Influence of Modern Education on the Culture of India

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ABSTRACT

There is no denial to the fact that Modern education has brought social awakening and awareness amongst people all over India. Recent revolutionary developments in the areas Science and technology, information technology and mass media have brought tremendous changes in the life style and working of people. Thanks to it, now any kind of information in any area of human knowledge or about any aspects of life is easily accessible, that too at the door:step of each and every individual. It has made the present generation much more informed about the developments happening anywhere in the whole world and knowledgeable than previous generations. But only gaining knowledge is not enough.

Keywords: Modern Education, Culture, India, Information Technology

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1835, modern Education system was introduced by Lord Macaulay. The main purpose was to educate Indians in such a way that they "should through western education get Anglicized in terms of both cultural and intellectual attainments". Lord Macaulay clearly said that, "we must at present do our best to form a class, who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indians in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." The main objective was to prepare clerks for running local administration as the rulers found it too costly and perhaps practically impossible to import enough Englishmen to man the large and increasing number of subordinate or lower posts in administration.

Served Double purpose : Introduction of modern education had served a double purpose for the British rulers: they got the credit for the amelioration of the Indian society. But at the same time, through it, they devised a unique method of distribution of power,

kept balance of power and prolonged their rule in India by keeping the natives busy in their in:fights.

II. CONSTRUCTIVE INFLUENCE OF MODERN EDUCATION ON INDIAN SOCIETY

Eighteenth century onwards, modern education led to social awakening, gave impetus to social progress and brought many reforms. It had influenced substantially the working style and thinking of missionaries, reformers, educationists and many Indians, especially those belonging to elite and intellectual sections of society. Some of the positive effects of modern education on Indian society were as follows :

2.1 Opened up the doors of the knowledge : Modern education opened up the doors of the knowledge flourished in Europe after Renaissance movement of Middle Ages. It had widened the mental horizons of Indian intelligentsia.

2.2 Highlighted evil practices : Modern education had highlighted the weaknesses and real issues, which had developed in the system like rigidity and harshness of

social customs and practices prevalent at that time for the weaker sections of the society i.e. women and lower strata of society.

2.3 Attracted attention of social reformers : Modern education had attracted the attention of social reformers towards social evils developed into the system because of ignorance, superstitions or irrationality like mumbo:jumbo of rituals and superstitions created by some selfish people to entangle the ignorant and poor masses, un:touch:ability and inhuman treatment to women, Sati, Polygamy, child marriage etc. etc. prevalent at that time. Modern education also highlighted the weaknesses, rigidity and harshness of caste system towards weaker sections of the society.

2.4 Realization of the worth of liberty and freedom : Indians realized the worth of liberty and freedom. They got exposure to the philosophies of thinkers like Locke, Mill, Rousseau, Voltaire, Spencer and Burke etc. They came to know about the reasons and impact of English, French, American revolutions. It equipped national leaders with the intellectual tools, with which they fought the oppressive British Raj.

2.5 Opened doors of education for all : During second half of the nineteenth century, British government in India gave access to education to all sections of Indian society irrespective of caste or creed.

2.6 Given birth to National movement : Modern education awakened the national leaders and Indian masses and equipped them with the intellectual tools, with which they fought the oppressive British Raj. The discriminatory and repressive policies and practices of British rulers alarmed the national leaders. Racial discrimination in the areas of education and jobs and their repressive policies elsewhere; Economic loot; political subjugation; assertion of lordly superiority over the subject on the ground of race; assumption of a haughty exclusiveness; persistent insulting and supercilious behavior towards all Indians;

exclusion of Indians from all places of honor, authority and responsibility; and denial of their capacity for self:governance united Indians against British rule. The destructive character of repressive policies of British rulers lit the fire and gave birth to national movement.

III. THE DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS OF MODERN EDUCATION ON INDIAN SOCIETY

3.1 BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

Some of the adverse effects of modern education system on Indian society were :

3.1.1 Disintegration of Indian society : Divisive policies of British rulers divided the whole of Indian society into many uncompromising groups. The primary aim of British rulers was to 'divide and rule' and keep the natives busy in their in:fights. They adopted racial discrimination and many repressive policies in order to disintegrate Indian society. On surface, everything appeared fine, but in reality it compartmentalized the Indian society into uncompromising groups by taking the path of discrimination. National leaders, Reformers and a section of intelligentsia could feel the damage, British racial discrimination and their repressive policies were doing.

3.1.2 Rise to unhealthy competition : Modernization of the pattern of education and occupations (making knowledge of English as basic qualification for white collared jobs especially in government) along with industrialization increased role of formal education and training for furthering future prospects of people.

