



A newsletter by the Department of Sociology, Maitreyi College

Volume 5, Issue 2

SOCIOLOGUE

आओ बात करें

Theme- Revisiting Education

In this issue

From the editor's desk	1	In the language of social sciences, education is defined as the transmission of certain attitudes, knowledge and skills to the members of a society through formal systematic training. The nature of education in India was historically perceived to be a process by virtue of which an individual was exposed to every aspect of the social structure in all its complexities, ranging from religion, philosophy to literature, warfare, etc. It played an instrumental role in an individual's personal growth, encouraging them to seek truth and recognize how areas of knowledge relate to one another and use this as the basis of critical thought.
Oasis- An unending tread	2	
Reflection on Intellectual Hegemony: Western model of education in India	3	With the advent of the industrial revolution, and the coming of colonialism in India, the purpose of education changed. This western hegemony made the sector of education an extension of the capitalistic enterprise through the process of commercialization. Schools and colleges began incorporating power- assertive methods in their curriculum in order to attune students to the new ways of an industrial and market oriented society. This cookie- cutter outlook adopts a one-size- fits- all strategy, as if it were dealing with goods, and not sentient human beings. The present education system focuses solely on accreditation, compliance and certifying students. Most of all, it incentivizes memorizing above originality, achievement over learning. Even the type of knowledge that is imparted is highly selective, often tailored to reinforce certain mainstream ideologies.
Women: Gendered to Rended	4	
Educational institutions dissent and dialogue	5	In light of the very need of revamping the flawed and outdated conceptualization of education, alternative education came into the picture whose main aim has been to cultivate the inborn abilities and tastes of students. We need to step back from divisive debates about the specific flaws of the education system, and look at it's raison deetre. It's purpose should be allowed to evolve and adapt according to the needs of society. The current dominant model of education is a broken system based on antiquated paradigms that tries to limit creativity into predetermined boxes. What it should focus on is to encourage independent critical thinking skills, it should challenge ones beliefs and question their realities, it should teach individuals how to participate in society, beyond just being a worker. The educational sector needs not just a systematic overhaul, but also one where we rethink it's core purpose as an institution of our society.
Editor's	6	Our theme for the semester "Revisiting education" centers around the need to redefine the purpose of education by drawing upon the systemic faults in its very conceptualization over the years. Likewise, through this semester's issue, we strive to shed light on the changing faces of the education system and impel our readers to stop being complacent and question the accepted educational norms.

Events:

-Movie screening :
dead poets society on
11th February , 2020

-Talk : Revisiting education on 19th February ,2020

- Webinar: Home and world in a pandemic : redefining the normal on 7th May , 2020

-Anahita Tenzing Sharma, Kasthuri Akhil

Oasis - an unending trend

- Priya Bhatt, Vani Shukla, Nikita Sarma

When we see that children everywhere are required by law to go to school, that almost all schools are structured in the same way, and that our society goes to a great deal of trouble and expense to provide such schools, we tend naturally to assume that there must be some logical reason for all this, but we have to abandon the idea that they are products of logical necessity. They are instead products of history. Education as it exists today makes sense if we view it from a historical and philosophical perspective. Philosophy of education has always been about holistic development of individual and individual capabilities to the fullest extent.

The Western philosophical tradition began in ancient Greece, and philosophy of education began with it. The major historical figures developed philosophical views of education that were embedded in their broader metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, and political theories. The introduction by Socrates of the “Socratic method” of questioning (see dialectic) began a tradition in which reasoning and the search for reasons that might justify beliefs, judgments, and actions was (and remains) fundamental; such questioning in turn eventually gave rise to the view that education should encourage in all students and persons, to the greatest extent possible, the pursuit of the life of reason. This view of the central place of reason in education has been shared by most of the major figures in the history of philosophy of education, despite the otherwise substantial differences in their other philosophical views.

