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Editorial

Quest in Education team wishes you an expansive and fulfilling, happy and harmonious new year. In the first issue of the new year, we bring to you inspiring, insightful and content rich articles.

Prof. Dr. Suneeta Kulkarni and **Prof. Dr. Sugata Mitra's** article explores varied facets of remoteness that encompass economic and social aspects and related issues of gender and ownership of the learning environment and considers the implications of these for children's access and resultant participation in educational experiences.

Prof. Dr. Veena Devasthali's article critically reflects on Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in the Education of Tribal Children in the context of rapid changes in the knowledge scenario.

Dr. Prabha Ravi Shankar in her article based on historical research focuses on Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve and Mahatma Gandhi's contribution towards women's education and empowerment.

Smt. Asha Damle's Review Article of An Edited Volume "Kabir Vimarsh" By "Dr. Hubnath Pandey" capture the essence of the lyrically rich publication by Dr. Hubnath.

Prof. Dr. Sunayana Kadle's Book Review of ENQUIRY MINDS Front for Rapid Economic Advancement of India CURATED BY MEERA SAVARA of Shakti Trust makes a fascinating reading about highly motivated changemakers of the 1970s.

Prof. Dr. Vibhuti Patel pays homage to a Gandhian stalwart and founder of Self Employed Women's Association, Dr. Ela Bhatt (7-9-1933 to 2-11-2022).

We request the scholars and experts to send their original research based articles, case studies and book reviews on contemporary challenges faced by the education sector.

Prof. Vibhuti Patel
Editor

ACCESS AND QUALITY IN SELF ORGANIZED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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Note: This brief paper was prepared for participation at PCF 6 [6th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning 2010] organized by CoL in 2010. It provides a perspective of our view at that time [end 2010] and hence has deliberately not been updated [other than the contact email addresses]. The SOLE & SOME project developed in those years emerged as The Granny Cloud and the School in the Cloud in the following decade. More information about these and related developments is available elsewhere including on The Granny Cloud website [www.thegrannycloud.org] [Wikispaces closed down so although that is referenced in the paper it is no longer accessible]. Nor are the email ids of the authors – so only the emails have been updated.

An ongoing concern in education is providing access to meaningful learning experiences. In disadvantaged and remote settings this is an even bigger challenge. The school systems that exist in such underprivileged settings, typically, imply an absence of ‘good’ teachers.

The HiW [Hole in the Wall] experiments showed that, given the facilities, groups of children can learn to use computers and access internet resources, on their own. The present paper focuses on an ongoing attempt to apply the HiW findings and use technological resources to provide novel learning situations in such underprivileged settings using a SOLE [Self Organized Learning Environments] and SOME [Self Organized Mediation Environments] approach to facilitate children’s learning in the formal, underprivileged school systems in Hyderabad, India.

Learning Environments in remote areas:

Almost no one in the world will deny that children need to have access to meaningful learning experiences if they are to truly gain from these experiences and go beyond rote memorization for the sake of passing an examination without understanding the concepts involved. This concern becomes even more critical in

disadvantaged and remote settings, where it is even harder to find ‘good’ teachers and schools.

Typically, remoteness is understood in geographical terms. The focus is often on distances from city and urban centres with the corollary assumption that these settings are far from the resources, services, facilities that one has come to associate with urban life. However, in the context of the current effort of Self Organized Learning Environments [SOLEs] and its basis, the Hole in the Wall [HiW] the concept of remoteness and thence access, goes way beyond simple geographical distance from an urban setting. Remoteness is understood to exist in resource poor, underprivileged, economically and socially deprived sections of society. Many of these exist within the heart of the city, in slums, or other areas where freedom of movement, of interaction, of choice, of thought, and therefore access, is often dictated by stringent social norms. All these aspects have implications for the quality of educational facilities available to children as well as the manner of participation in learning that is possible on part of the children. Even in these locations in the midst of the city, ‘good’, trained teachers are hard to come by, since neither the salary that can be given to them, nor the setting in which they would have to work, make this an appealing proposition. The quality of education naturally suffers. [Mitra, Dangwal, Thadani 2008]

Yet the need to provide children with quality education remains a prime concern.

The Hole in the Wall – Earliest Efforts:

Mitra’s earlier experiments, better known as ‘The Hole in the Wall’, were first implemented in 1999, when a computer with an internet connection was installed through a hole in the wall, for children to discover and use unsupervised (Mitra et al 2005). The wall adjoined a slum; and only a month later, it was evident that the children had taught themselves to use the computer and also picked up some skills in English and Mathematics. This kind of design up was then set up in more and more remote areas across India with almost identical results.

The HiW experiences gave credence to the belief that given the facilities, groups of children from disadvantaged and remote settings can learn to use computers and access internet resources, on their own.

What came through unequivocally in further work (Mitra & Rana 2001, Mitra et al 2005) on self-organizing systems in education was that groups of children, irrespective of who or where they are, or what language they speak in; given free and public access to computers and the Internet can:

1. Become computer literate on their own, that is, they can learn to use computers and the Internet for most of the tasks done by lay users.
2. Teach themselves enough English to use email, chat and search engines.
3. Learn to search the Internet for answers to questions in a few months' time.
4. Improve their English pronunciation on their own.
5. Improve their mathematics and science scores in school. (Inamdar, 2004)
6. Answer examination questions several years ahead of time.
7. Change their social interaction skills and value systems.
8. Form independent opinions and detect indoctrination.

The Next Step – Self Organized Learning Environments:

Through the years of the HiW initiative, many concerns had been voiced about the potential of such facilities/environments for children's 'academic' learning. Hence, the SOLE initiative sought to design the learning environment in a way that would facilitate children's search related to themes/topics that were part of their curriculum. SOLEs were set up in 11 locations in urban slums and rural areas in and near Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh and 1 in rural Sindhudurg, Maharashtra.

