# VISION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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*A vision is not a project report or a plan target. It is an articulation of the desired end results in broader terms.        -A.P.J. Abdul Kalam*

## INTRODUCTION

Providing free and compulsory primary education for all the children between the age 6- 14 yrs has been one of the primary duties of the Government of India as enunciated in the Constitution. While there is every reason to ensure universalization of primary education, but it would be a disaster if higher education is ignored in the name of primary education. Both are necessary and have to be addressed at the same time. It is because of higher education that India can compete with other countries in the international platform.

Higher education usually connotes education beyond the school level imparted at universities or other centres of higher learning like the IITs, IIMs and various research institutes. They are store houses of knowledge and creators of those who make knowledge grow. They are expected to represent the best brains and be centres for achieving excellence and for inculcation of higher values leading to the all round development of the personality of the individual to the fullest potential and to the well being of the nation. Higher education is not merely imparting of information or knowledge. It should aim at the total development of a person i.e. physical, moral, social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. It must train the student to be a good citizen and to be able to take decisions and act wisely in life. Wisdom is the ability to discriminate and decide between right and wrong. The objective of higher education is to inculcate such wisdom.

## INDIAN SCENARIO:

India has an ancient tradition of imparting higher education and an elaborate university system. We have inherited a rich cultural heritage. The Vedic rishis were the torch bearers of this cherished cultural heritage. The "gurukulas" or the "ashramas" run by the ancient sages were the higher centres of learning. These were single- teacher institutions and the method was mainly oral. The curriculum was wide and included almost all the fields of intellectual activity. Takshashila was the most famous and earliest centre of higher learning in the 7th century B.C.

During the Buddhist period there were also famous seats of learning. These were Viharas or monasteries. The most famous Buddhist centers of learning included Nalanda, Vikramshila, Odantapuri, Vallabhi, Kanchi etc. These institutions attained international reputation and attracted students from far and near. The studies too were fairly comprehensive and included a large number of subjects. Most of these institutions disappeared during the Muslim rule. According to Adam's report there were "tols" in the beginning of the 19th century which were regarded as the Hindu centers of higher learning. The Muslims had their own institutions of higher learning, which were known as "Madrasahs". These existed in cities like Delhi, Agra, Murshidabad, Dacca, Lahore and several other places.

The modern higher education in India began with the establishment of Hindu College at Kolkata in 1817. As per the Directives of Despatch of 1854, for the first time in 1857 three universities in the Presidencies of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras were established. At the time of independence, there were 19 universities throughout the country. During the British regime a large number of universities were set up in India (19). After independence there was a demand for establishing more universities to fulfill the need of higher education. There were differences with regard to the organization, aims and functions of different universities in India.

After independence there was a change of attitude with regard to the role of universities in free India. One of the earliest decisions of Government of India, in the post- independence period was to set up a University Education under the Chairmanship of Dr. Radhakrishnan (Nov. 1948). It recommended rapid expansion of higher education on a priority basis and it made important suggestions for improving the standard of university education in the country. To coordinate University Education in the country, the establishment of the University Grants Commission was also recommended. What followed was haphazard expansion of higher education and proliferation of universities.

A great deal has been written and spoken about the problems of education in India since Independence. A large number of Commissions and Committees have examined the various perspectives and reform options and made their recommendations. However, despite all the Commissions and Committees and their reports, no serious attempts have been made for implementing any reform proposals in the field of education. Also, for 50 years after independence, education has hardly occupied a place of primacy on the national agenda.

The country is trying to meet the new need mostly by expanding the system numerically. As a result we have now arrived at a point when we have about 600+ universities, 50,000+colleges, a student population of more than a crore, a faculty of lakhs and financial investment running into billions of rupees. In addition to these, the government have expressed the dream of establishing as many new universities and new colleges in years to come, hoping that through the proposed quantative growth it will be possible for the country to develop into a fully developed nation as per the Millennium vision of our former President Dr. Abdul Kalam, and also a similar millennium vision of global development conceived of by the UN by the year 2050. However, the credo of more, unaccompanied by quality, is likely to prove counter- productive. The history of education in India has time and again proved that quantity at the expense of quality has harmed education at all levels.

## CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION:

The Government of India has been concentrating more on primary education than on higher education. Universities have always tried to persuade the Government to release more funds but the Government has in plain terms declared that funding for higher education must come from other sources. UGC and AICTE are encouraging the universities to generate their own funds. Therefore the need to augment cost recoveries from students, developing a self- generating and self-sustaining fund, supplemented by other entrepreneurial avenues, has come up as the major issue in higher education discourse.

The mushroom growth of private engineering and medical colleges in the country stands testimony to the quality taking backseat in higher education. Many private universities are being set up but many of them which are not yet recognized by the UGC. This rapid growth has no doubt contributed to a quantitative increase in the number of colleges providing higher education but this has been at the cost of quality.

