

NAVIGATING HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH NEP 2020

Metrics of Excellence and Digital Virtues

FESTSCHRIFT

in honour of

PROF. ROSHAN LAL RAINA

Editors

Prof. (Dr.) Sonal Singh

Dr. Bhaw Nath Pandey

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Navigating Higher Education Through NEP 2020 Metrics of Excellence and Digital Virtues

FESTSCHRIFT *in Honour of* **Prof. Roshan Lal Raina**

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Abstract: After three quarters of a century have passed, since India attained freedom, we are still struggling with our education system, to make it more meaningful. The New education policy 2020, focuses on value based education which includes the development of humanistic, ethical, constitutional and universal human value of truth (satya), righteous conduct (dharma), peace (shanti), love (prem), nonviolence (ahinsa), scientific temper, citizenship values and also life-skills, lessons in seva/service and participation in community service programmes must be considered an integral part of a holistic education. This paper argues that if the modern education system, in accordance with NEP tries to bring back values of life as taught by the khadi movement, it will benefit the younger generation and give more value to the mundane education system, which is not doing justice to holistic education.

Keywords: Khadi, Self-reliance, Sustainability, Handloom, NEP 2020

Introduction:

There is an urgent need to work at the grassroot level of education. After years of dependence and serving the interests of the global north, India has realised to revise and revamp its education system. The National Education policy 2020, focuses on the same values that had built this nation. India is a country that does not share the same climate or land and soil types, not languages or skin colour, but it is a country that has the same values from a very long time period. These values need to make a comeback. This value based education which includes the development of humanistic, ethical, constitutional and universal human value of truth (satya), righteous conduct (dharma), peace (shanti), love (prem), nonviolence (ahinsa), scientific temper, citizenship values and also life-skills, lessons in seva/service and participation in community service programmes must be considered an integral part of a holistic education. The khadi movement is a very good example of our value systems.

Khadi was - Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of promoting made in India. It was a recipe for self-reliance, which focussed on working with one's hands, and the important message was to be a producer, not only a consumer.

"Hand-woven cloth made of hand-spun yarn is of course khadi, however fine it may be. It may be made of cotton, silk or even of wool. One should wear whichever of these one happens to find convenient. The khadi from Andhra is very fine. In Assam, one can get some khadi made of silk. Woollen khadi is made in Kathiawar. In other words, the only criterion of khadi is its being hand-spun and hand-woven. Ordinarily, hand-spun khadi is found to be coarse and thick, hence, some people erroneously believe that khadi can only be of this type, though in fact fine khadi of sixty to eighty count yarn is also made. Nevertheless, those who have used thick khadi know that the touch of coarse rough khadi is soft to the body and, being rough, it affords better protection to the skin." (Navajivan, 25-10-1925; 28:386.) Navjivan was a newspaper by Gandhiji. This extract is from a book - Gandhiji on Khadi.

If we look at the education, the more we try to ease the burden of the student, and do not let him / her think, the more the education becomes useless. Too much use of AI may be a threat, if not used properly. The idea here is self-reliance. People in ignorance think that Gandhiji started khadi, but ignorantly they do not realize that khadi was always there, Gandhiji only propagated it. More than propagating the fabric, the idea was to propagate self-reliance. It was a fight against British imports which kept growing for almost 100 years before Gandhiji started the movement. Khadi was not only a fabric but a symbol of self-reliance. Our education system will have to focus on such values. Make in India is a good initiative, start-ups and the complete culture to promote business is really the need of the hour. In fact we need to also focus on 'Design in India'. This will lead us to think and design better solutions for our own people and focus on the over all growth of the country.

Looking back at the khadi way, we can clearly understanding the philosophy of Self-reliance. Gandhiji says, *"We cannot claim to have understood the meaning of swaraj till khadi becomes as universal as currency."* (Navajivan, 12-3-1922; 23:77)

"Swaraj cannot come through the machine. But if two hundred million people with full understanding produce khadi with their own labour and wear it the face of India will be transformed." (Harijan Sevak, 28-7-1946; 85:15.) This also aligns with the NEP objectives of re-skilling and up-skilling of already employed persons. There are a lot of lay offs of Indian professionals as once their services are over they are not required any more. We need to re-skill them in order to achieve these objectives.