The initial interactions with the children in the SOLEs indicated that many of them came from traditional, relatively conservative homes and functioned within an authoritarian structure at both home and school. Although the schools they attended are technically English medium schools, even the teachers' fluency in the use of the English language is severely limited. The schools experience,

- Severe resource constraints in terms of space, and material resources,
- A formal school structure that functions with untrained or minimally trained staff,
- A lack of adherence to safety and sanitation standards taken for granted in many other places of the world, with none or very restricted toileting facilities,
- Limited educational resources, operating within a social system that has clearly defined norms of behaviour, even more so for girls.
- Children coming from family backgrounds that do not typically involve higher education or even literacy. The SOLEs provided them with their first exposure to computers.

A typical SOLE comprises of 9 computers with internet and broadband access [often in clusters to encourage/facilitate peer interaction] within a room that is publicly visible facilitating unobtrusive supervision from outside. It can accommodate 36 children [usually 4 at each computer]. Children can work often

in clusters of three, creating a circular arrangement that further facilitates interaction in a larger group. Activities include surfing the Internet, accessing software, following up on a class activity or project, playing games, or going where their interests lead them. It creates opportunities for learners to search for curriculum related or other information.

Given free access, children learn effectively and creatively, often succeeding in coming up with answers to questions beyond their grade level. Under these circumstances they self-organize and figure out group size, age and gender mix, as well as time-sharing. The ideal group size seems to be 4-6. Mixed age and gender groups were observed to work better by exerting natural restraint and preventing too much rowdiness.

Moving ahead – Self Organized Mediation Environments:

A related innovation that was developed attempted to provide opportunities to learn not just English through interaction with native English speakers, but also develop confidence and broaden their horizons. This was termed Self Organized Mediation Environments [SOMEs], or what the media often insists on calling the ‘granny cloud’. SOMEs involve establishing an interaction between learners in disadvantaged and remote areas and volunteer mediators living in areas that they prefer and still being “present” in schools in remote, disadvantaged areas where they do not wish to or/cannot physically go [Mitra, 2009]. During the period of May 2009 to December 2009 a total of 471 sessions were scheduled, of which 248 were attempted. 219 were successfully completed, while 29 remained incomplete.

SOME sessions are different from typical classroom sessions.

- There is no compulsion to 'attend', nor any fixed curriculum to be completed in a specified duration. There are fewer numbers of children interacting at any given moment with the mediators.
- The interaction consists of free flowing conversation, reading storybooks, looking at pictures/models, text messages [instant messaging], and accessing links to other sites. Older children [Grades 6 and up] have become quite adept at moving the webcam around to show the mediator a bit of their surroundings and, are able to connect to mediators independently even after one or two sessions.
- The mediators take this experience further by sharing their thoughts and material with other mediators and the children through the wikis.

[<http://SOLE-kids.wikispaces.com>]

[<http://solesandsomes.wikispaces.com>]

- Sessions are learner centred and learning is self-directed. Mediators ask the children what they would like to do at following sessions and the pace at which the session proceeds is determined by the children.

IMPLICATIONS OF CHILDREN’S USE OF SOLEs & SOMEs:

Opportunities and strategies available through educational technology and distance education are particularly appropriate in disadvantaged circumstances and remote areas, as they can “level the playing field” by providing enriched opportunities and resources for learners in areas where traditional schooling of adequate quality is not available. Attempts to address this issue have been made by distance educators and engineers alike through a variety of methods ranging from printed material to synchronous video conferencing.

The SOLEs and SOMEs represent such strategies. The concept of SOME attempts to bring to a remote area the synchronous or near-synchronous presence of an effective teacher in a classroom using a variety of technologies currently available including email, online chats, audio chats, video chats. [Mitra 2009]. Mediation may prove valuable in the ‘outdoctrination’ process of enabling learners to question, search, assist in verification of information and re-examining conclusions, as well as aiding them in their school studies. Simultaneously, the SOLEs conceptually encourage self-organization around ‘open’ computers. Friendly peer competition drives the process, while self-organization provides the means for such learning. The absence of authority figures enable the children to experiment with knowledge without fear of reprisal or assessment.

The potential of the SOLEs & SOMEs method, now combined as Method ELSE short for ‘Methods for Emergent Learning Systems in Education’ was observed at individual sessions at which project staff were present. Yet any significant impact on children’s overall achievement remained elusive due to the difficulty schools and teachers had in understanding, and thence, applying the principles on which SOLEs operate.

During the course of the project period, it became apparent that none of the children in the present study had any significant access to the SOLE or the SOME sessions with the mediators. Schools tended to use the SOLEs as computer labs that were kept locked for the most part.

If quality is to be ensured, ensuring children's 'ownership' and thence free and regular access to the SOLEs and therefore, the SOMEs is critical. Determining the impact of the SOLEs requires more 'controlled' studies. These would need to deal with issues of both 'access' and 'quality'. How much access should be considered access, as well as what kind of activities in the SOLE constitute access remains an issue. How the meaningfulness of these experiences can be enhanced would also need to be considered. This could include the use of SOLEs as resource centres with related material available for the children's use as they await a turn at the computers.

