

Wake up Agents of Social Change

by

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Background to the Present Scenario:

No one knows how our constitution makers interpreted secularism with no education-in-religious orientation which deprives the youth from character-building through spiritual education; and which if arranged and provided for could have ensured development of Sensitive Hearts, Healthy Cognitive Powers and Well-balanced Socially Acceptable Conduct enabling the students to feel others' agonies and pains; and had such orientation been made available to the students in the schools, the policy-makers could have helped the youth in taking right and humanitarian decisions and could have guided them to behave in tune with the Indian social norms which used to be steered by our ancient multi-religious cultural secularism; and could have saved the society from the mess which it is in today.

Today's secular education sans development of inherent virtues has produced stone-hearted youths insensitive even to the minors and weaker sections of the society what to talk of the whole humanity. Present education system develops thoughts based on materialism and consumerism which are mean, paltry and petty; and completely ignores development of inborn virtues like love and affection absolutely necessary for the entire global humanity.

It is sad that the present scenario of Spiritual and Academic Management is dismal. In my personal opinion, the first and foremost lacuna of the Indian education system is that the politicians keep meddling with it without knowing what education is, what it means and what consequences it will have on the system if meddled with mindlessly. Second is that it fails to produce good human beings compatible to Indian ethos. Ethical development of the students all over the world is at its nadir. Leave spiritual virtues aside, even moral and social values like truthfulness, honesty, dutifulness, sincerity, and respect for fair sex, parents and senior citizens which are of utmost need in daily life not only for personal mental peace but also for global social harmony, are missing today.

The youth of today is highly self-centered if not selfish. Right education, according to our ancient Indian wisdom is that which prepares the learners to give more importance to others or the colleagues than to his “Self.” This is an important part of right education to inform the learners that they can live happily when more importance is given to others’ happiness than the one for self. Perhaps sensing it, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education also realized its importance and made it imperative for the Indian school curriculum, *“to include inculcation of the basic values and an awareness of all the major religions of the country as one of the central components”*¹ to enable the boys and girls *“to know ‘good’, ‘love good’ and ‘do good’ and to grow into mutually tolerant citizens”*² But it has remained on paper only. The National Council of Educational Research and Training at the school level and the University Grants Commission at higher education level have completely failed to carry out the wise suggestions of the Framework under reference otherwise today’s youth would never have been so wayward, intolerant, immoral, hedonistic, sadistic and lacking in the spirit of self-less social work (*nishkam-sevabhav*) which he is today.

Absence of ideal role models consisting of parents, teachers, preachers; and social and political leaders from the Indian societal spectrum who the children could emulate and imitate to learn is a sad commentary on it in the present scenario. All are hypocrites and double faced. They themselves never follow what they advise others to do. The ludicrous situations which one father was put in when his child countered him saying, “Papa, why should I tell lies to the guest that you are not at home whereas you are very much here; especially when you had counseled me always to speak truth” is a case in point. This example may be fictitious. But we encounter such situations daily in our lives. What I want to emphasize is that there are lots of startling differences between what the elders (the parents, teachers, social, religious, political leaders etc) advise the younger generations to follow or do; and what they themselves actually do mindless of the fact that the latter tend to imitate and follow what they see their seniors doing. So whatever the elders say or advise the youngsters falls on their deaf ears. The result of such counseling is nil and the latter learns what they see the elders doing turning a blind eye to what they are told to do. *“Unfortunately the religious fabric of the majority community in India has broken down with withering away of the joint family system and absence of religious discourses in schools where majority community children study. Additionally, its preacher class, Brahmins, forming twenty percent in numbers, have lost their relevance in the fast materialistic life of*

today. A thorough brainstorming is required to see what could be done in this area."³ In our personal opinion the fault lies with our so-called secular education system too. It needs complete overhauling. Keeping its present academic system intact, we ought to reintroduce our ancient multi-religious and spiritual cultural secularism and discard the post-independence so-called pseudo-secularist education system which has turned Indians into insensitive robots.