In the near absence of industrial, commercial or social service activity, people had to depend entirely on modern education and Government jobs for earning respectfully. Stiff competition for getting enough space in modern callings divided the Indian society. Opportunities in modern education and government

jobs became the bone of contention between different sections of the society. The monopoly of Brahmins in these areas cautioned the British rulers as well as caused anger amongst the non:Brahmin communities and Muslims.

Muslims lagged behind because previously they were more dependent on the use of sword and lower strata of society because of their illiteracy. Brahmins, who had learning background previously, were quicker to take advantage of the opportunities offered by Modern education. It created caste and communal rivalry. It divided the Indian people into different unbridgeable groups : Hindu Muslims, Brahmins and Non:Brahmins in the south and upper castes and Lower/Backward castes.

Muslims (because Muslims were more dependent on the use of sword) and many castes belonging to lower strata of society lag behind in matter of modern education. Brahmins, who had previously involved in the process of learning, were quicker to take advantage of the opportunities offered by Modern education. It divided the Indian people into two unbridgeable groups : first in the Southern states into Brahmins and Non:Brahmins, and later on in other parts of the country as well into Upper castes and Lower/Backward castes.

In the Southern states, there emerged two rival groups : Brahmins and Non:Brahmins and in the North : Hindu and Muslims.

3.1.3 Biased census operation : Along with modern education, Census operations started in 1901 redefined and officially recognized the structure of Indian society through according to their administrative convenience. Census operations divided Indian society into different political groups : Upper castes, Lower castes, backward castes, minorities Tribal's and untouchables : on basis of race, religion, caste, creed, or place. It divided Indian population into different un:bridgeable groups. It politicized caste and community, which were made tools for Indians to fight amongst them from now onwards.

The government allowed forming their own pressure groups. It gave encouragement to all of them to pursue their sectional interests or to insist for their claims in the areas of education, white collared jobs and power: structure of the country.

3.1.4 Racial discrimination : During 1858 to 1905, the British Government adopted a racist attitude under the garb of the policy of apparent association. British, philosophers and writers started propagating theories of racial superiority and thereby, justified the domination of white races over dark races of the globe. Historians like Mill, Wilson, and Ward vehemently denounced the culture, character and social structure of the native people.

3.1.5 Masses remained illiterate : Though during second half of the nineteenth century, British government in India opened the doors of education to all sections of Indian society, irrespective of caste or creed, very few amongst the general public could avail the advantages of formal modern education. Education remained confined within a small section of society. It was only impoverished group of Brahmin and caste Hindus in search of respectful livelihood, who opted for modern education. Educating general public was not the aim of British rulers. Relentless efforts of missionaries, with an aim to convert poor people into Christianity, could educate a very small number of people from amongst them. Reasons being:

- ✓ Modern education was very costly and, therefore, unaffordable by the masses.
- ✓ Masses did not see any immediate use of education. It was more important for them to work and arrange two square meals day.
- ✓ English as a medium of instructions in education and as Official language. It alienated the masses from the educated Indians. English gradually

became the language of elite section of Indian society.

3.1.6 White collared jobs:

Introduction of modern education in 1835 and introduction of Wood's dispatch of 1854, known as Magna Carta, which declared English as an official language, changed the scenario. It gave importance and popularity to 'White collared jobs' in organized sector. Declaration of English as Official language pushed the masses away from new employment opportunities. More a person withdraws from physical labor, more honored; civilized and qualified he/she is considered by modern society. The trend of easy and quick money started.

3.1.7 Discredited traditional occupations :

Emergence of white:collared jobs based on formal education tended to make many traditional occupations obsolete, as they were considered less paying, more hazardous or time consuming. It scattered the efforts, sense of direction and manufacturing skills of millions of artisans, craftsman, weavers etc. There had been casualty of workers first, afterwards their work style, commitment, motivation and culture. They lost their creativity, sense of achievement and pride. Work culture has changed tremendously since then.

3.1.8 Unemployment increased :

Very few of them could join modern occupations. Majority of people could neither enter into modern sector, nor could stick to their traditional occupations considering the menial work derogatory. In the near absence of industrial, commercial or social service activity, most of them had no option, but either to join band of agricultural labors, industrial workers and marginal labor for their survival or increase number of unemployed or under employed.

3.1.9 More stress on rights :

Modern education brought social awakening and awareness amongst masses about their rights, but unfortunately not about their duties.

Disassociated Indians from their traditional values.: it disassociated Indian people from their traditional values, way of learning, classical roots and knowledge. With it, faded Indian values, philosophies and traditions.