Socrates’ student Plato endorsed that view and held that a fundamental task of education is that of helping students to value reason and to be reasonable, which for him involved valuing wisdom above pleasure, honour, and other less-worthy pursuits. Plato’s student Aristotle also took the highest aim of education to be the fostering of good judgment or wisdom, but he was more optimistic than Plato about the ability of the typical student to achieve it. He also emphasized the fostering of moral virtue and the development of character. Jean Jacques Rousseau famously insisted that formal education, like society itself, is inevitably corrupting; he argued that education should enable the “natural” and “free” development of children, a view that eventually led to the modern movement known as “open education.”

In India the education system has various aspects and it has evolved since ancient time. The unique things about Indian education system are diversity in fundamentals like language, culture and dialect etc. In the times of yore, India had the Gurukul System of education where the teacher and the pupils used to live together in a distant place and were taught philosophy, arts, science, etc. Guru was the central persona and the students returned the favour by helping their teacher in their daily chores.

During medieval period Vedic schools were dominant before British colonial intruded. In the 1830s Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay brought English language to India and the syllabus was limited to modern and specific subjects like science, mathematics, language, history, geography and civics. The mode of teaching was mainly confined to classroom and the teacher student relationship became stronger. The education system in India got shaped by the influence of various institutions throughout different periods. During the second half of nineteenth century Rama Krishna Mission tried to combine the western pattern of education with the congenial ancient knowledge to inspire the young minds of Indians and making them more open and accepted universally.

As the need to revitalize and reform the educational system started bending the thrust of utmost necessity, the intelligentsia started to realize the sheer futility of the British system of education. Rabindranath Tagore labeled the then system of teaching as bookish, mechanical, stereotyped, dull and uninteresting. In 1901, he started a school at Shantiniketan with a vision of man existing with perfect harmony in nature and focused on heuristic methods of study by allowing freedom and creativity. Afterwards in 1921 it was turned in to an international university, named VishwaBharati. Later on, various other colleges aiming at developing vocational studies emerged in various parts of the country. College of Vocational Studies affiliated to Delhi university is one of the finest examples in this field.

Even though the vicinity seems desirable to combat the demonic eruptions of the lethargic and convincingly pervasive British educational system to which we have been prey for thousands of years and continue to do so, the hard earned morals of society and their gatekeepers haunt the passionate individuals conflicted between desire and mediocrity by demanding “a pound of flesh but not a drop of blood”. Alas, the people crossing the barricades make a future where education is a true serendipity.

Reflection on Intellectual Hegemony: Western model of Education in India

- Aditi Kumar and Mridusmita Ray

In a world, where every nation is caught up in the rat race to achieve modernization, western education remains the most sought after means to accomplish the same. The Indian education system has not been spared from the western influence either. Even after independence, our education system bears imprints of the structures set up by our colonial masters. For all its merits, the attempt to assimilate the models of western education is something of a double edged sword.

For nearly more than half a century, the British followed a policy of non intervention in the matters of education of its subjects. But due to constant pressure from the Anglicists and Christian missionaries, they agreed to take up the responsibility of promoting western education which was designed to strengthen and legitimize the foundation of their political authority. The native languages of India, which are the true representation of its rich diversity, have succumbed to a dwindling state over the centuries due to the Western model of education that believes in the intellectual superiority of the English language. The system of graded class, standardised testing, and university degree becoming a valued commodity, all being products of the western education policies, gave longer legs to the intellectual hegemony.

Education system in India emerged out of the development of capitalism and was constructed to serve the needs of the capitalist class in a new industrial era. This grip of the market forces have been substantially strengthened in the contemporary times. Engineering and MBA degrees are regarded as more lucrative and superior as they transform their products into corporate professionals that serve the capitalist structure of the society. Language, literature and liberal arts subjects have taken a backseat in many Indian institutions as they do not directly serve capitalism, rather at times question it. Another impact of the intellectual hegemony is the privatisation of public institutions, a contested topic which has been debated for quite some time. As soon as education is reduced to a commodity to be purchased, it becomes inaccessible to the economically weaker section which eventually leads to an unequal society. Moreover the heavy cost of coaching centres and exorbitant tuition fees in many colleges establishes education as a lucrative business opportunity.