Since joint family system which used to lay down the foundation of Indian moral, spiritual and social values has absolutely crashed not only in affluent classes but among low income groups *also*⁴, the onus of counseling has now fallen on the educational institutions in particular and the social, religious, political and academic leaders in general. But as said earlier both of these systems are in disarray. The end result of this system sans religious and spiritual education and total absence of ideal role models has been very disastrous. It is not only the educational institutions which are responsible to the present disturbing situation but home, the community, political and religious set-up; media and cinema have equally contributed to it. Each is playing its negative role. *"Inattentive parents, intimidating peers or teachers, dysfunctional families are usually linked with expression of extreme opposition and rebellion in children."*⁵

The young generations who have been suffering from depression and raging with internalized anger and which is exhibited almost on daily basis on flimsy grounds, ought to have been channelized by the family and school. But both are ill-equipped to do so today. Due to fall of joint-family system and emergence of nuclear families, the former stands disintegrated. And the latter (the so-called education set up) has neither equipped itself with spiritual education which could have prepared the children to face the shocks and setbacks of daily life nor could it properly *sanskritise* its former students who have now been playing the roles of the parents or the educational planners/administrators when they were in the school. As a result, today we quite often see the children yelling, crying, breaking things and even hitting people just because the teachers and parents entrusted with channelizing their extra energies have miserably failed in this pious but very important mission. Professor Nimesh Desai, Director of Human Behavior and Allied Sciences says, *"Anger has to be channelized appropriately. As per one analysis, depression is anger internalized....The social control mechanisms that existed in a traditional society - a community, extended family - are lacking. Also, individuals have learnt value autonomy and demand it without learning to respect boundaries."*⁶

On one hand the so-called secular education system produces rein less and morally very weak youths, on the other hand it gives fundamental rights to immature children in the name of Child Rights and Women Rights which are further capped by various judicial orders restricting parents and teachers not to even scold the child lest his feelings are hurt; and also to the minority communities to impart whatever they choose in the name of protecting their identity which produces fanatics out of these rein less youths instead of virtuous human-beings. I fail to understand how being a mindless follower of any faith is more important than being a true human-being or a dedicated nationalist.

Is it not more than a farce which forces so-called secularism on one section of the society and; undefined and unbridled freedom to preach whatever they like or choose to the other one with an excuse that they are from minority? This duality or dichotomy has led to fanaticism causing disharmony in the society on one hand and downfall in character of people on the other. In a democracy, fanaticism has no place. But unfortunately we have to survive with it. Consequently sometimes we hear voices for Khalistan and at other it is a perennial problem of separatism in Kashmir and some parts of North-East.

Leaving these bigger issues aside, it would have been better if our constitution makers had adopted a policy of uniform education system for all including the so-called minority communities with teachings from all religions which would have certainly not allowed the present problems of inhuman conduct to raise their hood.

Second but no less important lacuna of the Academic Management is very poor development of language skills. *“Special importance may have to be given to the mastery of an instrumental subject like one or two languages to develop communication and comprehension skills for further learning,”*⁷ says the National Curriculum Framework for School Education but it has not been or could not have been implemented in true word and spirit.

The present system no doubt produces literates and mindlessly “engaged to work youths” but scholarly qualities among the students are missing. What to talk of the students, even the faculties are short of scholarly qualities. They have no taste for good literature; hence they never mind to read it. How scholarly qualities could have been developed among the students when the teachers themselves are not interested in or ill-equipped with them. The students are neither advised nor encouraged to read books other than those consisting of their course just because the

teachers are themselves ignorant of the importance of additional reading or reading of appropriate/classical literature?

Even reading fluently and coherently; and writing legibly is missing among the average teacher. Then how could they develop these language skills among students? Other language skills too are not up to the mark. Unnecessary and inappropriate mixture of words from various languages, which may be termed as *Khichdi* (*Khichdi: An Indian recipe consisting of rice and several pulses*) language in good humor, is in common use.

When most of the teachers themselves have surface knowledge of languages and of the subjects they teach, what to talk of their knowledge about classics? When they have poor command not only on the foreign language but even on their mother tongue or the national language, what can we expect from the students under their tutelage?

