It is not the problem with the student but the problem lies with the system. The present system is supported by large sum of money, infrastructure and advanced technology but money is not utilised properly. In short, the education should aim at updating knowledge independently, reflecting and forming opinions, communicating knowledge effectively, thinking rationally. These core capabilities would be an asset to students in any subsequent choice of career. After all it is a fact that market forces today determine the choice of career. It is only by realising today's needs that future strategies in education can be evolved.

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