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THE PRESENT EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA: AN 5th ANALYTICAL STUDY OF ITS MERITS AND DEMERITS

R. K. Tripathi

Headmaster, Raniganj Sri Guru Nanak Vidyalaya High School (H.S.)
 Paschim Bardhaman, West Bengal

Abstract

Education is the foundation of national development. As Swami Vivekananda said, "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man." India has one of the oldest traditions of education in the world, from the Gurukul system to the great universities of Takshashila, Nalanda and Vikramshila.

The present education system in India is essentially a legacy of the British colonial system introduced by Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay in 1835 to create a class of clerks. After independence, several attempts were made to Indianize and modernize it through various commissions and policies.

This article aims to critically analyze the present Indian education system, highlighting its achievements and challenges, especially in the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the ground realities of schools in semi-urban areas like Raniganj. While enrolment has increased massively, questions of quality, employability, and values remain.

Key Words: Education System, NEP 2020, Merits, Demerits, Skill Development, Rote Learning, Inclusive Education, Teacher-Student Ratio, Value Education

1. Historical Background

The journey of Indian education can be divided into three phases: Ancient Vedic and Buddhist period (knowledge and character oriented), Medieval period, and the Modern British period (degree and job oriented). Post-independence, the Government of India constituted:

- University Education Commission (1948-49) headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
- Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) headed by Dr. A. L. Mudaliar
- Indian Education Commission (1964-66) headed by Dr. D. S. Kothari
- National Policy on Education, 1986
- National Education Policy, 2020

Each commission tried to make education more relevant to Indian needs.

2. MERITS OF THE PRESENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

a) Universalization and Access: Through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001), Right to Education Act (2009), and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (2018), education has reached the poorest child. Mid-Day Meal scheme has been a great motivator. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) has improved significantly. My own experience at Raniganj



Sri Guru Nanak Vidyalaya High School is an example - while student numbers are falling in many schools in Raniganj, our school is witnessing a rapid increase. We have 280 students in Higher Secondary alone, despite shortage of teachers.

b) Integration with Technology: Education is no longer confined to chalk and blackboard. Initiatives like DIKSHA portal, SWAYAM, e-Pathshala, PM e-VIDYA, smart classrooms and AI-based learning have democratized knowledge. The COVID-19 pandemic proved that learning can continue beyond the four walls.

c) Emphasis on Skill and Vocationalization: NEP 2020 is a paradigm shift. It proposes vocational education from Class 6, with internships, coding, and 10 bagless days. This is an attempt to overcome the colonial mindset and make India 'Atmanirbhar' by making students job creators, not just job seekers.

d) Choice Based and Multidisciplinary Approach: The rigid separation between Science, Commerce and Arts is being removed. A student can now study Physics with Music. This multidisciplinary approach respects the uniqueness of every child as advocated by Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences.

e) Global Competitiveness: Indian students are leading globally in IT, Medicine, Space and Management. The curriculum of CBSE, ICSE and State Boards is now comparable to international standards, enabling our students to compete in TOEFL, GRE, and Olympiads.

f) Inclusive Education: The system now talks about inclusion. Special provisions for Divyang children under Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS), scholarships for SC/ST/OBC/Minority, and special focus on girls' education through 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' and 'Kanyashree' in West Bengal have brought social equity.

3. DEMERITS OF THE PRESENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

a) Theoretical vs. Practical Knowledge: Our system is still heavily theoretical. John Dewey said "Learning by Doing", but we are still doing "Learning by Mugging". A student can define Ohm's Law but cannot fix a simple electrical fault at home.

b) The Crisis of Employability: According to various reports by NASSCOM and Aspiring Minds, less than 20% of engineering graduates are employable. We produce degree holders, not skilled professionals. The absence of dignity of labour is a major drawback.

c) Rote Learning and Marks Race: The entire system revolves around marks. Parents ask "Kitne percent aaye?" not "Kya seekha?". This has created a parallel monster - the coaching industry. Creativity, critical thinking and originality are being killed, as warned by Rabindranath Tagore in his essay 'Shikshar Herfer'.

d) Lack of Value and Moral Education: Our ancient education aimed at 'Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye' - education which liberates. Today education is only for earning. Respect for elders, discipline, patriotism, and empathy are missing from the curriculum. This is leading to a moral crisis among youth.

e) Acute Shortage of Teachers and Infrastructure: This is a ground reality. As per UDISE+ data, the Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) is very high in many states. In many schools, especially in my region, student strength is



increasing but teacher recruitment has not happened for years. Many schools still lack proper laboratories, libraries, drinking water and toilets.

f) Digital Divide and Inequality: On one hand, elite private schools have AC classrooms, robotics labs and swimming pools; on the other, rural government schools struggle for benches. The digital divide became very clear during the pandemic - many students did not have smartphones. This dual system creates two Indias.

g) Neglect of Mother Tongue: NEP 2020 rightly emphasizes education in mother tongue till Class 5, but in practice, English is still considered a symbol of intelligence. A child understands better in his mother tongue, as proved by many UNESCO studies.

h) Commercialization of Education: Education was considered a noble service. Today it has become a profitable business. The exorbitant fees of private schools and coaching centres make quality education inaccessible to the common man.

4. SUGGESTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

1. Effective Implementation of NEP 2020: Not just on paper but on the ground with proper funding (6% of GDP as recommended by Kothari Commission).
2. Teacher Empowerment: Fill up all vacant posts immediately, provide continuous professional development, and restore the dignity of teachers as suggested by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.
3. Shift from Examination to Learning: Adopt Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) in true spirit, focus on project-based and experiential learning.
4. Strengthening Public Education: Government schools must be made centres of excellence.
5. Collaboration: Government, teachers, parents and society must work together.

CONCLUSION

The present education system is like a river - it has pure water of knowledge but also some pollution of commercialization, rote learning and inequality. We cannot discard it entirely, nor can we accept it entirely.

We need to retain its merits - access, technology, and global outlook - and remove its demerits through sincere implementation of NEP 2020. The aim of education should not be just to produce good employees, but good human beings and good citizens.

If we succeed, India will surely reclaim its status as Vishwaguru, as envisioned by Swami Vivekananda.

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