Most of the teachers never read literary works. Consequently, their own knowledge is shallow. So the students imitate what they see their teachers or parents doing or learn what their teachers/parents teach them. Keeping the present scenario in mind it would have been far better if we had given individual freedom to the learners to learn by themselves instead of by imitation which was denounced by **J. Krishnamurti, the great thinker, philosopher and educationist.**⁸

Third is lack of development of vocational skills. Even after decades of getting independence and Kothari Commission's recommendations (1964-66), the schools and colleges are by and large producing young men and women fit only for white collar jobs. The Academic Managers too have a lackluster approach towards vocational education because of two reasons. First they themselves are very poor counselors either due to their own bent of mind or lack of knowledge in vocational streams.

Second is peoples' own mindset which considers vocational education below their dignity and therefore do not want their wards to opt for it and undergo vocational training. Though some steps like introduction of computers, electronics, ophthalmic sciences and other technical subjects have been taken up in schools too late but these steps too are not adequate. The essential infrastructure is not available and the laboratories are ill equipped. Trained teachers are not available. Consequently, the students no doubt pass out with a certificate in vocational education but completely without knowledge in the technical subjects/trade they have studied.

Fourth is unawareness to the disadvantages of population explosion. Since population explosion has been taking a very serious turn it has become necessary to catch the children

young to sensitize them about this grave problem. The writer feels that most of the problems not only in India but globally too are due to unmanageable population increase. The wisdom of Malthus has been completely ignored and forgotten who had intellectually warned the world saying population increases manifold as compared to other resources. Fast depleting resources and rapidly increasing population leads the entire world to social unrest. This is what is happening in India as well these days. Most of the countries including all Asian ones today have been facing social and political unrest.

The torch bearers have miserably failed in this area too. Neither the education system does anything to sensitize the youngsters about this grave population-problem nor do the elders present any role model before them so that they could learn it in a natural manner by imitating them. Late Mrs. Indira Gandhi and her younger son Sanjay Gandhi had tried to catch the ever threatening population- bull by its horns but the masses that were never sensitized against this problem, turned against them and they lost at the hustings. Thereafter, no leader could dare to address it. Not only this, leaders of today have no sense of right or wrong. Asaram, Digvijay, Narayandatt Tiwari types are on the increase that sends wrong and lustful signals to the new generations.

The scriptural wisdom/knowledge on population education which emphasized that sex is more for procreation than for entertainment or recreation and therefore one ought to abandon it as soon as he has raised a balanced family, too is missing from the education system today. Another scriptural wisdom of four ashrams (stages) of life consisting of twenty five years (*Brahamcharya, Grahsth, Sanyas and Vanprasth*) each has also been fully forgotten and relinquished. Its results too have been disastrous and consequently very unfavorable.

If we look at each stage of life minutely we shall notice that each one is a launching pad for the next stage to be accomplished comfortably and successfully in the best of manner it ought to be. Today the whole spectrum of life is topsy-turvy. When one ought to be a celibate and get educated, he runs after girls or falls in love. When one should accomplish headship of a family in an effective manner taking care of the wife and children, he becomes passive towards family duties and start running after fake religious/spiritual heads/gurus that are in abundance today. When one ought to enter the third stage, he gets involved with wine and women (Please refer to Asaram, Digvijay, Narayandatt Tiwari types who the masses emulate) just because his passion for unfulfilled desires/pleasures raises its hood untimely once again. The last stage of life that is

Vanprasth is today unheard of due to various reasons. Its consequences; one of which is population explosion have been highly disastrous which have been quite visible for the last 50-60 years. Its negative consequences are:

1. Satan like traits in human-beings grows very fast. Hedonism overtakes humanism.
2. Makes human-beings pleasure seekers.
3. People become self-centered to the extent of sheer selfishness.
4. All pleasures are unattainable; and unattained pleasures cause dissatisfaction and frustration which in turn lead to desperation that further disturbs the peace of mind.
5. Contentment levels go down speedily. Discontentment also leads to tensions.
6. Pleasures sans spirituality too cause tensions.
7. Tensions deprive one of healthy life.
8. That is why most people have been suffering from hyper-tension (high blood pressure), diabetes, obesity etc these days.
9. Crimes against children and women increase.
10. Insensible indulgence in pleasures directly leads to population explosion.