Another important value that we learn from the Khadi way is sustainability. Khadi is the freedom to spin and weave your own fabric, it is a concept that teaches us to consume less and produce more. It is the freedom of spirit and freedom from consumerism. It makes us aware that we need to consume less, but consume with pride, what we have created. It shows respect for handcrafting and for humanity. It links various industries together and is sustainable. It is a means to satisfy needs, probably not the greed of every human being. It is the epitome of simple living, high thinking, and a sustainable future.

Such activities like spinning and weaving, pottery and another kind of hand crafting, or cooking, add skills that are value adding to our lives. These were earlier taught to youngsters who were apprentices to the skilled craftsmen, but now, a lot of these skills are lost. Thus we need to refresh this and take this up for future.

Handcrafted products have carved a niche for themselves worldwide in this era of mass production. In India however, there are multiple issues when we talk of the craft sector. It is evident by many schemes of the government and by the immense efforts done by NGOs, that Indians including NRIs understand the value of our traditional crafts and that we want to revive our languishing crafts and that we also want the crafts to be appreciated and recognised world over. There are many crafts that have been revived by the efforts of the people involved with them. Largely these have been NGOs like Sewa and Dastkar. These NGOs have helped the revival of crafts and have generated employment, but as we progress, we could empower the craftsmen by teaching design and entrepreneurship, which will encourage the next generation into the traditional craft practices. According to UNESCO and ITC (International Trade Centre), Final report of the International Symposium on Crafts and the International Market: Trade and Customs Codification, 1997, the definition of craft is as follows:

Products that are produced by artisan, either completely by hand or with the help of hand-tools or even mechanical means, as long as the direct contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product. The special nature of the artisan products derives from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously and socially symbolic and significant (UNESCO, n.d.).

The traditional crafts of our country can be divided into hard goods and soft goods. The hard goods comprise of materials made with wood, metal, stone, or even with clay and baked like pottery, ceramics, glass and similar kind of products. The soft material goods comprise of textiles, clothes in general, leather, paper products and products made from grass or similar type of fibres. According to the Ministry of Textiles, (Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), 2019) the handicraft industry provides employment to 7 million artisans (including those in carpet trades), which include a large number of women and people belonging to the weaker section of the society. Now the question is how effectively are we addressing this gap in education. In our aim for a society which is free from stress of jobs, if we can create an education system that caters to this need, we are truly fulfilling what is required of us.

The handicraft sector has a high potential for employment and requires lower levels of investment. India is one of the leading suppliers of handicrafts in the world market. Manika Dhama writes that, *"The handicraft and handloom sector in India is a ₹24,300-crore industry and contributes nearly ₹10,000 crore annually in export earnings. The 12th Five Year Plan had projected it would become the largest non-farm sector in rural India, swelling its workforce by 10 per cent, doubling the output and exporting 18 per cent more during 2012- 17."* She discusses the problems faced by the industry including infrastructure, poor market, tough competition by mass produced goods (Dhama, 2015). The article discusses a lot of issues and brings to light the role of government and private NGOs in the sector.

An initiative that was taken up by Padma Shree awardee, Ms Laila Tayabji in the form of Dastkar, was to generate employment in the craft sector, similarly many other big and small NGOs and educational institutes

like Kala Raksha, Judy Frater's Somaya Kala Vidyalaya and Sally Holkar's The Handloom School, were all targeted towards the growth in the hand crafted textiles. The National Institute of Design and The National Institute of Fashion Technology have both given a boost to this sector. The focus has been on handlooms and textiles and that too hand woven textiles have had a major share in the economy. Many government schemes like USTAAD, and SAMARTH, and Government agencies like KVIC, EPCH (Export Promotion Council of Handicrafts), have all focussed on Indian handicrafts as it is a sector that makes unique Indian textiles. The last Handloom Census of India 2009-10, conducted by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and sponsored by the Development Commissioner (Handlooms), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, was the third National Handloom Census of weavers and allied workers. This states that the distribution of adult (18 years and above) handloom workers by employment status Independent workers in rural area are 2,173,343, in Urban area are 178,279. Those under master weavers/private owners in rural areas are 907,850 and in urban areas are 391,146. Those under some institutions were 151,027 in rural area and 45,185 in the urban area (National Council of Applied Economic Research, 2010).

