CAN EDUCATION TRANSFORM THE SOCIETY? A BRIEF STUDY

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Abstract

If there is no education people will not have any knowledge and skills, and they will not get good jobs. They may be become someone's slaves. That is why the great social reformer Mahatma Jotirao Phule rightly said in his Akhanda that Shudra and Ati-shudra of our nation met their worst situations due to their ignorance. To emphasize the imporatance of education Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has said, "Education as a milk of a Tigress". Because of the education these social reformers made a lot of transformation in the society, values and they had reconstructed the social system. Education has been chiefly instrumental in preparing the way for the development of science and technology. Education has brought about phenomenal changes in every aspect of men's life. Education is a process which brings about changes in the behavior of the society. The main purpose of this paper is to discuss whether the education has capability to make changes in the society or not. It will briefly touch the goals of modern education, duties of the teachers, schools and colleges. It also very briefly focuses on the threats to the modern educational aims and objectives by some traditionalist people.

Keywords: *Education, Social Reformers, Changes, Society.*

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Mahatma Jotirao Phule rightly said in his *Akhanda* that Shudra and Ati-shudra of our nation met their worst situations due to their ignorance. Without education one could not get knowledge and skills. If one does not have enough knowledge and sufficient skills, it is impossible for him/ her to earn property, reputation etc. because he/ she could not get good job. Mahatma Phule and other social reformers knew the importance of education in humans' lives. Education has the great powers. It has capabilities to change the world of the individual and it has ability to transform the social structures. Every religion founders and Saints educated the people through teaching the simple examples of life via poetry. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has called 'Education as a milk of a Tigress'. Therefore, proper education may play the role of education as an agent or instrument of social change and social development.

Social change may take place if humans need some changes in their lives. When the existing social system or network of social institutions fails to meet the existing human needs changes in the society may take place. Education has been universally accepted as one major agency of socialization, and teachers and educational institutions as socializing agents.

In associating education with the social changes, three things are very important:

1. The agents of change,

2. The content of change,

3. The social background of those who are sought to be changed, i.e., students.

Educational institutions under the control of different cultural groups reflect the values of those groups which support and control education. In this situation, teachers can teach some specific values, aspirations and attitudes to the children.

Teachers are the agents who changes the lives of the students. Children has great influence of their teachers. Sometimes a student has more impact than his/ her parents. Therefore to understand the role of teachers as agents of change, we have to recall the three types of educational institutions which existed in India before independence: one, which wanted to teach Vedic philosophies (Gurukuls); before it there were some biggest Universities in our Nation, they were at Takshshila, Nalandaand so on after Buddhist era. and they had been greatly influenced by teaching of Buddha and his Damma, two, which focused on Indianisation of education; and three, which, wanted to impart western type of education.

Earlier educational institutions and teachers used to show a specific way of life to the students and education was more a means of social control than an instrument of social change. Because education was associated with religion.

The second and third type of institutions believed that English education, particularly at the higher levels, would lead to change of the social values and social structure. Social reformers, who were educated through English, emphasized values like removal of caste restrictions, segregation based on the Caste System, equality for women, doing away with evil social customs and bad practices, voice in the governance of the country, establishing democratic institutions, and so on. They, thus, wanted to teach liberal philosophy through education to transform social structure, and values. They wanted to reconstruct the society and it was done by our Constitution. After the liberation from Briton, Indian Constitution has accepted this philosophy which was based upon liberty, equality, fraternity, and social justice.

In other words, all social reformers regarded education as a flame or light of knowledge which dispelled the darkness of ignorance. However, it is doubtful that whether the teachers, both in the schools and in the colleges, accepted and taught this liberalism in their teaching values. Modern educational institutions do not place much emphasis upon transmitting a way of life to the students. The traditional education was meant for an unchanging static society not

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marked by any change. But today education aims at imparting knowledge. Education was associated with religion.

Therefore, some of the educational institutions or every institution did not impart the message of social equality, political democracy, and rationality, etc. to students. It was only after independence when the concept of popular democracy was accepted those new goals of liberalism, secularism, individualism, socialism, humanism, undermining the institution of Caste system and supremacy of higher Caste or Varna to be achieved through education. Educational goals came to be emphasized in schools and colleges by changing the content of education.