If we look at the present scenario impartially we will find and realize that all the shortcomings enumerated above have been ruling over human-beings and they are indulging in wanton behavior having no sense of right or wrong and the sufferers: Mostly women and children are shrieking hoarse. Tormentors are roaming the streets and the weaker are sulking indoors. Are we the same Aryans who took pride in giving shelter to the weak or the needy or worship women like Goddesses? What made us to be so cruel or beastlike that we take no pity on crying and helpless who we take into our clutches just to satisfy our lust? Is it the Indian society we were proud of?

A simple question to the policy makers and the learned readers: What after all are the objectives of education with reference to life? Modern education, as discussed in detail above make the youths insensible to societal expectations, does not equip them to discern between right and wrong, does not help them distinguish between love and lust or pleasures and happiness and therefore instead of prompting them for long term happiness it drives them to momentary pleasures which are not only self-damaging but harmful for the Indian society also. As Gandhi had said, *“By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man – body, mind and spirit.”*⁹ He further says, *“By spiritual training I mean education of the heart.”*¹⁰

When the child is born he is pure at heart. He knows no motives. He leads a life that is nearer to nature. As he grows this inherent nature is gradually polluted and is completely lost after sometime. Why? It is because of improper education system alien to Indian culture. Post-independence education system, instead of drawing out the best out of the child, speeds up drawing out the brute in him who is basically a pleasure-seeker at the cost of others instead of pleasure-giver.

Hedonism becomes his sole religion than spiritualism. Tagore also says, *“The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence. But we find that this education of sympathy is not only systematically ignored in schools, but it is severely repressed. From our very childhood habits are formed and knowledge is imparted in such a manner that our life is weaned away from nature and our mind and the world are set in opposition from the beginning of our days. Thus the greatest of educations for which we came prepared is neglected, and we are made to lose our world to find a bagful of information instead. We rob the child of his earth to teach him geography, of language to teach him grammar. His hunger is for the Epic, but he is supplied with chronicles of facts and dates...Child-nature protests against such calamity with all its power of suffering, subdued at last into silence by punishment.”*¹¹

But post-independence education system does not make “our life in harmony with all existence” as pointed out by Rabindernath Tagore. It rather pushes us towards a never-ending war with all existence. He keeps exploiting the nature for his greed and it consequently increases a huge imbalance in the whole existence: His surroundings (continues polluting it day after day), other human beings around him (especially weaker sections of the society) who are easily vulnerable to his animal spirits.

He lives for self, earns for self and spends for self leaving others including his dependents and old parents into the lurch. It is today’s trend. That is why the elders are leading a lonely and deserted life and the women and children are suffering the most in want of proper care and also due to their exploitation. Is it the meaning of education as envisaged by Gandhi and Tagore? Even the Vedas stress on self-realization. Their *Nirvan* means self-realization; that is coming face to face with the self and that is *atm-sakshatkar*.

What ought to be done?

1. The education system that we have adopted for the majority community in the guise of secularism and the other one in the name of maintenance of minority community status and identity, should be done away with immediately and a uniform pattern of education be adopted all over the country.
2. Philosophy ought to be introduced in all schools preferably from VI standard onwards. Philosophers should be assigned to formulate curriculum and design syllabus suitable to each class. The concepts of philosophy should be explained through interesting anecdotes so that neither the teenagers are bored nor feel disinterested in philosophy. This way we can nourish inborn virtues among the growing-up children and make them good human beings.
3. Introduction of philosophy will facilitate strong aversion to sheer materialism right from primary level through concerted efforts to build a base for the moral and spiritual values; and to develop sense of social responsibilities among the young generations.
4. This can be done by including anecdotes from *Vedas, Ramayan, Bhagwadgita, Quranshrif, Bible, Gurugranth Sahib etc.* These ought to be included appropriately in the studies. Please note that it is not at all difficult. Such anecdotes could be easily incorporated in languages and social sciences book. It will go a long way in inculcating spiritual values among the new generations leading to their moral and ethical uplift.
5. Ensure presence of ideal role models in the society which the children could imitate. Learning by imitation is in their nature. To ensure it, the parents, social, religious and political leaders will have to review their roles with reference to the younger generations.
6. Obscenity in films and media must be completely banned. There should be no production of nude films in the name of adult movies or freedom of expression. Freedom of expression never means production of absurd films or literature. There is no place for pornography in Indian society especially in present situations.
7. Only personnel with scholarly qualities especially at faculty level should be recruited in the education sector.
8. Teachers' selection should be based on selection tests consisting of educational, linguistic, social and spiritual questions followed by interviews.
9. It ought to be conducted at central level by Union Public Service commission for all the institutions in the country. Indian Education Service could also be introduced on the pattern of All India services. Only people having teacher like qualities should be selected and appointed.