The second census was conducted in 1995, and when compared with the 2010 census, one can see that the number of handloom weaver households has gone down by almost 3 lakhs. The handloom weaver count has almost gone down by 5 lakhs, now these figures are not very encouraging. We do not have much idea of the handicraft census, though we can see a list of the artisans on the website of the development Commissioner of handlooms. Mohanty writes about the craft artisans in the urban informal sector and details well the juxtaposition of the formal and the informal sector (Mohanty, 2009). He focuses on the silver smiths in Orissa who carry out the filigree work. He writes about how the work is really valued, but when it comes to artisans, the number is really small. Keshab Das, emphasises on this and points out that the labour of the craftsmen is really under-valued, he rightly states that, even many years after independence, and after many schemes by the government, nothing much has really been done for this unorganised sector (Das, 2017)

Brinda Viswanathan's Enumeration of Crafts Persons in India published in 2013, by Madras School of Economics, has a lot of data on various crafts of the country (Viswanathan, 2013). Craft and Design Education is the key to success.

The issue of education in this sector is addressed by the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design, as the Director of the institute, I would like to emphasize the vision of the institute which is, 'to continue to invigorate the craft sector and to become the centre of excellence in Crafts and Design, encouraging research and bringing new life to the languishing crafts of India.' The students that graduate from the institute have a keen understanding in this sector and are also taught entrepreneurial skills. IICD has been running craft incubation and craft acceleration programs in collaboration with IIM Udaipur incubation centre, istart, BITS Pilani incubation, and it has been funded by SBI as well as Kalhath Foundation, Lucknow.

Many other institutes in the country, including design institutes, engineering, agriculture, marketing and many faculties devoted to research and design should provide design and marketing interventions, and reasons for employment in this sector. The craft sector is one of the oldest in the country, it is common knowledge today that Indian handicrafts were being exported from India since the days of the Indus Valley civilization. Unfortunately we have not addressed this very important sector in the modern education at school or college level. It is merely reduced to a hobby due to the colonial mindset, and is not seen as a potential source of employment in future.

The British set up art institutes, and referred to the crafts in India as 'Industrial Arts'. These schools that were set up in India, like the one in Jaipur finally became only art institutes, promoting art but not craft. Due to industrialisation, cheap and mass produced goods were easily available. India realised the need of engineering schools and later of a design school. Our design school, NID (National Institute of Design) was modelled on Bauhaus, and became a hub of industrial design. Crafts were left behind.

Conclusion

Focus on entrepreneurship in all fields is important, and especially in the field of crafts, it is the way forward. In 1995, the Government of Rajasthan along with stalwarts from NID, decided to launch an institute of crafts. This was a wonderful vision for India's future. The institute was set up to foster creativity in the craft sector

and to create 'design-techno-managers'. Work happened, but there was no hand holding, now with the new ideas, with NEP 2020, I think we have now come a long way, IICD, along with relevant stakeholders in the field – IIMU, BITS Pilani incubator, istart, and with funding support from Kalhath Foundation and SBI, IICD, Jaipur, has paved way for the future leaders and entrepreneurs in the craft sector. The skill of hand crafting, with the right amount of mechanical and technical intervention, coupled with design thinking, gives result to excellent products that are based on the requirement of the user. The thought that this excellent product should be able to tell a story of its own, and the crafts person should be able to take it to its customers, has paved the way for craft entrepreneurs. This along with sustainability built into the program, is the path that needs to be trodden, the Khadi way!

It is important to be gainfully employed, it is more important to be able to give gainful employment to many. With emphasis on entrepreneurship in the craft sector, I believe we will be able to create wealth of the people of the country, not only in terms of money and product, but also in terms of sustainable goals that have been set up by the United Nations. The United Nation Development Goals focus on poverty alleviation, sustainable livelihoods and eco-friendly living. With our focus on the entrepreneurship in the craft sector, we will be able to meet these goals.

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