



Review of Indukuri John Mohan Razu, The Present and Future

The Crisis in Indian Education
and Theological Education

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Abstract

This is a book review of: Indukuri John Mohan Razu (2022): *Present & Future - The Crisis in Indian Education and Theological Education in India*. Candid Publications. The work will be reedited by Globethics.net in the current of the year.

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1. Introduction

Education has always been a boon humankind. It has seen varied nuances in the way it has been taught and learnt. Technology has played its role too, in defining the course of education. With every passing century and at the turn of every tide, there have been so many thinkers and scholars who have given back to the overall growth and development of the institution of education.

Being a product of a Jesuit institution where I was privileged to finish my bachelors, takes me back to a conversation with the Principal of the College. A man robed in his cassock would wait at the entrance of the quadrangle wishing the students as they traversed the hallways busily chatting and laughing only briefly to be interrupted with a greeting that almost instantly made them respond with a smile on the faces, the most heard off phrase “Good morning father”. I had to ask him, “Father, why do you do this always”? Why do you stand here everyday and wish the students as they enter the college...” He smiled and said, “one has to always know where one came from and how they got there, I do it for the joy of seeing that smile on my children’s faces...it is a sense of belonging that I am here for them, and they will always have my support. It is not who we are that defines us but what we are to the ones around us that makes all the difference....”

Education today is more “correspondence” or “distance education” than actual hands-on approach. Principals and teachers of old are but a dying breed and the changes in the educational system has only distanced the Guru from the Shishya.

I had the privilege of being taught by some of the best teachers, teachers who knew the connect between the subject and the student, teachers who inspired generations and led students to achieve great heights.

Education in today’s context has undergone a massive shift in paradigm. The crux of the educational system has come a very long way and has changed drastically. If one has to draw parallels from what was and what is, it is a very unsettling to see how this institution has gone from being a

beacon of knowledge and enlightenment to one of restrained thought and disconcerting ideologies. Cast, creed, sex, religion and political views seem to be at the very centre of these store houses of knowledge which are anything than what they were when they first were.

Education and the business of education has become a lucrative tool of individuals. Crores are spent on monuments and crores are made under the garb of education. It has become a rat race where everyone wants to be a part of it, the idea of education for the overall good of many has ceased to exist. Access to education has turned from the betterment of all to the benefit and the good of a few. Quality education is no longer a right of the masses. Right to education is a right accessed through government schools and colleges, not top raking educational institutions and universities. An institution based on the premise of impartation of knowledge has found a way to make it a means to further rigidize the existing lacuna in the society. They say education liberates, but the question remains, liberate to emancipate or liberate to oppress.

The role of the society, the church and other institutions around the world has gone through evolution. When we studied commerce, we learnt about trading and non-trading concerns. While trading concerns dealt in profit and loss and non trading concerns dealt purely on voluntary services to public. When asked to name a few non trading concerns, churches were the top option to sum up a non-trading concern. If one has to re-look at the meaning of trading and non-trading concern today, I am sure you would know the difference.

Leadership in educational institutions have become power houses of corruption. Schools and educational institutions have lost their ‘first love’ a love that went beyond the boundaries of the education and into the hearts and minds of many a student. Institutions which were at the forefront of quality impartation of knowledge have turned to units that churn out malice and contempt for the society, the system and everything that goes against the understanding of greater good.

I was privileged to study in some of the best educational institutions in the country may it be schooling, collegiate or theological. What was, is not

anymore, we had the honour of being taught and administered by some of the best. Teachers and Administrators who looked at value-based education more than the glitz and glamour of education today. Today's education has been stained by the religious, political and communal views. Nothing can be uttered without it being pulled up as anti-everything. How and where this whole thing transpired is still a mystery that one battles with.

2. Mind of the author

A call to go beyond the reading of the book and be that instrument of change

When one reads the book “The Crises in Indian Education and Theological Education” Present and Future, one is presented with a myriad of parallels and interpretations that strikes more than a chord in the mind of the reader. The book throws open a wider debate that has been silenced through white noises that seem to deafen the ear of the reader. My interaction with the chapters of the book bring to life the lacuna that exists in the very understating of the aspect of education. A reading of the chapters of the book gives the reader an understanding of the most important aspects that have gripped out society.