CONCLUSIONS:

The design and construction of SOLEs can be refined to a model that is less expensive, sustainable, safe, effective and fault tolerant. However, this requires:

- Scheduling SOLE sessions as part of the regular school timetable so that all children have free access to the facility. Teachers need to be trained in the use of the SOLE method. Any 'taught' sessions are likely to negatively affect the results aimed at, namely improvements in the school leaving examinations.
- Ensuring children's participation through "open, regular and free access". Under these circumstances they self-organize and figure out group size, age and gender mix, as well as time sharing.
- Broadband and reliable electricity in all schools.
- Basic proficiency in English is imperative by age 8 for the method to work. This needs to be ensured through the use of better teachers at the early primary levels and extensive use of eMediators from India and abroad. SOME 'clouds' can be set up to provide effective moderation, particularly for the improvement of English. A technical assistant and a session manager needs to be appointed for sessions to happen on a regular basis

Development of business models to ensure sustainability in the absence of project funded support is necessary in the long run. Given the right circumstances, Method ELSE [Mitra, unpublished manuscript 2010] can bring children at par with children of affluent, urban schools, thereby 'levelling the playing field'. The beneficial consequences of such a levelling on society can only be immense.

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ROLE OF EKLAHYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS (EMRS) IN THE EDUCATION OF TRIBAL CHILDREN

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Education plays an extremely important role in the economic development. Since 1990 it is an important component in the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations. For developing countries the goal is not just that of achieving high rate of economic development. These countries face even greater challenge of moving towards the creation of just and equitable society. Education is an objective as well as an important means towards achieving broader objectives. While the developing countries are struggling to ensure access not just to education but to quality education, significant changes in the field of knowledge are affecting the world at large.

Introduction:

The unprecedented pace of the changes in the knowledge scenario at the global level is forcing all countries to focus on the need for continuous and lifelong learning avenues. India adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 Agenda in 2015. The mission of SDG 4 is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. SDG 4 is a very important goal since large part of the global population is still very vulnerable and deprived of the educational opportunities that would enable them to improve their living conditions.

There is tremendous pressure in India to take advantage of the current phase of the Demographic Transition. There is an urgent need to provide access to quality education to all the young aspirants of the country. The tribal people constitute the most underprivileged section of the Indian population. The Constitution of India has made provision for the socio-economic development of the tribal people. At the time of independence India adopted the strategy of planned development. Various programmes were initiated through the Five-Year Plans for the upliftment of the tribal population. These included special Multi-purpose Tribal Development Projects (MTDP), Community Development Blocks, Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP), Modified Area Development Approach (MADA) etc. One important development was the announcement and the implementation of the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) during the Fifth Five Year Plan. One of the most important educational initiatives of the

Central Government is the introduction of the scheme titled Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) for the children belonging to Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the year 1997-98. It is nearly 25 years since the scheme is in operation. The present study explores the role played by EMRS in tribal education focusing on the spread of the schools across the states over the years and the status of these schools.

Salient Features of EMRS:

The EMRS scheme was launched to bring the children of Scheduled Tribes in the mainstream of education. The Scheduled Tribes are scattered across the states of India and union territories. The broad objective of this scheme is to reach out to the children belonging to the Scheduled Tribes in remote areas and provide them with quality education. The programme caters to the students of class VIth to class XIIth. It was expected that the children who availed of this benefit will have better chances to access higher and professional educational opportunities. This in turn would enable them to seek better employment opportunities in various sectors. The scheme came up as a residential school facility. However, to reach out to the larger tribal areas and tribal people it is proposed to also start day schools titled as Eklavya Model Day Boarding Schools (EMDBS) to provide educational facilities to those ST students that do not want residential facility. These are proposed to be established on experimental basis where the density of tribal population in identified districts is very high (90 %). Another important component of the scheme is the setting up of the Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Sports. These centers would be equipped with the specialized facilities for one identified individual sport and one group sport in each state. The facilities in these centers include equipment, sports kits, training, competition exposure, medical expenses, insurance etc. as per the norms of the Sports Authority of India. The EMRS scheme is monitored by the National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS) which is an autonomous body under Ministry of Tribal Affairs and registered under Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860. Thus, it can be seen that the scheme of EMRS is a very comprehensive scheme focusing on the overall development of the tribal children.

Number of EMRS with Functional Status:

The total number of schools sanctioned over the years and their functional status as on 01-02-2023 is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Status and Number of EMRS in India (As on 01-02-2023)

Sr. No.	Functional Status	Number	Percentage
1	Functional	401	58.12
2	Non-Functional	289	41.88
3	Total	690	100.00

Source: Compiled from <https://tribal.nic.in>EMRS.aspx>

From Table 1- The total number of sanctioned schools is 690. The functional schools are 401 (58.12 %) and the non-functional schools are 289 (41.88 %). Thus it is clear that still a large number of schools are non-functional.

Sanction of EMRS Over the Years:

As has been mentioned above the scheme of EMRS was launched in 1997-98. The increase in the number of schools over the years since the inception of the scheme is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 : Sanctioning of EMRS Over the Years (As on 01-02-2023)

Sr. No.	Year of Sanction	Total Schools	Functional Schools	Non-Functional Schools
1	1997-98	44	44	-
2	1998-99	06	06	-
3	1999-00	02	02	-
4	2000-01	10	10	-
5	2001-02	08	08	-
6	2002-03	02	02	-
7	2003-04	05	05	-
8	2004-05	-	-	-
9	2005-06	17	17	-
10	2006-07	-	-	-
11	2007-08	07	07	-
12	2008-09	02	02	-
13	2009-10	-	-	-
14	2010-11	34	33	01
15	2011-12	16	16	-
16	2012-13	02	02	-
17	2013-14	12	10	02
18	2014-15	30	22	08

19	2015-16	33	29	04
20	2016-17	30	15	15
21	2017-18	14	11	03
22	2018-19	63	30	33
23	2019-20	101	40	61
24	2020-21	150	75	75
25	2021-22	93	14	79
26	2022-23 *	09	01	08
	Total	690	401	289

Source: Compiled from

<https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/EMRS/ListofEMRSFeb2023.pdf>

