

Education for an Emerging World: A Futuristic Perspective

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Abstract

Etymologically, the word Education has its origin from Latin words such as 'educare' which is to bring out or to nourish; 'educere' refers to lead out or to draw out; 'educatum' means the act of teaching or training. Education implies 'a breeding, to bring up, and a rearing up.' The Sanskrit word 'shiksha' is derived from the word 'shas' which means the root. Shiksha implies "to discipline, to control, to instruct and to teach." There are a number of definitions that could be quoted and presented. The task at hand is grounding education toward strategies, content and goals that direct students to face the challenges and problems of the future by creating an environment to nourish and worship life. The word life also includes all animate, inanimate, living and nonliving phenomenon for example, crystals, infectious proteins called prions and so on. It is now discovered that computer programmes are also considered "living" by scientists. Many viruses have DNA or RNA which has led to an opinion that they may have a commonality with the human species. The word 'LIFE' is used here in its broadest sense with the awareness that life is a pulsating, dynamic energy constantly emerging and changing defying definition. This paper discusses the challenges of the future, the present technological developments, the adequacy of the present educational system in that context, and the enormous scope of the future of Education for the challenges that lie ahead. It attempts to visualize a possible alternate paradigm as an Indian model of educational system with enduring values for a changing world.

Keywords: Emerging planet, Mayculayan Model, education.

I. The present system, a view

The education system today is a product of the colonial era which was based on the MAYCULAYAN MODEL. The Educational system presently followed in India has evolved and grown from the colonial matrix and constantly changed in the last 60 years. There are various problems associated with the present system, namely

- The system suffers from a crisis of identity.
- There is crisis in the governance.
- There is crisis in availability of resources.

The architecture should address the crisis of identity first. It should evolve a system which is socially relevant, economically rewarding and ethically humane which can sustain a plural society having different groups and sub groups in differing percentages. The system should equip the student with skills and competencies that are commensurate with an India that is as today. It should give cutting edge technological, social, cultural capabilities which can forge a futuristic society adjusting to fast pace changes. That system has to be original, apt, relevant and very practical to the **"India that is."**

The report of Yaspal committee 2009 makes some very pertinent observations in that regard.

“Any unbiased and objective observer of institutions of higher learning in India will be able to surmise that there is a striking lack of rigorous values and an active academic culture capable of resisting the onslaught and invasion of market forces and socio-political forces which are actively engaged in the subversion and manipulation of the normative structures of the university and higher learning institutions in India. The invasion is so pervasive that it includes Policy matters, all fiscal matters involving Fund Grants, allocation, spending, accounting, approvals audit, administrative issues, appointments and day to day activities. The academic fraternity needs to introspect on the causes of origin, the extent of the crisis, the systemic damages and its role in exacerbating this crisis. The analysis and introspection by the academia will reveal the fact that the academic community willingly abdicated their rights and autonomy hitherto conferred by the system. Ideological moorings and political agenda’s became priority thus rendering education subservient, leading to a loss of respect and above all the reverence in which it was held. The Independence of scholarship from power has often been put to test and regrettably the academic community has, on most crucial occasions, failed.”

There are different influential groups who have political, social, local presence tinkering with policies promoting religious, social and cultural divide based on their self-interest which is highly unstable and inconsistent. Given the national aspirations for greater and equitable access to knowledge it is essential that the regulatory system propel the growth in the right direction.

II. Understanding the aspirations of the future generation

The ominous signs have had many expressions. For example, Greta Thurnberg (Born January 3, 2003) is a Swedish teenager who is an environmental activist fighting for Global change in energy policy and other factors causing climate changes. The movement has received worldwide recognition. In the month of August 2018, Greta started a movement to press her demands on climate change along with 100,000 schoolchildren outside the Swedish parliament. This movement is now called “Friday’s for the Future” “An Eight-year-old schoolgirl by name Licypriya Kangujam, also called the Indian ‘Greta’ for her passion and fight against climate change is another leading crusader. Speaking as an invited delegate in the UN Climate Change Conference COP 25 which was held from December 2-13, 2019 at Madrid, Spain, the child urged global leaders to act and save the planet and the future of young children like her.

