

CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract

It would not be an exaggeration if we claim that education is compulsory and mandatory for all class of people or rational beings. Following Aristotle it can be said education forms or shapes sound mind in a sound body. Even it makes man more rationale. Thus, nobody can evade the utility of education. It is a weapon for all round development of personality as well as society too. The main reason behind sound society is education. It is sound education brings a change in society. The present scenario of 21st century is a modern or developed or technologically oriented society is the outcome of sound education with scientific background. This is the reason why the people of the present century inclines to education. At this juncture it can be said that our India Government over the years both in the central level as well as in the state level took many initiatives to enroll maximum numbers of students in the primary level. Even Mid-day meal, *Sarva-Shiksha Abhiyan* (education for all), *Kanyashree* etc., are implemented to remove dropout students on the one hand and education is a must for on the other hand. The consequence of these initiatives is worth-pondering. However, there exists difference of perception regarding primary education and the idea of higher education. Unlike basic education, higher education is not for all. Apart from objectives, higher education differs from basic or primary education in that art, creativity and *enlightenment to perfection* are the hallmarks of higher education. This is where the relevance of the present paper actually hinges on.

Key word: *Art, creativity, education, enlightenment, perfection.*

Introduction:

There is no question of doubt that education is a must for all. Nobody can deny it. Education is a process by which a person's body, mind and character are formed and strengthened. It is bringing of head, heart and mind together and thereby enabling a person to develop an all-round personality identified the best in him. Education in the true sense of the term is worth-pondering because it is a process of humanizing; it helps to understand the world and society clearly. Its main objective is to make human beings capable, competent and wise to meet the challenges of life. Education is light without which nothing can be seen in proper. Men can overcome the illusions by means of educating themselves. Education is a means of enlightenment. So when we talk of education particularly basic education, we are in favour of holistic education without talking so much about the

quality of education. Fortunately, our India Government over the years both in the central level as well as in the state level took many initiatives to enroll maximum numbers of students in the primary level. Midday meal, *Sarva-ShikshaAbhiyan* (education for all), *Kanyashree* etc., are implemented and the consequence of these initiatives is worth-pondering. However, when we talk of higher education, our perception is somehow differs from the perception of primary or basic education. Basic or primary education is a must for all and there is no scope of raising question on any fronts. It should be provided at any cost. Without education, a man cannot live like a human because in such a case he or she will be no longer in a position to assess anything. But the pertinent question: Is higher education must for all? Should higher education be holistic? We cannot give a straightforward or categorical answer of this question. When we talk of higher education, the assessment of quality comes into consideration. In higher education quality rather than quantity has paramount importance.

Notably, the quality of Indian higher education is being degraded in every passing year. This is indeed alarming in the real sense of the term. The objective of higher education is different from the objective of primary or basic education even though the later is the foundation or base of the former. Higher education is all about of art and creativity. Creativity is the hallmark of higher education and naturally when we talk of quality in higher education, creativity comes to our mind. Unlike primary education, higher education is directed towards generating wealth on the face of human need. We cannot ignore the anxiety of the millions of graduates who do not find timely suitable jobs in their respective disciplines. In present day scenario jobs are being offered on the basis of quality and excellence. Thus, the objective of higher education should not be measured just like a passing shopping, rather it should be measured on the face of human needs. It must have a distinctive goal and objective. The general motto of education is enlightenment but higher education is not only enlightenment, but also *enlightenment to perfection*. This is made possible by means of excellence. In order to achieve it one has to excel him. In this regard, we can mention Tagore. According to Tagore, there is surplus in every man. One has to reach up to that stage. It is a higher stage and it can be gained through proper cultivation of one individual self. It is a process of onward journey, an upward movement going within. It is purely a creative and novel stage from where one comes to know that he is an integral part of God. According to Tagore, one has to realize that there is *Narayana* (God) within *Nara* (man). This is a higher stage one may acquire, according to Radhakrishnan, through intuition, but not intellect. Intellect differs from intuition. Intellect is required for external journey. It helps one to develop external, materialistic practice. Intuition, on the other hand, is internal journey. It is a matter of realization through the cultivation of inner soul or individual self. This is proper education, a form of creative education which is absent in present day education. Radhakrishnan says, "When man apprehends the Supreme Being, returns to the concrete, and controls his life in the life of its truth, he is a complete man."¹ Education for Tagore, is not collection of external information, rather it is the cultivation of the inner soul.² This sort of education actually helps one to reach to the level of perfection where creative counts the most.

According to Radhakrishnan, 'higher education is undoubtedly an obligation of the state'.³ Higher education demands intellectual process and progress. It seeks pursuit of truth and practice regardless of consequences. For Radhakrishnan, 'education is not merely a passport to societal superiority or an office job. Education must discipline and inspire the human being to exceed himself so that Radhakrishnan's ideal – the emergence of the religious man- would be realized. Radhakrishnan like Tagore, concedes education as the pathway to the recovery of man's spirit. Right education illuminates man to overcome dogmas and in turn recover the pure springs of the religious spirit. In this regard, Radhakrishnan in his *Education, Politics and War*, says, "The end of education is self-knowledge, in so far as the self is a calm discriminating spirit."⁴ The present form of higher education is suffering from maladies; it completely fails to fulfill its basic objectives. The present form of higher education should address the issues of spontaneous aims and ambitious of the youth which identifies itself the whole of humanity. At the same time, Radhakrishnan offers a remedy. He says that the spiritual view of ancient Indian education is the best choice to introduce today to eradicate the maladies of present form of higher education. Education in the real sense of the term triumphs only when the student becomes knower of the self (*atmavid*). In this regard, the role of teacher is colossal. Teacher can inject the sense of human in the mind of the students, an idea of the fundamental power and worth of man, his spiritual dignity as man, a supra-national culture and an all-embracing humanity.

