

# INDIAN EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF THE TIMES

The attainment of Independence has accentuated the wide-spread dissatisfaction with our present system of education, which has proved itself to be incapable of redeeming our ancient civilization and establishing a new social order. The appointment of the Education Commission by the Government of India is the administrative recognition of the fact that Indian Education is not flexible enough to meet the demands of the developing economy and the evolving society in our country.

It is heartening that our Government has at last decided to give up its policy of drift in educational matters and boldly addressed itself to the task of reorganising our entire education so as to make it accord with our historic commitment to establish a Socialistic Pattern of Society and to raise the living standards of our people. It is hoped that with the appointment of the Education Commission education in India will come to be recognised as a potent and potential instrument of social, economic and political transformation, which we are aiming at in Independent India.

Born of British tradition and based on the famous "Minute" of Lord Macaulay the basic pattern of Indian education has undergone little modification even after the attainment of our Independence. Notwithstanding the appointment of the various Commissions for the improvement of our Secondary and Higher Education the attitude of the authorities seems to suggest a shocking insensitivity to the spirit of our democratic Constitution and betrays a total unconcern for its democratic and socialistic implications.

The appalling incidence of unemployment even among the educated, and student unrest, not to speak of

the deplorably low standards of attainment in various departments of National life, may be traced to the want of a comprehensive educational policy. Although we have embarked on planned national development our people are not at all plan-minded; and although we have set out to achieve a Welfare State based on Democratic Socialism our people have not yet manifested any faith in Democracy and Socialism.

While recognising that the process of transformation from a Subject State to a Sovereign Democratic Republic is bound to be long-drawn, it is worthwhile to ask ourselves whether we have attempted to relate our educational policies to National goals. Education, it must be admitted, has come to mean a meaningless and purposeless acquisition of learning having no relation to the actualities of life for the vast majority of our students, who are torn from soil and cut off from the cultural and religious moorings of the earlier generations. To the average pupil, it must be owned, a Diploma or a Degree, however acquired, means only a passport to a job and education does not spell out his development into "a rich and well-integrated human personality" evincing keen interest in "worthwhile work, intellectual as well as practical."

It is undeniable that even eighteen years after the attainment of Independence no attempt has been made to gear up our educational system to meet the challenges of the times and to bring our education in line with our planned efforts in the economic field. Thanks to the frequent declaration of our National Ideals and Goals we are left in no doubt as to the direction in which we have to move educationally and the specific purposes which our educational institutions have to fulfil. The great problem of enabling our education to play its part purposefully in national development has to be tackled in the context of relating our limited resources to our very large needs.

If the image of India projected by our leaders is to be translated into reality we must bring into being an education capable of aiding our developmental effort in the economic sphere, and of ensuring the growth of our nation into a modern Welfare State with high standards of living and high potential for progress in the cultural, social and economic spheres.

The present system of education, mainly oriented to either Government services or certain crowded professions and not to agriculture, our main source of living, has actually created a class of persons who are virtually unemployable. The utter lack of man-power planning and the paucity of institutions offering courses in vocational and technical education have aggravated the problem of unemployment in our country and are in no small measure responsible for the acute shortage of trained personnel wherever they are needed.

While the fall in educational standards may be regarded as a consequence of the expansion of education and the extension of educational facilities to classes formerly denied the privilege of education, none can dispute the need for achieving qualitative improvement in education at all levels which alone will help our country to make use of the modern technical know-how in its improvement and development.

The present Emergency, which has generated tremendous enthusiasm for voluntary efforts and for making great personal sacrifices in the cause of the country, should be availed of to promote a new awareness of the value of education and to enlist the support of our people in the reorganisation of the entire educational system. The grave dangers that our country is facing today must intensify our efforts to become self-reliant not only in the attainment of economic self-sufficiency but also in the development of our defence potential.

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Apart from achieving the universally accepted objects of education which are the refinement of the human spirit, the acquisition of mental culture and the fitting of our youth for the national tasks, there is an urgent need for utilising education to give a meaningful content to our concepts of social justice, political and economic freedoms and the country's role in the progress of humanity towards a just World Order.

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21/09/05