The author has divided the book into six important and relevant aspects that seem to be at the heart of today's societal and ethical issues and aptly themed ‘Brain Drain’, ‘Dangerous Signals’, ‘Lacunas and Leverages of the NEP’, ‘Liberation of Education’, ‘Right to Education’, and the ‘Underside of Theological Education’. The play on words of each of these chapters does indeed in itself bring out the actual lacuna in the system and enable the reader to expound ones thinking and understanding into the evils that have laid strong and sure foundations in the society and norms that govern us.

3. Brain drain

Brain Drain looks at the simple questions of the prevalent education system, its cause for existence and the lacunas. How has the face of education changed over the millennia? The aspect of education for all and education

with the purpose has become more a means to an economic end. The author draws from thinkers like Paulo and Dewey and draws parallels in the present education set up, where educational development is a social experience panning between creative and critical education. Education has been marginalised and pushed to the periphery. Education and the systems of education have become centres of marginalization and alienating of the pupil from the very foundation of emancipation that education would bring. The conditioning of the thought processes and its impact on the thinking process of individuals has been clinically brought out in this section. The concerns raised by the author bring out the disconnect in way the system engrains the fabric of thinking and interaction. So much is demanded in a single-track mindset that it becomes practically impossible to think outside the box or expound ones thinking. The section brings out the evil face of suicides and the alarming rate at which the numbers are steadily growing with each passing day. The brain drain has alarming implication for the country and the children specifically. The reading throws open the challenges to the country and its ideals and morals at 75, and it's future outlook to be that of the children and their nurturing. With more and more leaving the country permanently and migrating to other countries the drain saga has begun. It's a mass exodus of bright minds not able to survive in an environment that's crippling and suffocating their very existence. The gap between basic education and higher studies is increasing steadily. With more and more students looking to foreign universities, the state of matters of education must be revisited with a fine-toothed comb. The call to this reading envisages an Indian with a mindset that is radical and dynamic and a challenge to make the educational system more dynamic and acceptable in the global arena. The lacuna between the ones leaving and the ones staying give a new perspective on how this system of education should be driven.

4. Dangerous signals

This section of the book is the most hard hitting and looks to drive the message home on all counts. Living in a Christian community with the heads of the church and the supreme head of all the churches. It's a euphoric feeling till someone comes along and strips the shrouds wide open

and exposes the situation for what it is, rather than what it seems to be. This particular section of the book seems to dwell more into the image and aura of the so called ‘Bishops’ and what they stand for in today’s context. The reading brings out relevant arguments to support the finding on how the church as a whole, the epitome of being the iconic representation of a faith, has become the epicentre of all corruption and illegal activities all in the name of God. The section looks at CSI educational institutions as ‘Geese Laying Golden Eggs’, I guess its hard to part with such a goose when one can get so much more out of it. The so-called Midas touch a boon or a bane has been beautifully captured in the reading of this chapter. The author brings in relevant argument with facts published in the papers that have shaken the very foundations of the Church. The reality of schools being used as storehouses of revenue to fill the coffers of the clergy. It’s interesting to note how the author has brought out the relevance of Covid as opposed to the running of the church, what affected the world has affected the revenue of the church as well and possibly the only time where all had to diligently work towards the actual nurturing of the congregation and the faithful. An interesting aspect that dominates this reading is one of the comparison in the existence of the feudal thinking, groupism, casteism and downright nepotism. With newspapers bringing to light the different raids being conducted by the enforcement directorate in money laundering cases across the countries against Bishops, the author weaves a beautiful parallel between Noah and Jeremiah juxtaposed in today’s scenario and how God has been undermined by the so call ‘CSI netas’. Churches and the resources have merely become an extension of ‘purple robed netas’. It is such a far move from the actual understanding and imagery of a shepherd who has been given the task of taking care of the sheep. If the shepherd is wolf, then the adage must be relooked at as this chapter definitely brings out the reality of such wolves that we have nurtured with our silence.