Table 2 reveals a very interesting picture. It traces the history of sanctioning of the schools and their status from 1997-98 till 01-02-2023. Let us first take a look at the total number of schools sanctioned over the years. In the very first year i.e. in 1997-98 there were 44 schools sanctioned in different states. Thereafter for nearly 11 years i.e., till 2008-09 less than 10 schools were sanctioned every year except for two years. In the year 2000-01 there were 10 schools sanctioned and in the year 2005-06 total 17 schools were sanctioned. However, it may be noted that in the previous year i.e. 2004-05 not a single new school was sanctioned. Similarly in the following year i.e., in 2006-07 also no schools were sanctioned. There is one more year in which no schools were sanctioned and that is 2009-10 and the picture starts changing after this year. From 2010-11 it can be observed that the number of sanctioned schools every year is considerably higher than the earlier years (i.e., from 1998-99 till 2009-10). From 2018-19 to 2021-2022 the number of sanctioned schools increased significantly. In 2022-2023 (till 01-02-2023) only nine schools were sanctioned. The total number of schools sanctioned during 1997-98 to 2009-10 is 103 (14.93 %) whereas the number of schools sanctioned during 2010-11 to 2022-2023 is 587 (85.07). The number of schools sanctioned during the four-year period i.e., from 2018-19 to 2021-2022 is very significant. There were 407 (58.99 %) schools sanctioned during this period. In order to give a boost to the scheme the Government announced in 2018-19 that EMRS will be established in every block with 50 % of the tribal population and at least 20000 tribal persons as per Census 2011. There is a significant increase therefore in the sanctioned schools from 2018-19 onwards.

The status of the schools sanctioned over the years is also interesting. It can be observed from Table 2 that all 44 schools that were sanctioned in 1997-98 i.e., in the very first year of the scheme are functional. From 1997-98 to 2012-13 all the schools that were sanctioned are functional except for the year 2010-2011. In this year total 34 schools were sanctioned of which 33 schools are functional and only one school is non-functional. From 2013-14 the number of non-functional schools

has been rising. From 2018-19 to 2022-2023 the number of non-functional schools exceed that of functional schools. Out of total 289 non-functional schools 248 (85.81 %) were sanctioned during this period. Thus, there is a very urgent need to ensure that these schools become functional.

Number and Status of EMRS Across the States:

The EMRS are established in those states and in the blocks within those states where the extent of tribal population is very high. The number of sanctioned schools across the states is presented in Table 3. There has been reorganization of some of the states after the scheme was introduced. Meghalaya was formed as a separate state before EMRS scheme was introduced. Similarly, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu were annexed by India prior to the launching of the EMRS scheme. But the formation of Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Ladakh has taken place while the EMRS scheme was in operation.

Table 3 : The Number and the Status of EMRS Across the States / Union Territories

Sr. No.	State	Total Schools	Functional Schools	Non – Functional Schools
1	Odisha	104	32	72
2	Jharkhand	88	07	81
3	Chhattisgarh	74	73	01
4	Madhya Pradesh	70	63	07
5	Gujarat	42	35	07
6	Maharashtra	37	37	-
7	Rajasthan	31	30	01
8	Andhra Pradesh	28	28	-
9	Meghalaya	27	-	27
10	Telangana	23	23	-
11	Nagaland	22	03	19
12	Manipur	21	03	18
13	Tripura	21	06	15
14	Mizoram	17	06	11
15	Assam	14	01	13
16	Karnataka	12	12	-
17	Arunachal Pradesh	10	03	07
18	Tamil Nadu	08	08	-
19	West Bengal	08	07	01

20	Jammu & Kashmir	06	06	-
21	Himachal Pradesh	04	04	-
22	Kerala	04	04	-
23	Sikkim	04	04	-
24	Uttar Pradesh	04	02	02
25	Uttarakhand	04	03	01
26	Bihar	03	-	03
27	Ladakh	03	-	03
28	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	01	01	-
	Total	690	401	289

Source: Compiled from

<https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/EMRS/ListofEMRSFeb2023.pdf>

From Table 3- Odisha tops the list in terms of the total number of schools sanctioned. It has 104 schools. This is followed by Jharkhand (88), Chhattisgarh (74) and Madhya Pradesh (70). These four states together account for 336 (48.70 %) of the total sanctioned schools. The states in which the number of sanctioned schools ranges between 31-42 are Gujarat (42), Maharashtra (37) and Rajasthan (31). These three states together have 110 (15.94 %) of the total sanctioned schools. The states in which sanctioned schools are between 20-30 are Andhra Pradesh (28), Meghalaya (27), Telangana (23) and Nagaland (22). Both Manipur and Tripura have 21 sanctioned schools each. Mizoram, Assam, Karnataka, and Arunachal Pradesh have 10-20 sanctioned schools. All the remaining 11 states have less than 10 schools each.

The picture varies in case of functional and non-functional schools. Chhattisgarh has the largest number of functional schools followed by Madhya Pradesh. Both Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh respectively have 73 and 63 functional schools. These two states together have 136 (33.92 %) of the total functional schools. This is followed by Maharashtra (37), Gujarat (35), Odisha (30), Rajasthan (30), Andhra Pradesh (28) and Telangana (23). These six states have 185 (46.13 %) of the total functional schools. Thus, these eight states together have 321 (80.05 %) of the total functional schools. The remaining 19 states have less than 10 functional schools each. All sanctioned schools in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Sikkim and Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu are functional.

In terms of non-functional schools Jharkhand tops the list with 81 non-functional schools. The second in the list is Odisha with 72 non-functional schools. Both these states together have 153 (52.94 %) of the total non-functional schools. Odisha and Jharkhand have more non-functional schools than the functional schools. All sanctioned schools in Meghalaya (27), Bihar (03) and Ladakh (03) are non-functional. Except for Sikkim in all the other North Eastern states the number of non-functional schools is more than that of functional schools.

Extent of Tribal Population:

The extent of tribal population across the states is presented in Table 4. It gives the extent of tribal population in the states and union territories to the total tribal population in the respective states and union territories as well as to the total tribal population in the country as well.

