



INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES IN PRESENT CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Life is based on one's own philosophy and those which we follow from our great philosophers and educators to improve our society and education system. Scientific thinking gives answers to many questions but it cannot bring humanity in the minds of people. For this we should realize the needs of every individual and give our best efforts to lead a satisfactory life and face the practical situation with a positive outlook. The narrowness in our thinking should be transformed into creative thoughts along with the inspirations taken from the great philosophers so that the higher education becomes a right to all and everyone aspires for it. Also the facilities provided should be to make each one a better human being. The present paper has been produced by taking into consideration the trends existing in present higher education and the philosophical approaches that have been implemented with its impact on students. The ideas of students have been collected to find out the suitability of the components of the present higher education. This can bring about a revolution by bringing changes in the narrow and rigid thoughts existing since ages and providing better outputs in education to make society a peaceful dwelling place.

Keywords: *scientific, humanity, needs, practical, and revolution*



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Introduction: (Importance/Relevance)

1. Philosophical Inquiry means whatever people choose to do in a logical, rational manner-areas being reality, knowledge and values.
2. Philosophical concern is to lead a balanced life with reason.
3. Philosophy is to have direct vision. Indian philosophy asserts knowledge of reality through direct experience.

All schools of Indian philosophy are designed to provide a systematic method for exploring one's potentials to reach happiness and consciousness. Essential questions here will be:

1. Who am I ?

2. What is the nature of my being?
3. What is the relationship between the centre of consciousness and world objects?
4. What are the guidelines for our actions in life?
5. What is truth?
6. What is nature of God ?
7. What is nature of Soul ?

Background/Review of Literature

Astin (1993) found out that college has strong effects on students. Students develop a greater sense of interpersonal and intellectual competence and a greater commitment to developing a meaningful **philosophy** of life.

Gallagher (2000) conducted a study on the Philosophical conceptions of the self: implications for cognitive science and Several recently developed philosophical approaches to the self promise to enhance the exchange of ideas between the philosophy of the mind and the other cognitive sciences.

Musholt (2015) conducted a study on interesting and stimulating ideas concerning the transition from implicit to explicit self-consciousness.

Objectives

1. To find out the relevance of “Nastik” (Atheist) school of philosophy (Charvaka philosophy) in present system of Higher Education which rejects the sanctity of Caste or Vedas as the qualification for knowledge.
2. To find out the relevance of Buddhist philosophy based on idealistic interpretation of universe through rejection of egotism and egoist orientation of life.
3. To find out the relevance of “Astika” (Theist) Nyaya-Vaisheshika philosophy in Higher Education based on realistic and logical understanding to be achieved by students through curriculum.
4. To find out the relevance of Samkhya-Yoga philosophy based on realistic understanding and yogic practices of meditation which is part of Higher Education.

Research Questions

1. Should caste system or discrimination exist in educational opportunities and facilities in Higher Education ?
2. Should Freedom / Self-discipline be the students’ right ? (Freedom of thought and expression through activities, debate, discussion, mutual respect in my opinion. So, not necessarily the 8 fold-path or 4 noble truths as in Buddhism)

3. Should students follow the Gurukul system ? (Not supported by Tagore's philosophy)
 4. Is faith in God or Absolute more important than the present needs of students and teachers in the Higher Education system ?
 5. Is Religion misinterpreted as Communalism inside and outside the classrooms and campus life of students and teachers ?
 6. Is Violence necessary to manage any critical situation or crisis existing in the College and University campuses ?
 7. Do all students and teachers have the same idealistic concept of Nationalism ?
 8. Does gender equality/ equity exist among male and female students in campus life?
- For the last question, my personal opinion is that male and female students should be given equal status in campus life. Particularly no restriction in time (in hostels etc. especially for girls) and free movement so that they can develop a healthy work culture and utilize the resources available as much as they can.

Methodology

Study Design: It is a phenomenological study to evaluate how one's concerns affect the lives of an individual. Here it can be that of teachers and students and their mutual relationship and the phenomena of consciousness, perception and meaning in their experiences.

Sample Size & Sample :

The students of Undergraduate and Postgraduate level of Semester I in Visva-Bharati campus (8 U.G. and 2 P.G. students) (Snowball sampling).

Tools : Interview Schedule (based on the research questions)

Techniques : Structured Interview

Views given by the students (Real names) as follows:

1. Ahana Bhattacharya (Bachelor of Design, Silpa- Sadana Department) *Caste system /discrimination should not exist in the facilities in Higher education because this system makes a students' life lot more complicated, increases competition for the deserving candidates and in few cases those who are deserving do not get the opportunity.

*Freedom should be there in a student's life, so that they can express their ideas and work according to their will.

*Gurukul system effects the personal life of the students and the rules of gurukul are stringent so I do not support.

*Once someone depends on God, he starts to lose confidence in his/her ownself, so the present needs are more important.

*I have no idea about Religion being interpreted as communalism.

*Violence is not necessary, we can solve big problems by just sitting together and discussing them.