A large number of students continue to go abroad for higher education. Only a very small percentage of the student population opts for higher education in India. This may be due to several factors which inter alia include the high fee payable, the capitation fee, the standard of higher education which is not as good as it ought to be. Many big business houses has entered education sector during the last decade and have been doing very well from the business point of view. With the same motive, foreign universities are trying to have a large share of Indian educational market. Due to marketing approach in the education sector, the unit cost of higher education, particularly of professional and technical education has gone too high to be within the reach of the poor and disadvantaged sections of the society. One of the most fundamental principles is that the Universities and other centres of higher learning must enjoy autonomy and allowed full functional freedom in their academic and research pursuits. The present position is that no classes being held, examinations being repeatedly postponed, coping at examinations being accepted as normal, teachers not being interested in teaching and students not bothered about attending classes. This can not be allowed to go on under the grab of autonomy. The worst scourge for higher education and the ugliest stigma on its face today is that of politics, crime and corruption entering the portals of our Universities- the temples of learning and character building. Campuses are plagued by party politics. Universities are hardly open for 120 days in a year and that also if there are no strikes by teachers, students or employees by turns or all these together. With the incursion of the private enterprise and export of education by the foreign university in the form of "trade in education" has subsequently bewildered this situation. Educational institutions have reacted accordingly by becoming more market-oriented, focusing their energy more on creating funds rather than providing sufficient education for students. Through foreign aid agencies (as aspect of globalization), education is made widely available to all levels of the population. However these educated individuals have increasingly left their countries to pursue more beneficial employment, which their countries cannot offer them and some Third World Societies, may suffer a "brain drain". Economic globalization is certainly accentuating these problems.

## HIGHER EDUCATION WITH RESPECT TO INDIAN VALUES:

The Education Commission (1964) has rightly remarked that 'while a combination of ignorance with goodness may be futile, that of knowledge with a lack of essential values may be dangerous". The central objective of Education in Indian context is knowledge and liberation. 'Knowledge is power' and the source of knowledge can be traced back to Education which would inter alia include Primary Education, Secondary and Higher Education. Education cannot be construed to be merely the instruction received at school, or college but would include the whole course of training- moral, intellectual and physical. Thus Higher Education in particular plays an extremely important role in inculcating values.

There has been a general devaluation of all values in every walk of life. The only values, if any, left are money, power and success. In today's scenario, it is difficult to find those who want to better the world around or to ameliorate the sufferings of fellow human beings or to suffer and sacrifice for cause or even to bother about matters like character building. The spiritual dimension will have to be given central importance in our new educational thinking. Education and more so higher education has to be value based. Education is not teaching or learning alone. It has to inculcate amongst the people a sense of piety, a culture of collective welfare and togetherness, a deep concern for upliftment of society and eradication of evils. These are some of the values which the educationists and academicians must crave for. If need be, there should be no hesitation in switching over to any other, but better system. Evolving new methods for merit assessment in the background of privatization and commercialization of educational institutions, and in keeping with the pace of history, getting out of imposed falsehoods and with the desire to search the truth – social, historical, scientific and spiritual should be the concern for all. We

must know that morality, ethics and spirituality are the most significant factors in evolving an enlightened society. This aspect has to be taken care in the days to come as we are more likely to be technical, mechanical, confined and self-concerned.

The west has looked at various points, institutions and concepts in a compartmentalized manner. They have considered the individual, family, community, society, and humanity, as separate and non- interacting entities. In sharp contrast to this concept, our, Indian concept begins with the individual, but goes on expanding into different entities and ultimately into the Universe without ever de-linking itself with the center i.e. the individual. In the Bharatiya Model each entity originates from the inner one and expands into the outer, thus forming an infinite spiral, with no inner conflicts and tensions. One compliments the other. It is a long journey in the realm of self cum social consciousness of man. Infact, all entities of life. As our consciousness grows, our visions widen. This is like the seeds sprouting into a plant, the plant growing into the tree and the tree blossoming and bearing fruit. All this is a process of evolution, growth and development.

The solution which Vedanta offers to the ethical crisis in a world dominated by globalization, is just the opposite of what is happening. Excess of knowledge and power without holiness make human beings devils. Tremendous power is being acquired by the manufacture of machines and other appliances, and privilege is being claimed today it has never been claimed before. That is why Vedanta wants to preach against it, to break down this tyranny over souls of men. It is clear that India cannot afford to continue such defective system of higher education. As a country, we are the inheritors of an ancient culture that used to value education as a liberating force. This motto "Saa Vidyaa, Yaa Vimuktaye" had been a lode star for Gurus and Shishyas in their pursuit of true education for generations. They realized that true liberation could be achieved only through comprehensive and value addition to the personality of the recipients of education. Obviously, by an analogy, in our contemporary education system only a continual, on-going all-round value adding process, in the classroom as well as outside, formal and informal, can ensure education of a "whole" man.

## CONCLUSIONS

Thus, in the light of liberalization, privatization and globalization where the world is changing at a faster rate and at the same time where the Indian values are derioting at a faster rate considerable attention has to be directed towards higher education in the days to come because of the realization that higher education is essential for national development and economic prosperity. Internationalization of Higher education is welcome but it should be assimilated with Indian values, cultures, and ethos including respect for people, their perceptions, integrity and being. Thus the higher education system of our country has to be built on the firm ground of its own philosophical, cultural and sociological tradition and must respond to its needs and aspirations. It should be rooted in Indian reality and its composite culture. Therefore we have to be ready for a collective endeavour to initiate reform in the nation's interest, since education is the primary agent of transformation towards sustainable development by enhancing people's capacity for transforming their vision into reality. Education should not be treated as a commodity but rather it should be the mission of all. Therefore to sum up, this should be the vision of Indian Higher Education which should also act as a guiding light to the whole world.

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