Allen Singer writes, "More than a century ago, Emile Durkheim rejected the idea that education could be the force to transform society and resolve social ills. Instead, Durkheim concluded that education "can be reformed only if society itself is reformed." He argued that education "is only the image and reflection of society. It imitates and reproduces the latter...it does not create it" (Durkheim, 1897/1951: 372-373)".(louisville.edu)

Most mainstream proposals for improving education in India assume that our society is fundamentally sound, but that for some reason, our schools are failing. Different critics target different villains: poor quality teachers, pampered, disruptive or ill-prepared students, the culture of their families, unions, bureaucrats, university schools of education, tests that are too easy, or inadequate curriculum. But if Durkheim was correct, a society has the school system it deserves. Denouncing the poor quality of education is like blaming a mirror because you do not like your reflection

As a teacher educator and a public high school social studies teacher, we try to avoid being overwhelmed by pessimism during debates over school reform. Even though we believe that education will not be changed in isolation, we recognize that efforts to improve schools can be part of a long term struggle to create a more equitable society in our country. We also believe that students, especially high school students, must be part of this struggle and that an important part of our job as teachers is to help prepare them to participate as active citizens in a democratic society.

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Should teachers encourage high school students to work for social change? Thomas Jefferson believed that, in a democratic society, teachers do not really have a choice. According to Jefferson, freedom and republican government rest on two basic principles: "the diffusion of knowledge among the people" and the idea that "a little rebellion now and then is a good thing." Jefferson supported the right to rebel because he recognized that the world was constantly changing. The crucial question was not whether it would change, but the direction of change. Education was essential so that ordinary citizens could participate in this process, defending and enhancing their liberties.

John Dewey (1939) saw himself within this intellectual tradition. He believed that democratic movements for human liberation were necessary to achieve a fair distribution of political power and an "equitable system of human liberties." However, criticisms have been raised about limitations in Deweyan approaches to education, especially the way they are practiced in many elite private schools. Frequently, these schools are racially, ethnically, and economically segregated, and therefore efforts to develop classroom community ignore the spectrum of human difference and the continuing impact of society's attitudes about race, class, ethnicity, gender, social conflict, and inequality on both teachers and students. In addition, because of pressure on students to achieve high academic scores, teachers maintain an undemocratic level of control over the classroom. Both of these issues are addressed by Paulo Freire, who calls on educators to aggressively challenge both injustice and unequal power arrangements in the classroom and society.

The use of education for spreading the values of modernization came to be emphasized from the 1960s and 1970s onwards. Highly productive economies, distributive justice, peoples' participation in decision-making bodies, adoption of scientific technology in industry, agriculture and other occupations and professions were accepted as gods for modernizing the Indian society. And these goals were to be achieved through liberal education.

For Freire, education is a process of continuous group discussion (dialogue) that enables people to acquire collective knowledge they can use to change the society. The role of the teacher includes asking questions that help students to identify the problems facing their communities (problem posing), working with students to discover ideas or create symbols

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(representations) that explain their life experiences (codification), and encouraging analysis of prior experiences and of society as the basis for new academic understanding and social action (conscientization) (Shor, 1987).

Greene believes that, to create democratic classrooms, teachers must learn to listen to student voices. Listening allows teachers to discover what students are thinking, what concerns them, and what has meaning to them. When teachers learn to listen, it is possible for teachers and students to collectively search for historical, literary, and artistic metaphors that make knowledge of the world accessible to us. In addition, the act of listening creates possibilities for human empowerment; it counters the marginalization experienced by students in school and in their lives, it introduces multiple perspectives and cultural diversity into the classroom and it encourages students to take risks and contribute their social critiques to the classroom dialogue. (louisville.edu)

Thus, modernization was not accepted as a philosophy or a movement based on rational value system but as a process that was to characterize our society. Modernization was, thus, not to be confined only to economic field but was to be achieved in social, political, cultural and religious fields too. Education was sought to be utilized as a channel for the spread of modernity.

The problem is that there is open disagreement among the elite in our society about the socio-political framework and the values of modernization. As such, the question is: who will impart values of modernization? Who will educate? If agents of change are themselves traditional and do not incorporate modern values in their own lives, how can they impart such values to students?

Even though the Education Commissions and the New Policy of Education of 1986 have spelt out with unusual directness the values and characteristics of a modern society, yet the path of modernization through education is not likely to be an easy one. Some political leaders who belonged to the Orthodox Religious Organizations are in power in some States. They are really keen on some traditional cultural elements to be taught through education. With such philosophies and lack of consensus on the validity of particular values of modernization (like secularism, individualism, socialism, egalitarianism, etc.), how can we expect to achieve

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goals of modernization? We may, thus, conclude that use of education as an instrument for the spread of modern influences is an issue which requires serious and fresh thought.

To conclude, as in colonial period, education became possible to those people who were denied by the cultural traditions of our country. So many people educated and they became social reformers. Because of the education they made a lot of transformation in the society, values and they had reconstructed the social system. Education has been chiefly instrumental in preparing the way for the development of science and technology. Education has brought about phenomenal changes in every aspect of men's life. Education is a process which brings about changes in the behavior of the society. It is a process which enables every individual to effectively participate in the activities of the society and to make positive contribution to the progress of society

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