5. Lacunas and leverages of the NEP

Moving forward into the reading of the book brings up the most relevant question that seems to be at the hearts and minds of an entire nation. How is the NEP going to make a mark in a nation where education is for a few and

the access to quality education even more, for a chosen few. In the present scenario of education, money favours the best access to education. Without the right access to such education the gap between the level of understanding and the external ask only keeps widening. It seems to be an apt fit that the author has dwelt thoroughly on lacunas and leverages of the NEP. The author reminds the readers of the education system that has been and still seems to be the same where it does not cater to everyone, the cut offs for the different caste groups only furthers this divide of discriminations in education. Education has been the tool of oppression and submission. Equality in education seems to be at the heart of this reading. If education is not uniform, then how would it be possible for a child, in some rural, unheard off place be able to achieve a chance to prove oneself at a national level? This has been woven into the book through the NEET entrances and the gap therein. The NEP is a game changer and a leveller if the implementation of this would be driven with a single purpose of higher learning. It is a decisive implementation that would cause a revolution to possibly target a wave of change, the call of the author to this specific wave of change is to see education without boundaries.

6. Liberation of education

The choice of a heading for this chapter is like driving the nail into the head. Education not for domestication but for liberation. The Author starts the chapter with a very relevant question ‘why do we hesitate to go from make in India to made in India?’ The key points of this chapter embarks on a journey, to see the relevance, acceptability and implementation of the NEP. The author seems to get into the mind of the reader in brining out both the pros and cons of the policy and its impact on the country. The outline to have a set standard across the country would definitely be a utopic feeling. To sum up the crux of the NEP draft, change seems to be the corner stone on which this entire proposal has been made. If the Country sees this through with the correct allocation of resources and allocation of right minds, the impact that this policy can make in the lives of young minds cannot be fathomed as it would weed out the hegemonies that have been the institutions of oppression and impactors of intellectual growth. The author

plays on the words quality, quantity and equality, all economic terms but aptly used in the context of the debate that's ongoing. By some way of constantly challenging the reading the author keeps bringing up the prevalence of cast and discrimination on the basis of backwardness of tribes and other communities who have not had any chance at in the corporate world of education. The need of the hour is the upliftment of the sections of communities that have been marginalised and side-lined just because we did not think that education was for all. Unless the vision is realised, we can celebrate 75 more 'glorious' years and realise that gap has been orchestrated by a few and not for the greater good of the many, in the words of the author 'education not for domestication but for liberation'. Can the NEP be that liberator?

7. Right to education

A fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution of the Country and we as a nation still struggle to give education to all regardless of caste, creed sex and religion. Educational institutions have always been the hotbeds of critical and constructive thinking. Growing up being a part such institutions one always was not aware of what was happening in the wider world. As we read through this chapter the actual state of affairs of these institutions of knowledge, it is clear that they are no longer imparters of knowledge. The ugly face of education is like a serpent rearing its head. The book seems to look into every minute aspect in which these educational institutions have becomes storehouses of wealth and power. A call to educate has become a desperate call to help. Private schools have started mushrooming all over the countryside with the dawn of franchises being bought and sold. The business of education as one reads this chapter has become a lucrative business, invest a little, reap payoffs that never end. When the author looks at the way RTE has been used and misused, I am drawn to the time when I was a part of a school that simply portrayed numbers to fill the seats that had to be filled in, to create to the understanding of seats open to all. This has been so critically looked at by the author by introspecting on the disparities between public and private schools. With the availability of this 'right' even government schoolteachers put their children into private schools, such is

the state of education in the country. The eyeopener in this reading is the challenge to draw the line and stop with the ‘lame excuses’ and try and look at the gaps that are widening. With lot of loopholes in the RTE the game will continued to be played and where there is a law people always try and find a way around it or a fix to further deepen the problem. The author is right in bringing in democracy and places the burden of a solution in the able shoulders of the people who are partakers of this democracy. Where is minority in education and what is right to education that does not grant one the right to access this education and the other the same right to access it? The role of the RTE is properly wielded, can be a very crafty tool to alleviate the woes of many children in the country. It is not the existence of a law that guarantees the success of it, it is in the actual implementation of or effective implementation of the law that paves way for absolute change.