The World Economic Forum's (WEF) conducted the annual Global Shapers survey and published their findings in the year 2016 based on a sample of 26,000 millennial’s from 181 countries to gauge the problems and issues which according to them are the most pertinent. The results of the survey revealed that the millennial’s perception of problems and issues are very different. The results showed a high degree of global and inclusive views.

The following are the issues as expressed according to priority

1. Climate change/destruction of natural resource (45.2%)
2. Wars and large scale conflict (38.5%)
3. Religious conflict (33.8%)
4. Poverty (31.1%)
5. Accountability of the government, transparency and corruption (21.7%)
6. Safety, security and wellbeing (18.1%)
7. Education; the lack of it. (16.5%)
8. Political instability and lack of political freedom (15.5%)

9. Food and water security(15.1%)
10. Lack of economic opportunities and unemployment (14.2%)

III. Analyzing the causes for the concerns expressed by the future generation

A careful analysis of each factor will lead to a very alarming and pessimistic view of the present situation. Left as it is now without any radical reversal efforts, the factors concerning climate change, natural resources and habitat destruction due to commercialization, technology, pollution and non-degradable plastic is enough to wipe out and destroy our planet making it uninhabitable for future generations of human and other life forms.

The first four factors are very clearly the byproducts of our present educational system. The emphasis on GDP, Economic growth, consumption and ever increasing production of consumer durables, goods for relentless and indiscriminate consumption, services in different form for enjoyment and luxury has concentrated and created mindless innovation and technology in a few whose pursuits are mindless emphasis on higher production pandering to the whims and fancies of the consumerist society. The second and third factor has do with power and institutions that are needed to perpetuate a system where war and violence is needed to suppress and exploit groups and societies to keep institutions and political processes robust and powerful to further the commercial agenda.

The political agenda and elections in many countries are remotely managed by business lobbyists and related groups. The use of religion in modern day governance and political processes is alarming and very toxic. The spread of hatred and distrust is so venomous that tranquil societies and plurality is almost choked by wringing its neck in infancy by the educational systems, mass media, social media and agenda based movements. The reemergence of right wings schools in all parts of the world is really a very ominous sign.

The political and religious leadership in all countries speak in binaries which are fundamentally divisive with seeds of violence. An analysis of speeches and policies of all leaders of top 50 countries of the world will clearly validate the basic concerns of the survey. The numbers of international migrants is swelling the world over and is constantly growing in the past 17 years. The estimated numbers are about 220 million in 2010, 248 million in 2015 and 258 million in 2017. The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development has a commitment to be inclusive and ensure that no one is left behind. International or global migration is now acknowledged as a major issue for the wholesome development of countries. Nations of origin, transit and destination of migrants need to have a coherent and comprehensive constitutional and policy response. Vide the 2030 agenda (SDG target 10.7) governments have taken a pledge to facilitate responsible, safe, regular and orderly migration and mobility of people. Countries have accepted the need to have well planned and well managed migration policies in place. It further assures toward working for the elimination of human trafficking, promotion of proper labour standards and reduction of remittance fees. Human trafficking, safety security and the well being of millions of human beings are the underlying concerns in large scale migration.

IV. Other significant game changers

Cyber technology and artificial intelligence driven technological processes has already made the present education system partially irrelevant now and will render it fully obsolete in the near future. Artificial Intelligence is one of the branches of computer sciences. It deals with the intelligent behavior of machines based on programming and the ability to imitate or replicate human behavior and conventional response patterns. This ability is ingeniously simulated with algorithmic programming. The specific algorithms make artificial intelligence function within a specific scope of activities. In effect now artificial intelligence can perform or duplicate most of our everyday activities. In all work areas most of the operations performed by human beings can be done by machines with more efficiency and precision without all the disadvantages of human resource factors.

According to the then chief envisioner David Colin *“it will change how we relate to each other”* also urging that *“it will change our perception of what it means to be human”*

One of the founding fathers of AI John McCarthy had said that the study has to proceed on the basis of the conjecture that every feature of Intelligence or learning can be defined with such precision that machines can simulate them. The future is of Artificial Intelligence and with civilizations that are based on technology driven applications. The possibilities and prospects are astounding and revolutionary-redefining both life and living.

