

# Education and Technology in the Globalized World: A Study

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Gandhi and Nehru, the two leaders who struggled together for three decades to India from foreign domination, present two different but fundamentally and dramatically opposed encounters with foreign culture in their cultural identity. ‘I cannot,’ Nehru declares, ‘get rid of either the past inheritance or my recent acquisitions. They are both part of me, and, though they help me in both the East and the West, they also create in me a feeling of spiritual loneliness not only in public activities but in life itself’ (Nehru, 1936/1980, p.596). Spiritual loneliness, cultural in-betweenness, and psychological ambivalence, resulting from cultural and educational hybridity, made him say, ‘In my own country I have an exile’s feeling’ (p. 596); it created a cultural limbo in him- neither here nor there. Gandhi, on the other hand, had no cultural ambivalence in spite of his foreign encounters. He knew where his roots were; his encounters with native and foreign cultures produced in him an enriched and enlightened cultural persona. He aptly declared, ‘I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people’s houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave.’ (Gandhi: 1921, p. 170). ‘Nothing can be further from my thought, he observed, ‘than that we should become exclusive or erect barriers. But I do respectfully contend that an appreciation of other cultures can fitly follow, never precede, an appreciation and assimilation of our own’ (Gandhi, 1921, p.277). Gandhi rejected cultural isolationism and freely acknowledged his debt to Western culture in his own identity formation. It is this Gandhian view with its twin pillars of rootedness and openness that offers a strong foundation for the planning and construction of the fusion of the global and the local in education, self-identity, and cultural consciousness, particularly in a globalized world. Gandhi believed that education was merely an instrument and ‘an instrument may be well - used or abused. The same instrument that may be used to cure a patient may be used to take his life, and so may knowledge of letters. We daily observe that many men abuse it and very few make use of it....’ (Gandhi, 1993, p.53). This is true not only of education but also technology and the application of technology in education.

J. Krishnamurti, the well-known thinker, says, ‘Our present education is geared to industrialization and war, its principal aim being to develop efficiency; and we are caught in this machine of ruthless competition and mutual destruction. If education leads to war, if it teaches us to destroy and be destroyed, has it not utterly

failed? The function of education is to create human beings who are integrated and therefore intelligent. We may take degrees and be mechanically efficient without being intelligent. Intelligence is not mere information; it is not derived from books, nor does it consist of clever self-defensive responses and aggressive assertions. One who has not studied may be more intelligent than the learned. We have made examinations and degrees the criterion of intelligence and have developed cunning minds that avoid vital human issues. Intelligence is the capacity to perceive the essential, the *is*; and to awaken this capacity, in oneself and in others, is education' (Krishnamurti, 1953/2000, p.13-14).

At present, our educational system is completely market-driven; degrees are mass produced and even manufactured; education has become a money-making industry; somehow get a degree, somehow get a job, and somehow make money has become the goal of education. Even in the IT industry, where there is more money and more pay, there are many respectable terms like 'project', 'outsourcing', 'transcription', etc, to employ, what was known as 'slave trade' in olden days, 'cyber coolies' in the 'sweat shops' in countries where cheap labour is available; even skilled employees accept the position willingly even though they get only a part of what an employee gets in the developed world. Economic globalization and materialism driven by modern technology has engulfed the world. We can see this in every walk of life; changing life styles, smart homes, smart phones, smart kitchen and smart appliances, smart boys and girls (sometimes too smart!), on line shopping and banking, online chatting, healthcare and medicine, robots doing even household chores, genetically modified food items, e-bhakti and e-prasad, even prayers and burial get 'outsourced'- you name it and the application of technology is there! But, moderation must be the mantra. Education too is not left out from this all pervasive and omnipresent phenomenon. Education is undergoing a phenomenal metamorphosis under the influence of technology. Many online courses, online universities have started giving courses; any lecture given by a professor in MIT or Harvard or Oxford can be recorded in any part of the world and replayed according to the convenience of learners. This has freed classrooms from the limitations of time and space. We know of **Khan Academy**, a non-profit educational organization created in 2006 by educator Mr. Khan, to provide "a free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere." Its website features thousands of educational resources, including a personalized learning dashboard, over 100,000 practice problems, and over 6,000 micro lectures on You-tube and videotutorials, teaching mathematics, history, healthcare, medicine, finance, physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, cosmology, American civics, art, history, economics, and computer science. All resources are available for free to anyone around the world. By 2013, they were used by about 10 million students per month. Khan Academy's micro lectures have been watched over 440 million times. (Wikipedia). In India too, along with the TV, many companies like Pearson Education, Educomp, PurpleLeap, Ecole Solutions, WIZIQ education online, and many others are offering innovative and cost-effective programs to empower educational institutions; but they are yet to take off in a big way though there is a lot of potential for even