Another major defect in the western model is its total neglect of the native systems of knowledge. At being exposed to Western education, the worldview of the indigenous population of India marked by collective decision making contradicted with that of West's worldview of individualism. Western education emphasized the written word rather than the oral traditions that has been one of the important ways to pass on knowledge to new generations among indigenous cultures. Consequently, a vast amount of local knowledge hasn't stood the test of time.

Notwithstanding the limitations, western model of education has been a major proponent of rational understanding that has broadened the periphery of learning. That being so we should be able to identify the best of both the worlds and connect them to produce a sustainable educational practise that checks the widening gulf between traditional knowledge and western rationality and questions the overruling power of western capitalism.

Women: Gendered to Rendered

- by Ananya Upadhyay

“Rajaji, we must accredit your people with education and a sense of intellectual direction!!” said Lord Thomas Macaulay to Raja Ram Mohan Roy, whose eyes shone like those of allotropes.”

“Lord Macaulay, it is indeed their Magna Carta and they will procure it. You have my word.” Ram Mohan Roy said” The girls read in unison. The class then, roared with audible pride and cheered amongst themselves for having successfully read a newspaper article, so heterogenous.

SavitribaiPhule looked over to her smiling husband, Jyotirao, who was standing by the entrance.

“The girls’ reading and writing skills are unparalleled, Rao. I am proud of you, of us. And mostly, I’m utterly pleased with the girls.” Savitribai said. JyotiraoPhule and his wife, SavitribaiPhule were now the most “dystopian” and unreal couple of the village. “Subliminal”, the headman had commented for when the Phule’s had introduced him to the idea of equal education for the mothers and daughters of the village.

“Go by the noble sayings of the Manusmriti” “How could one even permit his wife to stroll through the village when there are so many elder men in presence?” “You should not pay heed to what Ram Mohan Roy had envisioned. He was an anti national sycophant who appreciated the British Raj for his own, material gains!” were a few amongst many other profanities that activists and educationists like Jyotiba and SavitribaiPhule, TarabaiShinde, Begum Rokeya and many others, had to stomach. Education in India was just a counterfeit concealment of patriarchy in the olden days. Texts like the highly revered Kautilya’s “Arthashastra”, also dismissed female liberation and promoted retributions like corporal punishments, caning or even flogging of women. Though, with the coming of British improvised and augmented education, the condition of the social state started to improve.

Educational standards in India were being amplified with the help of laws and acts like the 1813 Act, The Macaulay Education Policy, The Sadler Commission. Later on, provisions like Article 15(3) and 51 A) (E)27 of the Indian Constitution also paved way for women’s overall proliferation. Well, if not entirely so, then by degrees. Education, which was previously sporadic and loopy, was now hastening in the Indian subcontinent. Women were seen getting educational and vocational degrees, denoting that education was indeed, on a widespread. By the post Vedic period, a negligible, yet evident number of women were seen in educational platforms alongside men. Scholarly woman such as the Brahnavadinis and the Sadyodvahas were a few amongst the first ones to have had access to Vedic literacy, which, to be frank, wasn’t quite the head start that women were aiming for. howbeit, they took their chances.

“Savitri, my sweet, it is time..” Jyotirao said to his wife. After all, it was time to close the school shut as it was past evening.

“You know, I do detest this time of the day when we have to put the lights of our school, out. But I take it as a sole example of the dark that lingers upon us may get close, momentarily so, but each new day, we come back with more light. With more literacy for our girls.” Savitribai said as she looked at Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar’s memorabilia which hung stoically on the pigmented wall of their classroom. The pair swore to never suspend the legacy of all those who pledged allegiance to their efforts for women’s education and rights. And conclusively so, as Albert Einstein had once said, “Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death”