Table 4: Extent of Population of STs in the State to the Total Population of the State and to the Total ST Population in India

Sr. No.	State	% STs in India/ State/UT to total population of India/ State/UT	% STs in the State to total population in ST in India
	India	8.6	-
1	Mizoram	94.4	1.0
2	Nagaland	86.5	1.6
3	Meghalaya	86.1	2.4
4	Ladakh	79.5	0.2
5	Arunachal Pradesh	68.8	0.9
6	Manipur	40.9	1.1
7	Sikkim	33.8	0.2
8	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	33.0	0.2
9	Tripura	31.8	1.1
10	Chhattisgarh	30.6	7.5
11	Jharkhand	26.2	8.3
12	Odisha	22.8	9.2

13	Madhya Pradesh	21.1	14.7
14	Gujarat	14.8	8.5
15	Rajasthan	13.5	8.8
16	Assam	12.4	3.7
17	Jammu & Kashmir	10.4	1.2
18	Maharashtra	9.4	10.1
19	Telangana	9.3	3.1
20	Karnataka	7.0	4.1
21	West Bengal	5.8	5.1
22	Himachal Pradesh	5.7	0.4
23	Andhra Pradesh	5.3	2.5
24	Uttarakhand	2.9	0.3
25	Kerala	1.5	0.5
26	Bihar	1.3	1.3
27	Tamil Nadu	1.1	0.8
28	Uttar Pradesh	0.6	1.1

Source: Compiled from
<https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/Statistics/AnnualReport/AREnglish2122.pdf>

It can be seen from Table 4 that the total tribal population in the country is 8.6 % of that of the total population of the country. Let us first consider the extent of tribal population of the states to that of the total population of the respective states. The North Eastern states are predominantly tribal states. Mizoram (94.4%) has the highest tribal population. This is closely followed by two states viz Nagaland, Meghalaya and Ladakh with 86.5 %, 86.1% and 79.5 % of the tribal population respectively. Arunachal Pradesh has 68.8% of tribal population. Thus, all top four states with more than 60 % of the tribal population are the North Eastern states. States whose tribal population is 30% to 40% are Manipur (40.9 %), Sikkim (33.8 %), Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (33.0 %), Tripura (31.76 %) and Chhattisgarh (30.62 %). The tribal population of Jharkhand (26.21 %), Odisha (22.85 %) and Madhya Pradesh is between 20 % to 30 %. The states whose tribal population is between 10 % to 15 % are Gujarat (14.75 %), Rajasthan (13.48 %), Assam (12.45 %) and Jammu & Kashmir (10.04 %). The tribal population of all the remaining states is less than 10 %. With respect to the ST population of the states to the total ST population of the country it is seen that Madhya Pradesh with

14.7 % tops the list followed by Maharashtra (10.1 %). This is followed by four states viz Odisha (9.2 %), Rajasthan (8.8 %) Gujarat (8.5 %), Jharkhand (8.3 %) and Chhattisgarh (7.5 %). All the remaining states have less than five per cent of the ST population of that of the country except West Bengal (5.1 %).

Table 5: Years of the Sanction of EMRS in North Eastern States

Sr. No.	State (% o State's ST Population to State's total population)	No. of Schools Sanctioned during 1997-98 to 2009-10	No. of Schools Sanctioned during 20110-11 to 2022-23	Total
1	Mizoram (94.4 %)	01	16	17
2	Nagaland (86.5 %)	03	19	22
3	Meghalaya (86.2 %)	-	27	27
4	Arunachal Pradesh (68.8 %)	02	08	10
5	Manipur (35.1 %)	03	18	21
6	Sikkim (33.8 %)	02	02	04
7	Tripura (31.8 %)	03	18	21
8	Assam (12.45 %)	-	14	14
	Total	14	122	136

Source: Same as Table 2, 3 and 4

Years of Sanction of the Schools in North Eastern States:

The North Eastern states are predominantly tribal states. Table 5 covers the years in which the schools were sanctioned in these states.

Table 5 reveals an interesting picture. Even though the North Eastern states are predominantly tribal states the total number of schools in all the states taken together during 1997-98 to 2009-10 is only 14. However, the scenario has changed significantly during 2010-11 to 2022-23. There was total 122 schools sanctioned during this period. Not a single school was sanctioned during 1997-98-2009-10 in Meghalaya and Assam. From Table 3, Out of 136 total schools sanctioned in the North Eastern states only 26 are functional and the remaining 110 schools are non-functional.

Going Beyond:

The scheme of EMRS is extremely important for the upliftment of the tribal people. Though large number of schools are functional there is also a significant number of non-functional schools. Concerted efforts are needed to make these schools functional. There is also urgent need to reach out to the tribal blocks in remote areas that are still uncovered to bring those children to the schools. Special efforts are required to reach out to the North Eastern states. There is considerable increase in the number of schools sanctioned in these states since 2010-11. But there is also need to initiate measures to make these schools functional. In the Central Budget 2023 significant provision has been made for the recruitment of 38800 teachers and support staff in the next three years in EMRS. This needs to be followed up. The scheme of EMRS has the potential to bring about revolutionary change in the lives of the tribal children and their families.