3.2 After Independence

With minor changes here and there, the education system basically remained the same. Karl Marx remarked that British, "had a double mission in India, one destructive, the other regenerating; the annihilation of the old Asiatic Society and laying the material foundation of Western Society in Asia." (Quoted from Dutt RP, India Today, p. 476) The regenerating character can be seen in the social transformation in India through modern education. British rulers made English language as a medium of learning and official language. There was modernization in economic sphere. It led to political unification of the country and laid foundations for many democratic institutions.

The reactionary and destructive character was seen in the economic and social sphere. The growth of casteism had a close connection with these developments. Its result on Indian society was :

3.2.1 Large population of Illiterates and unskilled work:force :

'Education for all' and 'employment for all' is still a dream. Lack of proper education and training systems combined with illiteracy and lack of skills amongst a large number of people has turned the visions of national development into empty dreams. Only 64.84 people are literate according to 2001 census, (Males : 75.26% and Females : 53.67%). In absolute number, the figure is alarming. No nation can afford to have a large number of its population to remain illiterate, ignorant and unskilled. Not only the number of illiterates and unskilled is a matter of concern, but also quality and insufficient resources of education and training are the matter of great concern.

Population explosion has put a heavy pressure on available infrastructure of education and training.

3.2.2 Fall in quality of education : Attempts for social changes make a virtue of narrow loyalties of caste and religion. Caste and communal conflicts are increasing. There are sectarian and regional imbalances generating social and psychological tensions. The work culture has been degenerated. All these developments have adversely affected the education system as well. Standard of education in general has declined considerably. Under:currents of caste politics have made the vision of 'education for all' into an empty dream.

3.2.3 Complex in the minds of many educated Indians about their social values : Modern education has developed a complex in the minds of many educated Indians about the primitiveness of Indian society and about efficacy of its value systems. Many educated Indians have lost faith in social customs and practices altogether. Some Indians consider Hindu philosophies and its way of life impractical, or its social practices indefensible.

3.2.4 Apathy towards their values and systems : Apathy towards their value systems has made a large number of intelligentsia alien in their own country. It has disassociated them from their own way of living, classical roots and traditional knowledge. With it; are fading steadily Indian value:system, philosophies and traditions? Usually a person becomes miserable, when he is cut off from his source of life : his own roots. A large number of educated Indians have lost faith in the traditional values, principles and way of life. They have lost faith not only in their fellow:beings, but also in themselves.

3.2.5 Wide gulf between common man and educated : Quality of education, especially in government or government:aided educational institutions has also deteriorated to a great extent. The costly nature of quality education especially in private institutions has further alienated uneducated masses from educated ones. Quality education has become a monopoly of the richer classes and city dwellers. Their youth have become quite insensitive, arrogant and does not hesitate speaking their minds bluntly.

3.2.6 Culture of Neo:rich : A drastic change is visible in the values, behavior and etiquette of a new educated neo: rich youth of elitist class, which has emerged especially in urban areas and Metros. Their life style and value system have been gradually replaced by the Western ones. They want to enjoy pleasures of modern life at any cost. They are more conscious of their rights.

3.2.7 Undisciplined behavior : Present:day youth want to enjoy life fully in any possible way without any bondage/restriction/comment on their behavior or way of life. Loosening grip of social bondage and observances has made many of them selfish, self:willed and arrogant. Some of them have become so intolerant and aggressive, that they out:rightly discard all social norms and etiquette. Their thinking and value systems are quite different from the older ones.

3.2.8 Failure of Present Education System : Education is supposed to develop positive thinking in learners, so that they can channelize their efforts, make their thinking:base broader and flexible, increase openness to information and enhance spirit to work hard, sincerely in a responsible manner in order to attain desired goals. Present system of education has miserably failed to inculcate in youth these qualities. They do not have a clear vision about their aims and ambitions, courage to own responsibilities, face bravely the challenges in life and a balanced approach towards one's rights and duties, which are the basic ingredients of any cultured/matured/civil society.

3.2.9 Traditional jobs hijacked by educated entrepreneurs : Some young entrepreneurs, having education, money and awareness, did market survey and hijacked many discarded traditional occupations. They modernized such disdained and contemptuous jobs like mechanization of fishing or leather industry and made them profit oriented. Even less capital:intensive occupations like that of barber or washer:men have been hijacked by educated middle class. They re:christened them as saloon, laundry etc and employed those poor traditional workers, who were earlier practicing such occupations independently.