10. More technical subjects ought to be introduced in schools and colleges with adequate infrastructure and well-trained manpower.

11. Language skills development should no more be ignored. Keeping its importance in mind all teachers (irrespective of their teaching subjects) ought to be held accountable for language skills development. It is more important and relevant because the subject wise terminology could easily be developed by the concerned subject-teacher only.

12. Only those Academic managers, who have thorough knowledge of spiritual and vocational education system, are sensitive to the development of language skills and know how to improve them and how to administer the schools and colleges be given the responsibility of leading the educational institutions.

13. Strict actions ought to be taken against those who violate moral and education code: be they teachers, principals, managers or any other educational authority. Our opinion is that extra care ought to be given to the selection process lest any black sheep creeps into the academic circle. It is more necessary because once an institution gets defamed; it takes a lot of time and energy in getting it washed and recoup the image.

14. Fast track courts ought to be established for speedy trial of the accused of heinous crimes and award of punishment to those found guilty. Please note that those who are responsible for guiding and educating the children due to their social status (the parents, teachers especially social, religious and political leaders), cannot/should not be allowed to misuse the existing justice system due to their position and status; and go scot-free. Unfortunately Asaram, Digvijay, Narayandatt Tiwari types are on the increase.

15. Crimes against children should be made cognizable. State should be extra-cautious regarding crimes against children.

16. Juvenile Justice Act ought to be amended keeping the rate of increasing crimes by the children. There should be no leniency in grave crimes even if these are committed by juveniles. The issue of punishment to the children by teachers and parents ought to be carefully reviewed. Absolute liberty, even to the adults makes them crazy and; prompts them to behave irresponsibly. Giving it to the immature adolescents is highly risky. In today's scenario neither the parents nor the teachers have any control over the children. That is why crimes by the adolescents are increasing. Government should approach the Supreme Court for review of its orders. Professor Nimesh Desai, Director of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences rightly

says, “...*The social control mechanisms that existed in a traditional society - a community, extended family-are lacking. Also, individuals have learnt to value autonomy and demand it without learning to respect boundaries.*”¹²

17. To curb wanton punishment to the children, the punishing authority ought to be made accountable to record the reasons in writing why the punishment was necessary. For this we may have a mandatory register in which the wrong-doing of the student should be recorded along with the rationale behind the punishment awarded. It should be in the open domain so that any enlightened member of the society could check it. But umbrella ban on teachers and parents from checking the undesirable behavior of the adolescents in time has been very disastrous, counterproductive and the youths have been going astray. “*Failed live-ins behind rise in rape cases. Young Adults Acting Immaturely.*” says Delhi High Court.¹³

If the above steps are taken in the right earnest, the scenario could be changed gradually because deterioration and degeneration is not only easy but fast also whereas the transformation to improvement is always slow and a bit tough and time consuming. Therefore, even after taking the above steps we will have to be very patient but consistent in our efforts.

What I want to point out that modern education-social-political system has spoiled the character of not only the Indian youth but of the world too; and it needs immediate overhauling. The saying goes, “*If money is lost, nothing is lost. If health is lost, something is lost. But if character is lost, everything is lost.*”¹⁴ Today we notice that not only the youths but the elders like parents, teachers, social, political and religious leaders also miss the last miserably. We need to awake to the grave crisis before it is too late otherwise even stringent Acts like POSCO Act are destined to fall to the ground.

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