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"We have bought into the idea that education is about training and "success", defined monetarily, rather than learning to think critically and to challenge. We should not forget that the true purpose of education is to make minds, not careers. A culture that does not grasp the vital interplay between morality and power, which mistakes management techniques for wisdom, which fails to understand that the measure of a civilization is its compassion, not its speed or ability to consume, condemns itself to death." Chris Hedges, *Empire of Illusion*

MAHARSHI KARVE AND MAHATMA GANDHI: TOWARDS WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

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Maharshi Dhindo Keshav Karve laid the way through the foundation of the Anandh Balikashram and the first Women's University in Poona. He anticipated Gandhi in many ways as the latter believed in establishing a just and equitable social order and to humanise, equalise and spiritualise. During his campaign in South Africa, Gandhi actively involved women in the Indian campaign for dignity and self-respect in South Africa. After his return to India in early 1915, he involved them in the struggle for Swaraj from the British rule. Gandhi paid a visit to the Karve's Widow's Home in the same year and paid handsome tribute to him for his stupendous work for the emancipation of women. He later took a larger interest in national education and ways and means to improve the position of women.

Introduction

The great historical significance of Maharshi Karve, the founder of the first women's university in the country can only be properly appreciated when we know that Indian social life since centuries was full of injustice to women. Manu, the ancient Indian law giver, had laid down the law that women could have no liberty and would have no access to knowledge. Women in India suffered from social discrimination and subjection. Almost all social evils prevailing in the Indian society pertained to women such as sati, female infanticide, child marriages, torture of widows, to name a few. Though education made some progress in the early nineteenth century, women hardly benefitted. Their condition was so miserable that R.G. Bhandarkar rightly described them as 'Women! Thy name is misery'.ⁱ Both Karve and Gandhi were firmly of the view that a country can never progress politically unless there is moral and social advancement.ⁱⁱ

Genesis of Education for Girls and Women in Bombay Presidency

Bombay began to receive the impact of formal western education only after the appointment of Mountstuart Elphinstone as the Governor of the newly created Presidency of Bombay in 1819. He laid the foundation of modern education which produced a virtual renaissance in western India. The education institution that perpetuates his name, accomplished for Maharashtra what the Hindu College did for Bengal Renaissance. As many as twenty-two educational institutions were

established during the period 1822-1857.ⁱⁱⁱ Except in a few mission schools and to a very limited extent, women had no access to education. Such was the apathy towards female education that Margaret Wilson, wife of the Reverend Dr. John Wilson who founded one of the first Girl school in Bombay in 1829, regretted: 'The teachers had to go every day to al the girl's houses and pay them to get them to schools and even then very few attended'.^{iv} After Margaret's death, Wilson called two ladies from Scotland to manage the Girl's school and a Ladies' Society for female education in India was formed which supported Girl's education in Bombay, Poona and other districts. In 1848, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule, two prominent social revolutionaries in religious and social reforms, founded a school for girls making a small beginning. In the year 1835, Lord William Bentinck had adopted English as a medium of instruction in India as expressed in Macaulay's Minute on education. In the year 1854, Sir Charles Wood through his Despatch on education, considered as a landmark in the history of education in modern India, stressed on the necessity to encourage and promote women's education in India. It recommended that all schools for girls be brought under a comprehensive system educational system and assisted through grants-in-aid.^v In the year 1857, the University of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras came to be established. But the benefits were totally one-sided as the advantages were for the boys and not girls. In 1857, it is important to note, the University of Bombay had refused admission to a Parsi girl to appear for the entrance examination. It was not until 1883 that the University of Bombay lifted this ban. Between 1854 and 1882, women's education made some progress. In 1870 few of them attended secondary schools and still fewer entered colleges. No wonder therefore the Education Commission in 1882, popularly known as Hunter Commission, regretted the little progress made in the field of female education while noting the increasing public interest in this area. This Commission recommended expansion of secondary education, appointment of women teachers and inspectors and the training for women teachers. It also recommended that liberal grants-in-aid be made available for women's education.

However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the progress of education among girls was still abysmally low. Social reformers of India beginning with Raja Rammohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, M.G.Ranade, G. Subramania Iyer, R.G. Bhandarkar, Jyotibha Phule, Maharshi Karve and others were deeply concerned with the miserable plight of women. They had realized that for the creation of a just and equitable social order, it is paramount that women need to have equal rights and opportunities with men. Education is the key to advancement in their lives. Maharshi D.K. Karve (1858-1962), has been truly a pioneer in the matter of female education. He believed that an enlightened woman is a source of

infinite strength. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Karve therefore laid the foundation of a Widows' Home at Hingne in Poona and later the first Indian Women's University that would pave the way for their progress.

In the early twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi then in South Africa, was anxious that 'the education given at the Phoenix *ashram* [founded in 1904] will be entirely free and should result in the building up of character, the directing of the minds of the students into healthier channels of thought than those of Western materialism, and the creation of men and women... who will be available for national service'.^{vi} After his return to India in 1915, Gandhi was determined to promote female education and their participation in the struggle for swaraj. In a speech 'To the Women' in 1931, Gandhi noted: 'To call a woman a weaker sex is a libel; it is a man's injustice to women'. He believed that it would be a great education for women even if they are not educated to participate in the production of Khadi, picketing and in the salt satyagraha. He went to the extent to say that these movements would collapse if women did not take part.^{vii} He felt education gives women the power to uphold their natural rights. He wanted them to learn home management, pregnancy, nursing, and care of children apart from the basics of education. He wanted women to learn spinning and weaving and be economically independent. In his book *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*, Gandhi wrote: 'Women have been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which she had no hand. Women have as much right to shape their own destiny, as man has to shape his. Men...have considered themselves to be Lords and Masters of women instead of considering them as friends and co-workers'.^{viii} He believed that wives should not be dolls and objects of indulgence but should be treated as equal and honoured comrades. He felt that women must receive liberal education both at home and outside. Thus Gandhi gave, as Aparna Basu wrote: 'new direction, strength and inspiration to the freedom movement and drew into it women in large numbers'.^{ix} It is therefore important to recapitulate briefly their contribution to women's education and emancipation.