*The ideology of a teacher and a student differs a lot because of the lack of experience a student has.

*Gender equality is there among male and female students, it is just that few rules are different for the female students for their safety.

2. Radhika Agrawal (Bachelor of Design, Silpa-Sadana Department):

*Caste system should not exist because of this discrimination most of the students are set back of what all they deserve.

*Freedom should be there because if students are provided with freedom, they will not crave for it. They will be well aware of how to tackle any situation with freedom. They will be independent.

*It is not necessary to follow Gurukul system because if a student really wants to learn something, he/she will be after that to learn it from anywhere whether school or Gurukul.

*According to me it is a diplomatic question. Definitely the present needs of students are important but if we have faith in God, we have the different source of light and power to accomplish those needs.

*No, now the students are aware that all the religions have their own identity and each of them is supposed to be worshipped.

*According to my genuine opinion what cannot be done with the war can be done with love. So, violence is not necessary to manage any critical situation in campus.

*No, because the thoughts and ideology of a student and a teacher are not the same.

*For a teacher, students are students, they do not do any partiality among male or female students.

3. Anita Lepcha (Bachelor of Education B.Ed., Vinaya Bhavana) :

*No the caste system / discrimination should not exist in Higher education.

*To some extent, freedom should be students' right.

*No, I do not feel that students should follow Gurukul system.

*Both are equally important.

*In classroom I do not feel it is misinterpreted.

*Yes, violence is necessary to manage any critical situation.

*Some may have same concept but not all.

*Gender equality/equity does not exist. There is particular timings for girls in the hostel. Girls not allowed to step outside during nights and many more. But in some places gender equality does exist. Both girls and boys are equal.

4. Deepika (Bachelor of Education B.Ed., Vinaya Bhavana):

*Yes, caste system falls into the category reservation of the scheduled caste and tribes that has been written in our constitution therefore caste system and discrimination exists regarding the facilities in Higher education.

*Yes, freedom should be a right in an appropriate manner, it should not be misused.

*No, I do not think that students should follow Gurukul system.

*Ofcourse, since God is the supreme power above all, He guides us in every endeavour of our life.

*No, not as such, Religion is not misinterpreted as communalism.

*No, not at all, violence is not the end of everything.

*Each possess a particular individual difference who has different perspective to see certain things so there is no question of having the same concept of nationalism among the teachers and the students.

*Yes, it is often being seen in most of the cases but I think or strongly feel that this should not be so. In today's world nobody is inferior than the other. If the rules have to be imposed , it has to be imposed equally among the boys and girls.

5. Dushila Subba (Bachelor of Education B.Ed., Vinaya Bhavana):

*Yes, caste system/ discrimination exists in facilities in Higher education because most of the lower caste students are from very backward family. A handful of them are only able to pursue Higher education. If Government provides some extra facilities to them, it will be helpful to decrease some gaps between a general caste and other lower castes.

*Yes, freedom is a right of student. If there is freedom, there is always development.

*No, in present days no student wants to follow Gurukul system. They feel it is like a cage.

*Faith in God is good up to certain extent but to fulfill our present needs is a primary work.

*Yes, Religion is misinterpreted as communalism inside and outside classroom since the mentality of students from childhood is affected like that and they are a slave of their own thought.

*Violence is not necessary. It always leads towards a destructive end.

*I do not think that all students and teachers have same concept of nationalism because a teacher is more mature than student and in addition to that each individual has their own point of views.

*Gender equality exist only theoretically but in India it is suppressed practically.

6. Suprabha Dey (Bachelor of Education B.Ed., Vinaya Bhavana):

*No, caste discrimination should not exist in higher education as this would be a barrier to the success of the genuine students and they would be debarred of the facilities even after having merit.

*Yes, freedom should be students' right, as for the advancement of a student in a holistic way independence/ freedom is needed.

*No, I do not think it is essential for students to follow Gurukul system, as it has certain strict rules which can hinder a students' overall growth. He/she needs a free atmosphere.

*I think if we meet the present needs of students, they can be a better citizen and do good work and make a better environment and that is more important than having faith in God.

*Religion is sometimes misinterpreted as communalism inside and outside classroom as there are some specific religious schools who try to impose their ideas on students which should be prevented.

*No, apart from violence, if the matter is investigated in a better way and students are oriented or made aware of logical facts and understanding then violence is never necessary to manage critical situations.

*No, nowadays students and even teachers misinterpret nationalism. Nationalism does not just mean to show respect by wearing dresses but respect should be in heart and nationalism should be seen in actions, by making efforts to serve our motherland in all possible ways.

*Yes, it does exist. The stereotypes existing in society do not allow females to enjoy the same freedom as that of males. This is the reason females are asked to come home or enter hostel early while males are exempted of this rule.

7. Kumudini Banerjee (Bachelor of Arts in Economics, Vidya Bhavana):

*There should be no caste system. It should be on merit basis.

*Yes, it should be students' right.

*No, Gurukul system is very impractical.

*Present needs of students is more important.

*No, these things should not be inside or outside classroom.

*No, things can be done in a non-violent way.