3.2.10 All powerful Government making common man a pigmy : Being a 'socialist' and 'Welfare state', government has assumed absolute power and taken over itself the responsibility of improving the quality of life of its people from `womb to tomb'. Instead of being a facilitator, it has become the provider. Instead of teaching people 'how to fish', it obliges different sections of society by 'giving a fish'. It has led to centralization of all control systems and made common man a pigmy.

3.2.11 Populist policies to catch vote:banks : In order to create vote banks discriminatory populist policies are being pursued in the name of 'equality' or 'social justice'. More emphasis is being given in pursuing abstract and emotional issues rather than solving the real problems of people. Attempts for social changes make a virtue of narrow loyalties of caste and religion, generating sub:cultures like favoritism, lure for easy money, nepotism and, in:discipline in the society. Caste and communal conflicts are increasing. There are sectarian and regional imbalances generating social and psychological tensions.

3.2.12 Unhealthy competition : There is neck to neck competition for a few places in educational institutions of repute or in employment, especially in organized sector. Rivalry and bitterness for pelf,

power or position is continuously increasing. Total aversion of youth from their traditional occupations and stiff competition elsewhere for employment pushed millions to poverty. It has rendered millions of people unemployed or underemployed, who are now wasting all their efforts and most energetic and creative time of their lives, while hunting for a job.

3.2.13 Effect of Political turmoil on Indian society : Recent political turmoil has adversely affected the whole atmosphere. A few Individuals and groups, with political, money or muscle power control the destiny of millions and have say in almost every walk of national life. They are working day and night to deny justice to common men and upright citizens. Favoritism, in:discipline, violence, corruption, lure for easy money, nepotism and chase of materialism based on ruthless competition have weakened the social fabric beyond repair. The erosion of basic moral and human values has turned the life of men, "nasty, brutish and short".

3.2.14 Standard of Administration : Standard of governance has declined. Work culture in government offices whether at Centre, state or local level, has been degenerated. Under:currents of caste politics have made the task of governance difficult, making the governance difficult and ineffective. It has given birth to sectarian and regional imbalances generating social and psychological tensions. People are disgusted with the non:performance of government. The administration has become incompetent to solve the burning national issues.

3.2.15 Technological advancement : Scientific and technological developments has endowed human with tremendous power both to preserve and destroy. At slightest provocation, people do not hesitate to unleash destructive powers accessible to them. That is one of the reasons for increase in the incidents of violence and crimes.

3.2.16 Modern education led to 'Intelligence', but not to 'intellect' : Modern education has made people intelligent and knowledgeable, but could not develop the 'intellect' of people properly. Revolutionary developments in the areas Science and technology, information technology and mass media made all kind of knowledge accessible and organized knowledge, but could not guide people to organized life. Present environment and modern education system has made people more and more intelligent by opening up the world of information and knowledge. But it does not give people intellect or wisdom to apply it to real day today life.

Khalil Gibran has pointed out that a little knowledge that acts is worth more than much knowledge that remains inactive. A person, whose knowledge is confined to books, is unable to use his wealth of knowledge, when the need arises. Knowledge, the object of knowledge and application of the knowledge : all the three are equally important for motivating to take a wise action.

3.2.17 Deficiencies of modern education system : Modern education, which has been inherited from the British, has brought social awakening and awareness all over India amongst Indian people. But there are also certain deficiencies in it. Internally, as Mahatma Gandhi had pointed out long ago, modern education based on colonized British Grammar School type education has deprived masses. English medium has put undue strain upon the nerves of the Indian students, made them crammers, imitators and unfit them for original work and thought. Internally, quality of education, especially in government or government:aided educational institutions has also deteriorated to a great extent. Reasons are many.

3.2.18 Ignored the culture of heart : Modern education has ignored the culture of heart and hand and confined itself simply to head. It has made people aware of their rights, but unfortunately not about their duties. It has pushed modern youth away from their roots and their own culture, which advised them to adopt a self:restrained and self: disciplined life style, to learn to be contented, honest and willing to help others; to observe austerity, simplicity; to maintain cleanliness of diet, body and mind and; not to waste energy or over:indulge oneself in wasteful and destructive activity. In short, it advised people to rise above the animal instincts hidden inside human:beings.

3.2.19 Pushed people away from their indigenous culture : It has not taught youth of the day to have pride in their surroundings. More modern and advanced they become, the farther they are removed from their surroundings and at the end, becoming estranged from their surroundings. People basically become miserable when they are cut off from his source of life: one's roots.