Educational Institutions: Dissent and Dialogue

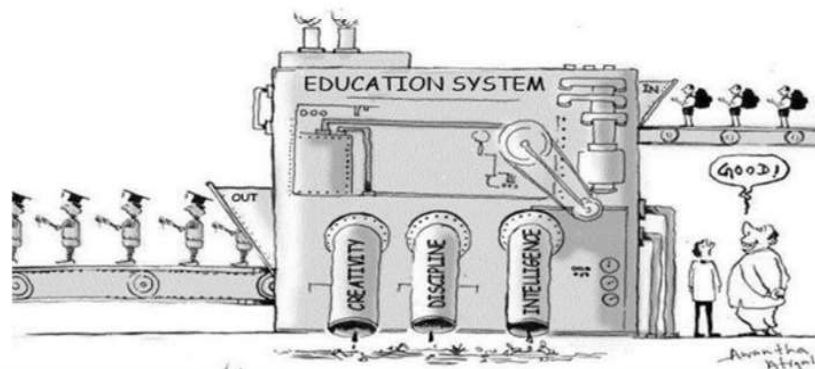
-By Ananyaa Anirudh

Right Wing Authoritarian sentiment is trending across the globe, and India has not been spared. The NDA, India's alliance of centre-right and right wing political parties secured an absolute majority in the Rajya Sabha with 38.4% of seats in the 2014 general election and 45% in 2019. This has impacted our educational institutions. A nation-wide collective of human rights defenders called the People's Commission on Shrinking Democratic Space in India (PCSDS), has been examining the state of university campuses since 2014. It found a drastic cut in funding of universities, leading to a shortage of teachers and a steep hike in course fees, centralisation of the admission process; increased privatization of institutions through policy changes; distortion of history, syllabus and saffronisation of education; appointing loyalists as university heads; the rise of Hindutva forces within the campuses; suppression and criminalisation of dissenting voices; and use of legal measures to curb students' protests. This substantiates the argument that free speech, and dissent and dialogue are under threat in our educational institutions.

It is less important to read everything than it is to question everything you read. The sanctity of education ensures the sanctity of the individual, and by extension, of the citizen. It is for this very reason that all arenas of intellect remain centers of curiosity (that develop critical thinking) as elucidated by Dr. Romila Thapar. It is in equal parts terrifying and informative to see why the state is targeting educational institutions first, and so brutally, as seen in the incidents that occurred in Jamia and JNU. Educational institutions are meant to be centers for dissent and dialogue; places where the values of thinking for yourself and thinking of the other are enshrined, in direct opposition to a totalitarian herd mentality and a vilification of 'the other'. The truth is, the 'Dream of India' as conceptualized by her nation builders requires them to continue being the bastions they are, and to fight (non-violently) against the current of looming fascism.

An important, yet overlooked part of the importance of freedom of speech is that it causes sweeping change in ways that the government itself can never quite accomplish, because without it, the voices of minorities and vulnerable groups would never be heard. Without the guarantee of freedom of speech, unpopular opinions would be hidden out of fear of retribution, change and progress would come to a screeching halt and all Constitutional freedoms would crumble.

The public intellectual Dr. Jordan B. Peterson said 'You need to learn to think ; because thinking makes you act effectively in the world... If you can think and speak and write, you are absolutely deadly... That's what you're at university for!' Don't let Big Brother take that away..



EDITOR'S CHOICE

**"Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high,
where knowledge is free.**

**Where the world has not been broken up into frag-
ments by narrow domestic walls.**

**Where words come out from the depth of truth,
where tireless striving stretches its arms toward per-
fection.**

**Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
into the dreary desert sand of dead habit.**

**Where the mind is led forward by thee
into ever widening thought and action.**

**In to that heaven of freedom, my father,
LET MY COUNTRY AWAKE!"**

— Nobel Prize Winner Rabindranath Tagore, Gitanjali

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Movies and Documentaries

Freedom writers (2007)
Dead Poets Society (1989)
Hitchki (2018)
Taare Zaneen Par (2007)
Mona Lisa Smile (2003)
3 Idiots(2009)
Girl rising (2013)
Chalk n duster (2016)

Books

Deschooling society by Ivan
Illich (1971)
The Uses of the University by
Clark Kerr (1966)
The process of education by
Jerome Bruner (1960)
The republic by Plato (c.375
BC)
Emile or on education by
Jean- Jacques Rousseau
(1762)
The unschooled mind by
Howard Gardner (1991)

Misc.

How schools kill creativity- A
TED TALK by Robinson
Education - an essay by Ralph
Waldo Emerson
Online platforms like Skill-
share, Byju's , Khan Academy