8. Underside of theological education

The book finds a conclusion in appraising the relevance of theological education and its ‘underside’. The last chapter of the book, to me I feel is the culmination of one’s own experience and struggle and which I personally relate to. Having dealt elaborately with important aspects of education, its status, its past, its present and its future. One can only conclude where the journey brought the secular and the theological into one track. It is in the merging of these two secular thoughts and through the reading of this chapter that one can truly understand that the grass is definitely not greener on the other side. Theological education enables students to understand so many subjects from day- to-day experiences and interactions with people around them and enables them to finally become ministers of the faith and render their service to the people who look up to them in faith and reverence. As a theologian God is at the epicentre of all discussion and debate where the text and the faith are interlinked to better understand the life and work of the maker. Regardless, this too has been plagued by politics, misinterpretation, unfounded representations and meaningless ideologies. The connect of theological education and the world needs a lot more introspection and thought to ensure this aspect of education too does not get pulled into the mire. Education needs to stem for the understanding

of and enable the individual to expand and expound ones thinking, without this there is no solid foundation and theological education is not exempt from this disease. The summation of the book looks at the very evils of education in churning out students of the subjects but not thinkers and academicians. Education needs transformation and that is the rock on which this book is written.

9. Conclusion

The education system both secular and theological is caught in a web of make belief morals and ideologies. The question that the book brings out and what I believe too - is what is the output of these institutions today? Are we churning out a generation of thinkers and reformers or are we facilitating the existing evils in society and adding to the woes on the existing chaos around us. The trust index of education can be better understood when one looks at the masses. When I sit for interviews of young graduates coming into their first job the gap between education and the actual connect with what is needed, it is a sad state of affairs that they are not able to communicate anything, let alone make a connect between what they have learnt and what they are called to do. Where have we failed as a society and as a nation?

What is the yardstick of education today? That foundation which once was, is no longer there, complacency and corruption have replaced value and ethics. There is no more right in the system anymore, it's ok to loot, it's ok to squander and it's very much ok to take everything, all in the name of it being "mine" and innocence has been bought and sold. To me the critical reading and relativity of the book enables me to draw from the struggles the book ensues and encourages the reader to stand up and be accounted for.

The greatest challenge that lies ahead is not basically education and its transformation but one of revolution and ultimate change. We have seen the birth of so many disciplines and certifications over the millennia, but there has not been any impact towards an education system that's all encompassing and radical. The need of the hour is going beyond classrooms and rigid constructs to actual transformation in the pedagogy and change in

the curriculum to encompass the ever-changing need of the wider community and the world. Are we equipping stronger minds and a sharper generation?

There are so many suggestions and so many proposals with the promise of a bright future, but without actual implementation of these so called ‘changes’ we will still live in an archaic and feudal education system with absolutely no promise of better things. Any integration and implementation must see changes in this generation through the development of skills and preparedness for tomorrow. There needs to be checks in place to ensure education is primary factor for all change. The future of education lies only in the rendering of a positive awakening of the mind to what must be, rather than what has been. Educate to enlighten must be what we as a community must look to.

We have the tools, we have the ability, but are we willing to be that instrument of change?

10. Bibliography

Indukuri John Mohan Razu (2022): *Present & Future - The Crisis in Indian Education and Theological Education in India*. Candid Publications.

11. Short biography

Dr. Godwin Daniel Athishtam comes from a family of illustrious teachers and educators who are leaders in the field. With over 26 years of experience in varied fields of work from church administration, school administration and teaching, human resources, counselling and as therapist for differently abled children, sound engineer and radio show compere, social volunteer and resource person. He heads and manages The Ark Foundation, an NGO that works with orphaned children, elderly, destitute women and the homeless and spends most of his time helping and mentoring young people and counseling them through life’s difficult situations in shelters.

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