A cursory look will indicate the various applications in medical, banking, manufacturing, defence etc., it is embedded in our GPS, internet, mobile and all ITES applications. The final goal for the present appears to be that artificial intelligence will be a self-teaching system which will outperform and replace humans in a wide range of disciplines.

Some scientists visualize that the total takeover will take about 30 years. This takeoff stage also called as the singularity is likely to pull human intelligence and blow past it in a matter of days/weeks. *“AI will render many jobs redundant, millions of jobs such as drivers, radiologists, insurance and bank employees. It has the potential to colonize and transform the cosmos and make it intelligent”* according Juergen Schmidhuber, a pioneering computer scientist of Switzerland. Artificial intelligence will be so smart and widespread on lakhs of computers that we cannot wish it away. It is our destiny of the future.

The other possible scenario is that it will free up people from a lot of drudgery and enslavement creating for the first time in history enough time for the common man, the labour class time for leisure and happiness or well being pursuits. Under efficiently managed economic systems it can free citizens from the compulsion to have a vocation to earn a living where the governments will have surpluses to pay unemployed citizens a universal basic income, thus shifting the problem from earning for livelihood. In another possible scenario it can potentially create staggering wealth inequalities. Social chaos, failed leaderships/polity across the world causing social turbulence not seen hitherto.

The world is now at the cusp of great peril or possibilities depending on the choices that the global leadership make. The sagacity or otherwise of the quality of decision making will decide the fate of million lives albeit the future of our planet. The Attila's, the Hun's, the Genghis khan's and the Hitler's Mussolini's, the Stalin's will look like kindergarten students in front of today's leaders. Cyber and internet technology, artificial intelligence, strides in biological and chemical warfare have made totalitarian leaders so powerful, unsurpassed and absolute which can nearly be called *“Godlike.”*

V. A possible educational design for the future

Education for the future will have a different paradigm for radically changing the direction and context for what we need education for. Education will not be needed to earn livelihoods and work in jobs for eight hours. The potential of AI to change and usher material comfort and perform tasks with ruthless efficiency and speed will redefine both life and living. Education has to train human beings to be happy and impart a humanistic approach of plurality and inclusiveness. The ideology/concepts of nationhood, religion, patriotism, will have to be re-valuated and changed for global citizenship and human well-being. The sharing of resources has to be much more equitable and just. The monopoly of resources based on rich-poor equation has to be jettisoned. The mindless pursuit of profit and ruthless exploitation of natural resources has to be reversed. Human beings have to foster and support creation of balanced ecosystems to ensure continuity of life forms on planet earth. We share the earth with such a vast galaxy of species that each has a role and specific function and a role in the cosmic balance. In the Indian context “knowledge” was considered to be of two kinds- Para-Vidya and Apara-Vidya.

Apara-Vidya dealt with the material aspect of education and the Para-Vidya dealt with knowledge related to intellectual pursuits for achieving salvation and self-realization. Thus, overall development of the pupils took place in the form of spiritual emancipation, moral, spiritual and character development, under the guidance of the Guru, thus helping one to realize the identity of the Atman (individual soul) and Brahman Universal soul) (Bhatnagar, 2008).

VI. Conclusion

While the education of the present has laid a great emphasis on “APARA VIDYA” looking outside oneself into the material world through the sense organs and making entire education material focused, that is to say in terms of GDP and material comforts, there is almost no form of structured education on “PARA VIDYA” which is knowing oneself, the individual consciousness, the universal consciousness and the interconnectedness between everything, in-effect the absence of any binaries.

What we see, hear, smell, touch, feel and all the other cognitive aspects are within us, but we have hardly any systematic knowledge in structured learning of our education to be human and interconnected with oneself. To be happy, to love, to share, to relate to, to grow, to be healthy, all are natural states which our present learning and education is not enabling. The Education of the future should be designed for gross happiness and optimum health index and geared toward both the physical and non physical aspects.

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