Maharshi Karve was born in 1858 in Ratnagiri. He studied at the Elphinstone college in Bombay and later taught in the Girls schools in Bombay for some time. In 1891 he commenced his work as a Professor at the Fergusson College in Poona where he worked for a long period of twenty-three years. It was during this time that he found a new mission in his life. He became deeply concerned with the sufferings of women especially of young widows. In 1893 he decided to espouse the cause of widows by marrying a young widow called Godhubai who had suffered a lot. Godhubai was fondly called as Baya and she became a source of

strength and support to Karve until her death in 1950. Karve and his family were persecuted by the orthodox society and were almost excommunicated. However, it only increased his determination to work for women's emancipation. On 31 December 1893, Karve founded the Widow Remarriage Association at Wardha with six other associates. On the 14 of June 1896, Karve founded the Anandha Balikashram Association with fifteen other friends. It was modelled on the home of Bapu Sasipadh Bannerjee of Bengal and Viresalingam Panthulu of Andhra Pradesh. It was located in a small hut with eight widows and three unmarried girls in Hingne on the outskirts of Poona. It later became a school with the chief objective 'to educate widows so as to enable them to earn an honourable living. The cause of widows and women's education was extremely unpopular in those days. Karve was a man of indomitable will and determination and each obstacle was met with remarkable courage. Parvatibhai Athavale, Anandibhai's widowed sister, played a significant role in the growth and expansion of Karve's school and she became a teacher and then a superintendent.

On 4 March 1907, Karve opened another chapter in his life by starting Mahila Vidyalaya to promote education and social reform for women in general. It bore a striking resemblance to G.K. Gokhale's Servants of India Society founded in 1905. Visiting this institution Major Hunter Steen made a prophetic remark when he wrote: 'In a small house...is to be found a tiny beginning at least on this side of India of what will one day prove to be the social regeneration of the country'.^x Karve retired from the Fergusson College in 1914 and became a full time worker for women's education. It immediately struck him that the Hindu Widows Home Association could take upon itself the task of establishing a Indian Women's University. He found some of his colleagues not very supportive and even expressed the fear that it would fail. However, Karve kept his balance of mind and judgement and began alone to fulfil his dream vision, conducting propaganda and securing whatever help from some friends. Karve was called upon to preside over the Social Reform Conference held in Bombay in 1915 where he explained his ideas. Thus Karve had realized very early in his life that education is the most powerful agent of human civilization and a chief agent of democracy for spreading true social values. Superstition and ignorance cannot be conquered if the masses remained ignorant. What J.S. Mill called as 'deep slumber of settled opinion' can be challenged only through education.

On 3 and 4 June 1916 Karve conducted the first meeting of the Senate of the Women's University. The new College began work on 6 July 1916. Karve though sixty-six, became the first Principal of the College. Six girls joined the College. Until then the educational activities were managed by through friends and their

contribution. At this time Karve received a pamphlet about a women's University in Japan. One of his friends in Bengal had been to Japan where they visited a Women's University. He sent a copy of the University prospectus to Karve, who, they had heard was actively involved in promoting women's education. Karve read it from cover to cover and was greatly impressed. Soon the idea of an Indian Women's University took form and shape.

At this time Karve received an unexpected munificent donation from Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, an industrialist and a large-hearted businessman from Bombay who was deeply interested in Women's education. It greatly relieved Karve from financial constraints. Sir Vithaldas laid down one condition. He wanted Karve to name the University after his mother. That was how it came to be known as Shrimati Nathibhai Damodar Thackersey University.

After the University was founded, Karve travelled up and down the whole country to collect funds, to popularise the ideas of the University and to establish institutions affiliated to the University. For fifteen months he toured the West collecting funds for his mission. Karve believed that political freedom has no meaning without social equality and a just social order. It is now universally recognized that Karve gave a reorientation to the pattern of women's education to bring about a healthy regeneration of the Indian women.

Gandhi visited Poona on 11 February 1915, a cultural and educational centre and his simple living and high thinking was an education. He was welcomed by the members of the Servants of India Society and the Sarvajanic Sabha. On 13 February he visited the Anand Balikashram of Karve. In his short speech Gandhi referred to Poona as a centre of culture, learning and spirit of self-sacrifice and therefore a place of pilgrimage for him and his wife.^{xi} When Karve suggested to Gandhi his new ideas, the latter approved his plans for making of mother tongue as the media of instruction. Gandhi, however, expressed disapproval of having English as a compulsory subject. Gandhi felt it should be a voluntary subject. Gandhi agreed to subscribe some money annually and requested Karve to send him the annual report and Karve readily obliged.

In February 1913 Karve accompanied Gandhi to Ahmedabad to further the cause of his mission of women's education. On 23 February 1916, he gave a public address on the aims and objects of the Women's University. Gandhi presided over this address and paid perhaps the greatest tribute to Karve.

It read:

Everyone here knows the gentleman [Karve] who will soon address us. Hence I need not speak at length by way of introducing him. He has taken up the mission of founding a university for Indian women. The task will entitle the revival of different regional languages. He proposes to start in June an examining and teaching University. It is said that in our society as it is today men suffer from ardhangavayu [paralysis of one side of the body] and this charge, by and large is well founded because we are not able to make our 'better halves' keep pace with us. Circumstances are chiefly responsible for this state of affairs. Prof. Karve has undertaken this work in order to improve the condition of women and has set about it briskly. I must indeed admit that his enthusiasm is matchless. If I may introduce him in the words of Mr. Gokhale, he is truth incarnate. We are therefore confident that, even if his work is not crowned with all the success one may hope for, no harm is likely to result from it at any time. He has devoted twenty years of service to the Fergusson College and has been managing a widow's home for as many years. Now, at the age of, 59, he has started on a new venture, a mark of the highest self-sacrifice that we found in Poona. This should make us feel ashamed of ourselves. Gujarat has therefore, much to learn from the life of Prof. Karve.^{xii}

Vidyagauri R. Neelkanth, a social worker, also made a speech. At the end of the proceedings Gandhi said: 'We shall have equality for the rights of women but I think their education should differ from the men's; as their nature and functions do. In Progressive countries the women receive the very highest education but after it is over they do not have to perform the same duties as men and in our country women never have to compete with men'.^{xiii} Nevertheless, Gandhi suggested that we must help Karve's institution as much as possible.