satellite enabled digital classrooms, mentoring and coaching, arranging guest lectures, case study discussions, internships and projects via online. This can reduce the cost and make use of the best talent in the country. Some educational institutions did try with language labs and communication labs but the right kind of software suitable for Indian learners is not available. We have the talent and know-how. Today, particularly in the urban areas, the new generation called Gen y/z, have become digital learners or e-learners with a different lingo; they expect the teacher to understand their lingo and expect everything in the digital format; they do not want books and photo-copying. The learners are more active online than in the class; they are hooked to the social media all the time. They want classrooms on the social media like Facebook and Twitter so that they can log on from anywhere and learn; they expect lessons even on the mobile phones and in their language of texting. They want more interesting and challenging ways of learning like quizzes and puzzles, case studies, projects, problems, and seminars and discussions, and not conventional lectures that are boring and result in passive listening. They want teachers to understand and motivate them, allow them to explore their talent, and get practical and prepare for the real world of big careers. Teachers are not yet ready to meet their aspirations. Teachers and traditional scholars and administrators say that this new generation is interested only in I and E (i.e. **I**, **M**e, and **M**yself and **E**lectronic gadgets) and the result is impatience, irritability, lack of concentration, and the desire for instant gratification. That is why a book entitled ‘**Why Do You Need a Teacher When There is Google?**’ has appeared; but the writer does not realize that Google cannot cry with me and console me when I do not perform well or jump with joy and hug me when I excel in my performance; there is a need for human touch but it is fast disappearing under the influence of technology. Machines must be only extensions of human potential and not the substitutes for human beings. With appropriate software, technology in education can certainly complement even the most competent teacher; it will be of immense help to the average and below average teacher; but technology can never replace the human factor in education. There is a generation gap even in the urban areas in the styles of learning; the rural areas are not yet ready to embrace the digital revolution. Maybe, when this new generation of digital learners takes charge of education, things might change without killing the human element; we can only hope for it.

But, there are some peculiar problems in India. India is the world’s largest democracy; India is not one but many; Gulam Mohammed Sheik says, ‘Living in India means living simultaneously in several cultures and times’ (Sheik, 1989, p.107). India is a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-religious, multiregional, and multi-ethnic phenomenon with democracy as its ideology. The complex cultural osmosis has been described differently by others as ‘segmented identities’ (Thapar), ‘fluid identity’ Nandy), ‘mosaic’, ‘salad bowl arrangement’, etc. These ‘modules’ have been developed over centuries as part of the evolution of the Indian civilization. India was never and will never be ‘a melting pot’! Apart from the several divisions of caste, class, religion, rural-urban, the haves and have-nots, there is also the important division between the

literate and the illiterate and the computer literate and the computer illiterate. The constitution guarantees a right to education to the total population of about 1.3 billion people, resulting in a conflict between **universal education and quality education**. According to a recent guestimate, there are about 315 million students in India, which is about the total population of the USA; at the primary level the student population equals the total population of France and at the middle level the population of Germany; at the secondary level the number of students equals the total population of Spain and the teacher population in India equals the total population of some small countries like Switzerland or Denmark or Singapore. It is mind boggling. It is estimated that there are about 620 universities of all kind, 33,000 colleges and 12,000 other institutions apart from the flourishing tutorials. With not much connectivity and with other problems like poverty, malnutrition and other problems of day-to-day existence, imparting education to all sections of people is a formidable task. At the same time, we have to impart the right kind of education to all, taking care of the local conditions to preserve local culture and self identities. An educational system, obviously, should meet the aspirations of the people and impart **universal education** and, at the same time change the society and offer **quality education**; education must be an instrument of social change and impart 'true' education and not pseudo-education. True education must promote self-identity and self-respect and be rooted in the local culture in order to do it. But, with about 23 official (22+ English as the associate official language) languages and about 33 languages spoken by more than one lakh people, varying cultures in a vast area scattered in the urban and rural areas, education being on the concurrent list (shared between the States and the Centre), with the additional problem of autonomy of educational institutions and minority institutions with special privileges, and with all the party politics, it becomes too complicated for the human mind to comprehend.

Diversity is the law of nature outside in the environment as well as in human nature; there is no uniformity but there is unity and any attempt to impose uniformity will be disastrous. Globalization is threatening the very existence of local culture and languages. We cannot uproot ourselves and become perpetual immigrants or nomads in the name of globalization or Westernization. In other words, the twin objectives, **modernization without Westernization**, must be built into our educational system. It is true that the global, national, local, social, and individual realities are all interconnected; we cannot live in a bubble. Globalization makes it possible for individuals and societies to derive useful and usable insights from various sources; using such a facility, individuals and communities can and should try to make sense of their own and other's cultures. After all, 'making sense of ourselves is what produces identity' (Spivak, 1993, p.179). Globalization and the internet has vastly increased the interactional opportunities among the various culture both within and outside one's own culture, thus opening up unlimited possibilities for one's own and the local communities cultural growth. This is a welcome trend that will facilitate the shaping and reshaping of all in a synergic way. At the same time, we cannot ignore the local wisdom and indigenous

knowledge systems. As *Science International* points out, 'That traditional and local knowledge systems as dynamic expressions of perceiving and understanding the world, can make and historically have made, a valuable contribution to science and technology, and there is a need to preserve, protect, research and promote this cultural heritage and empirical knowledge.' (p.4, *Science International*, September 1999).

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