Let us take a glance at the status present form of higher education in India. During 11th five year plan the then Prime Minister Monmohan Singh was deeply concerned about the quality of higher education. As an outstanding educationalist politician, he realized the debacle of Indian higher education and decided to launch the **National Knowledge Commission** (NKC) for improving the quality of higher education. He realized that without improving the quality or standard of higher education, the nation will not be able to reach the desired growth targets in the foreseeable future. Even President Pranab Mukherjee recently remarked, "I feel very sad when I find out that out of the top 200 universities not a single Indian Institute finds its place." The country at present has more than 600 universities and the number is being increased in every passing year. Presently, there are almost more than 30 thousands degree colleges and 16th IITs but unfortunately none of them are of the world standard. Realistically, the standard and participation in Indian higher education is miserable and precarious. Many would say that Indian higher education is crippling both from quality as well as quantity. The report reveals that India has one of the poorest **Gross Enrolment Ratios** (GER) for Higher Education in the world. It was near about 13.8% in 2010 in compare with the global average of around 26%. India, being a developing country, must address on increasing GER up to 30% within 2020 and it will require immense infra-structural development. It is proposed to achieve without compromising quality of education. In this regard, proper national education policy is prerequisite.

Of course, there are various factors and forces that influenced the changes and development of higher education in India. System of education in general and higher education in particular is normally influenced and shaped by the socio-economic and cultural need of the society. In this regard, one may talk in favour of *diversification of*

higher education in India. In fact, India is a unique country with regard to development of higher education even though the quality of higher education is comparatively lower than the developed country. It has history of oldest universities in the world imparting education in various disciplines. To develop higher education, India set up University Education Commission in 1948 under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who later on became the President of India. This commission broadly laid down a philosophical background for Indian Higher Education. On the basis of the recommendation, University Grants Commission of India was set up to develop, promote and maintain standard in higher education with the central government support. University Grant Commission also became a source of change and diversification with the financial support and with the advice of experts drawn from length and breadth of the country. At present University Grant Commission in fact is the main architect of higher educational system of India. There are various others commission organized over the years to develop the standard of higher education. Having said this, there is no point in denying the fact that the quality and standard of Indian higher education is lagging far behind of its global peers.

Concluding Remarks:

To overcome the immanent challenges of higher education in India considerable and effective reform is prerequisite. We think fundamental reform and change in higher education is necessary. The expansion of higher education is needed considering the importance of more participation. The participation in higher education is dismal in compare to other countries. In this regard, the private-public partnership is needed. There are as many as private colleges and universities already opened in India. Almost 50% medical colleges are private in India. The same is true in case of engineering colleges. But the problem is that unlike the government colleges, the private colleges in most general cases violate educational policies in some sense or other. The Supreme Court order of introducing uniform medical test in India from 2016 is a case in point. It goes against private medical colleges. It is learnt that most of the private colleges offer admission in higher education with the expense of accumulating unlimited money. If money matters the most while taking admission in higher education and merit does not count at all, it would be detrimental to the higher education in general. Moreover, corruption in education is no more secret at the present day scenario. Therefore, to uplift the standard of higher education, government must be proactive to reform higher education in a judicious manner. Otherwise we cannot get the benefit of the talent of our country men. It is learnt that a stunning 86 per cent of Indian students in the fields of science and technology who obtain degrees in the United States do not return home immediately. Thus, in order to improve the quality of higher education and also to overcome the challenges of the same, we propose to suggest on the following issues:

- (a) Improving accesses and quality of education at all levels.
- (b) Increasing funding for higher level of education.
- (c) Increasing the literacy rate.

(d) Removing one fit model from education.

(e) Modernization of Education system.

At the same time we must be careful about the drawbacks of our educational system. The important drawback of this system is that it has acquired a dualistic character. As a result of that, it operates with a strong class bias. Secondly, the resources are inadequate. As a result of that the facilities offered in our educational system in general are well below the level of qualitative viability. Thirdly, academic and administrative problems faced by our educational institutions are further compounded by governmental control or university regulations. Fourthly, in Indian educational systems, teachers and students feel a tremendous academic pressure on them. In India, the workload is still heavier in professional courses. Further, government policies and programs are not effectively implemented. Political interference is rampant in Indian educational system. The syllabi in many universities reveal the extent of academic backwardness. We think that to develop world class education, feeder stages of education are required to be developed. Central government should allocate substantially higher funds to state universities in order to achieve GRE rate of at least 25%. Moreover, there is need of judicious mix of accountability and autonomy in institutions. Institutions should have proper missions, resources and purposes. Introduction of effective administration and managerial reforms are a prerequisite for better command and control. Teachings of skill development courses by practicing professions with latest development of technologies are required. These are some of the important observations that may be considered as the incentives in favour of improving the quality and standard of higher education.

Notes & References:

¹Nandakumar, Prema (2015), *S. Radhakrishnan*, Sahitya Akademy, New Delhi, p.58.

²See, Tagore, R. N.(1931), *The Religion of Man*, Oxford University Press, pp.40-41.

³Nandakumar, Pream (2015), *S. Radhakrishnan*, Sahitya Akademy, New Delhi, P.74.

⁴Ibid., p.74.