Today, people are losing their natural character, because they are getting away from roots, from their traditional aspirations and values in preference to the western materialism. The traditional culture in its true form can still give to the people, a purpose to live for and ideals to be achieved. Modern educated intelligentsia needs to stop imitating the 'West' blindly.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1 Conclusion

According to Hindu philosophy, human beings possess three shakties (Powers) : knowledge, will and action. A human mind consists of right knowledge, wrong knowledge, fancy imagination (illusion), sleep, memory. It is only the right kind of knowledge, which is source of empowerment, understanding and consciousness. It gives essence to life and removes ignorance. Right kind of knowledge, like a rock, stays with a person giving him needed support all the time. Spiritually it brings harmony and peace of mind and materially happiness, relaxation and celebration in life.

Education needs to show students the path to 'Intellect' and to come in touch with own inner self. Self realization/self introspection and knowledge about one's own strengths and weaknesses, enables one to understand better oneself and other people around him without bias, to make more intelligent choices, to focus on self and one's own principles and to stay calm in the face of crisis and chaos. Wisdom or intellect empowers a person and help him to rise above 'I, my, and me' attitude.

Intellect enables one to analyze, reason, judge the thinking process and distinguish between facts/realities and opinion. Intellect guides how to apply knowledge. It is lack of intellect that leads a person to vices like egoism, superiority complex etc and creates problems in people's life and in the world. Only intellect can control human mind and lead it mind to right direction. When intellect becomes weak, negative reasoning takes over mind.

4.2 Suggestions

- India's massive human resource needs to be cultivated through sound system of education and training to get out of the rut of mediocrity.
- Ambitions or desires of people should be directed in proper manner towards proper objectives. The purpose of education and learning is to train the faculties of a person to channelize his/her desires and energies towards right activities. Discipline and productivity are also necessary for education.
- Common men in India still have faith in good intentions and wisdom of their ancestors, who have contributed in developing the culture of India. Rajgopalachari has said, "If there is honesty in India today, any hospitality, any charity— any aversion to evil, any love to be good, it is due to whatever remains of the old faith and the old culture".

- Usually people argue that there have been revolutionary changes in circumstances and atmosphere of modern times. There were many things which the ancestors did not know like World Wars, nuclear weapons, technological advancements in the areas of media, transport, and communications or in the world of computers. With complete change especially after 1970's Information Technology revolution, old values and systems have become obsolete and useless. In recent past, traditional values have lost their sanctity and developed many distortions.
- Modern reformers and intelligentsia have shown their anguish at the declining moral and ethical standards and discipline of the modern society. They try to combat negative forces like deceit, treachery, violence, crimes and degradation of values and make the society a better place to live in. They welcome the rationality and other good features of Modern education, but have still some faith in traditional values and system.
- They wish to remain firmly rooted to Indian Culture. Today, when Indians are getting away from their roots, it is important to keep their feet firmly on the ground and to instill right values in them. There are some values and systems, which are still relevant and inspire common men to lead a disciplined life style. Traditional value system in its pure form still gives to the people, a purpose to live for and ideals to be achieved. Only after evaluating its worth in the light of present circumstances and understanding the rationale behind them, people should follow them systematically.
- Traditional principles, rituals or customs should not be followed blindly without understanding the logic behind it. Blind following quite often leads to practice social customs and practices incorrectly or in a wrong way, which later on develops misunderstandings.

- With the passage of time, there developed many deformities in Indian systems as well, which has harmed the whole society. Apathy of people towards the value system of Indian society has generated caste:conflicts, feudal oppressions, exploitation of vulnerable sections of society and mass poverty.

- Education should guide youth to have a clear:cut vision of one's responsibilities and a balanced approach towards one rights and duties, which is a must for any matured/civilized society. It should lead to positive thinking, which could channelize human efforts in proper direction, make vision broader, thinking flexible, increase openness to information and enhance spirit to work hard. Discipline and productivity are also necessary for a sound system of education.

- There is enough goodness inside and around every human being. Only people need to channelize their ambitions, desires and energies towards right direction through sound education system.

- In the recent past, it is not the principles, but the practices, which went wrong. Today, when Indians are getting away from their roots, nothing is more needed than the constant interpretation of past experiences and present circumstances. Present should be a constant challenge to the opinions of past. A value or a system, which in the light of modern times appears more effective and beneficial, should be replaced by a better one. At the same time, it would be suicidal to sacrifice ancient value systems to an increasing passion for change.

- After raising oneself from ignorance, and with a rational and open mind, a person can understand the greatness of the Indian culture and its value system. A knowledgeable and civilized person like a jeweler should spot out gems from amongst worthless pebbles from this ocean of knowledge; pick them up and leave the undesired obsolete elements developed into it

with passage of time. In a changing world, nothing can be more disabling than its idolization of past.

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