

ROLE OF EDUCATION FOR CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION- OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Ms. Sangha Gurbaksh kaur

H.O.D Department of Education. B.A.M.Khalsa College, Garshankar (Hoshiarpur)

Introduction

“ Science is organized knowledge. Wisdom is organized life.”

The Education includes both formal schooling and informal transmission of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. A society's culture can survive far longer than the lifespan of any of its members, because its educational system passes down the folkways and knowledge of one generation to subsequent generations. A culture changes over time, but has a recognizable continuity of basic values and behavioral patterns that distinguishes it from other cultures. That continuity is provided by the educational system. 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. India’s massive human resource needs to be cultivated through sound system of education and training to get out of the rut of mediocrity. 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.

Culture and Education:

According to dictionary- culture is –an integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior of a group that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations, the customary beliefs, social norms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; The characteristic features of everyday existence (a way of life).The set of attitudes, values, goals, and practices shared by people in a place or time.

Singleton (1974) defines culture in an educational angle as "The shared products of human learning", and from a psychological orientation, Singleton sees culture as "Standards for deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding how one feels about it, standards for deciding what to do about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it"

Lawton (1975) "culture includes everything that is (man-made), technological, art, facts, skills, attitudes and values"

Gandhi- "By education I mean an all around drawing out the best in the men and child-body mind and spirit".

Nelson Mandela "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world".

Martin Luther King – "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education". **Swami Vivekananda-** "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man"

Thus, a culture changes over time, but has a recognizable continuity of basic values and behavioral patterns that distinguishes it from other cultures. That continuity is provided by the educational system.

Role and challenges of Education for Culture Transformation

A society's culture can survive far longer than the lifespan of any of its members, because its educational system passes down the folkways and knowledge of one generation to subsequent generations.

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 Indian value-system, philosophies and traditions are fading steadily. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Suggestions

- ❧ 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".
- ❧ 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. In recent past, traditional values have lost their sanctity and developed many distortions because people started following them blindly and in a wrong way. It developed a widespread misunderstanding. 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. Only after understanding the rationale behind them, people should follow them systematically.
- ❧ Traditional value system still gives to the people, a purpose to live for and ideals to be achieved. Blind following quite often leads to practice social customs and practices incorrectly or in a wrong way. Later on, with the passage of time, there develops many deformities into the system and harms the whole of the society. All the principles, rituals or customs of ancient India should not be followed blindly without understanding the logic behind it. But there are some values and systems, which are still relevant and inspire common men to lead a disciplined life style. After evaluating its worth in the light of present circumstances, people should follow them systematically. Modern times and circumstances have changed completely especially after 1970 with information technology revolution. 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.

- ❧ 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.
- ❧ Modern intelligentsia, who have some faith in traditional values and system welcome the rationality and other good features of Modern education, but wish to remain firmly rooted to Indian Culture. Reformers and intellectuals 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. 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.

Conclusion

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. There is a difference between knowledge gained through information (intelligence) and its application to real day today life (intellect or wisdom). Intelligence leads to the world of information and knowledge. And 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.

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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 jeweller 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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