*Nationalism should be in heart.

*No, it does not exist, males enjoy more freedom, no one says anything but female students are questioned.

8. Sunita Kumari (Bachelor of Education B.Ed., Vinaya Bhavana):

*In my opinion, caste system should not exist in facilities in higher education. The only thing matters is economic conditions. This system has just made education system a political system.

*Freedom to some extent is needed. In freedom only talent flourishes.

*I think no. Living in a four-walled big building having strict rules cannot help in the holistic development. Practical experience is very necessary for emotional quotient.

*No, ofcourse not. For students trust in oneself and labour works, nothing other.

*Yes, teachers use their own beliefs or thoughts (generally) in classroom in terms of religion in spite of talking in an unbiased way.

*No, violence only can ruin the situation. For example, the kidnapping of Najeeb Ahmad in Jawaharlal Nehru University. Protests only made few students a figure but Najeeb is still not in reach.

*No, people often misinterpret Nationalism with communalism.

*No, infact a big no. In my opinion we do not need such a care or security which hinders our success. There are many examples which show this inequality like hostel rules, library rules etc. The recent case of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur where protest was made related to library rules. Boys are allowed whenever they want but girls can go till 11p.m. only.

9. Gangutri Das (Master of Fine Arts in History of Art , Kala Bhavana):

*No, caste system / discrimination should not exist in facilities in Higher education. It is an obstacle in the way of higher education. Every student has right to gain knowledge so they should get the right of Higher education.

*Freedom is a natural and inherent right to all. For the welfare of studies and gain more knowledge it is an important right. Knowledge is free to all so every student needs freedom to gain knowledge.

*Students should follow the Gurukul system or institution system generally for the welfare of their studies and themselves. However, if there is no discrimination or exploitation in Gurukul and every system made for higher education then they should follow the system.

*It is my opinion that faith in God and the present needs of students both are important. In our life to fulfill the present needs we should do our own activities ourself and on the other side faith in God helps us to choose the right path and God's blessings are a need of us. Moreover, faith in God and the present needs of the students never become opposition. Present needs of students are outward, changeable and it should be fulfilled. Faith in God is

internal and endless. There should not be any conflict or controversy between them.

*Religion is for human welfare but the communalism is a hindrance and man-made creation which creates problems in the society. Religion is misinterpreted as communalism inside or outside classroom by the person of their self motives. People make religion an implement and medium to fulfill their self motives and they defined it to their own ways and by these activities religion become communalism

*I think there is no necessity of violence to manage any critical situation in campus. If there is any problem then students should solve the problem by maintaining peace and teachers should give the importance to the problem and do discussion between students and themselves. Every problem can be solved by peaceful activities if unanimity between teachers, students and authority exists.

*All students and teachers do not have the same concept of Nationalism. It differs from person to person, the mentality. Everyone has own opinion and concept about nationalism. Some people are conservative about their Nationalism and some are liberal about it.

*In our society there is a clear discrimination between male and female and that is why gender equity does not exist among the students also. This is because it has become a rule of the society that females should do that or not do that because of its norms and not welfare.

10. Wageesha Ruwangee (Master of Performing Arts in Hindustani Classical Vocal , Sangeet Bhavana):

*No, it is not necessary in facilities in Higher education as because every person has right to get higher education whether he/she is from general caste or lower caste.

*Yes, because students also have their own creativity. If given a set of rules, it means students have no freedom or right to prove their own ideas.

*Yes, Gurukul system is one best way to understand teachers and students' thoughts. Teachers can be closer to students though it seems to be rigid and students can get more knowledge from the system. Teachers can teach freely by exercising their control over students and students can learn better.

*No, I do not think that God is more important than the present needs of the students. We can trust God because it is one part of religion but more important is the students' need to believe their own work. God is one-sided weakness.

*No, every person believes their own religion, some are Hindus, some are Buddhists. So they will have their own different rules and manners. There is no need to communicate these inside or outside classroom.

*Sometimes it will be necessary to be violent when the authorities are not giving freedom or certain rights to students. Then violence situation has to be created in the campus.

*No, teachers and students cannot have same concept of nationalism because everyone thinks in a different way and students particularly think in a creative manner so it will be different.

*For girls especially there are strict rules and restrictions otherwise nowadays all enjoy equality of gender with equal opportunities and facilities in higher education.

Conclusion

1. Higher Education should focus on the needs of individuals , both rational as well as non-rational as and when required. Humanity is most important and the notion of possibility. (availability of resources , expenses , relaxation of time etc.)

2. Teachers should understand their own “ lived world ” and help students with their emotions and limitations accordingly so that they become agents of radical change.

3. Teachers and students can bring progress in a civilization by moving beyond class struggle .

4. The general conflict remains that the teacher is a “ transformative intellectual ” to bring change in the present context of Higher Education.

5. Everyone should understand that our body cannot return again once it becomes ashes. So we should not delay in doing our duties and giving our best efforts in this life itself.

6. Life is ours and we should live joyously. None can escape Death’s searching eye.

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