Gandhi's views on education remained steady. In his introduction to P.J. Mehta's book on *Vernacular as a Media of Instruction in Indian Schools and Colleges* (Madras), Gandhi wrote that vernacular as a media of instruction is a subject of great importance and neglect of vernacular 'would amount to suicide' and the neglect of vernaculars would mean loss of faith in ourselves and 'sure signs of decay'.^{xiv} Gandhi believed in English being used as an optional language. But the students must learn to speak correct and grammatical English. He preferred Hindi as a national language and devoted much attention to his Hindi Prachar Sabha all over India. As a matter of fact, ever since his arrival in India, Gandhi devoted as much time as possible to the problem of education. He felt that if India had to be in the mode of creative vitality, she must dethrone English as a medium of

instruction and reduce emphasis on book learning. His ideas on education were explained in detail in some of his letters written to friends from Champaran in Bihar and the prospectus of the National School of Education.^{xv}

It is of his immense interest to note that Karve got help from some unexpected quarters. Sir William Wedderburn, a retired civil servant who had much sympathy for Indian aspirations wrote a letter to Karve on 19 July 1916. It read: 'I have read with greatest interest and sympathy the printed papers you have sent me [on Widows Home and Women's university] and you may rest assured that I will do all I can to help your valuable undertaking'. True to his words Sir William wrote about Karve and his activities in *India* a weekly newspaper and organ of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress in London.^{xvi} He wrote to many of his influential people in England such as Lord Morley, Lord Bryce and Lord Reay, the Viceroy of India and Governor of the Bombay presidency on Karve and his work. Another English man in South Africa named H.S.L. Polak, who was also his close associate and fellow seeker, greatly helped Karve. He sent 150 pounds to Karve's Widow's Home and another 100 pounds for his Women's University.^{xvii} Polak helped Karve to develop contacts with the liberals in England and visit London. Thanks to him Karve delivered a lecture on "The Education of Indian Women" under the auspices of the East India Association which was followed by a lively discussion.

South Africa gave Gandhi a rich and varied experience. It brought a change not only in his religious thought but also resurgence in his social thought as well. He had close association with westerners of different race and religion, women such as Sonja Schlesin, his able and efficient secretary. Millie Polak, the Christian wife of Henry Polak was also his close associate and Gandhi signed all his letters to her as 'Bhai'. From Millie to Sonja, Maud Polak (Polak's sister) and others, Gandhi got along extremely well with women. Their independent-mindedness, indomitable spirit, moral courage, hard work, self-sacrifice, courage and patriotism impressed him. He had had endless arguments and counter arguments with them on many Indian questions. In the years 1906 and 1909, Gandhi went on a tour to England on behalf of the Transvaal delegates pleading for their cause. He was struck by the commitment of the English suffragettes.^{xviii} Meeting such women impressed Gandhi more clearly the ways in which they could and must take charge of their lives. It made him confess: 'When I was in South Africa, I had realized that if I did not serve the cause of women, all my work would remain unfinished'.^{xix} Indeed had Gandhi remained confined to Rajkot or even Bombay, he might not have outgrown the conventional views so early in life.

When Gandhi returned to India in 1915, he met Mrs Ramabhai Ranade, Dr Kadambini Ganguli and Jaiji Jehangir Petit who had supported his campaign in South Africa. As early as 1915 he had spoken about the dire need for women's education in his public speeches. Gandhi had a different view on the curriculum of women's education. He did not believe in English as the national language of India. At a speech in Surat on 3 January 1916, Gandhi said:

To those who argue that they cannot express their ideas in their own language, I can only say that they are a burden to their motherland. It does not become any son worthy of the name to slight his own mother tongue, to turn away his face from it, instead of removing what imperfections it may have. If we of the present generation neglect the mother tongue, future generations will have the occasion to feel sorry for us. We shall never cease being reproached by them.... We do want the English language but we do not want it to destroy our own language.^{xx}

Gandhi's first and long speech seriously concerning women was made at the Bhagini Samaj, a Gujarati organization founded in 1916 in memory of G.K. Gokhale, his political Guru. Here he argued that women's regeneration was necessary to overcome the subordination of women supported by religious texts, laws and customs. He urged them to fight for freedom struggle.^{xxi} During his long travel through India in 1915, Gandhi realized how women detested the unnecessary restrictions that hampered equality with men. He advised the upper- and middle-class women to take Khadi to the poorer section of women as a matter of livelihood. He therefore suggested education, awareness and encouragement to women to fight for their rights through women's organization as remedies.

During the silver jubilee celebration of the Women's University in 1928, Karve had appointed a committee in-charge of the function including fund collection. On seeing the appeal send by the Committee members, Gandhi wrote:

Mr Karve is not an ordinary man.... he has obeyed a master that is never generous, never indulgent and ever exacting though invariably just. This master is his own conscience. His self-effacement, his single-minded devotion to duty, his exhaustless energy, his energy in all circumstances, his faith in the midst of opposition, his irresistible optimism are a national asset of the first magnitude.^{xxii}

It is interesting to note that in a letter to Devdhar on 4 October 1928, Gandhi said that he had asked Urmila Devi, the widowed daughter of C.R. Das, a prominent leader from Bengal, whose only son was studying at Poona, to stay either at Sharda Sadan or at Karve's Widows Home in Poona as he had developed a high opinion

about both the places and advised her to do some good work there. In a letter to Devdhar, Gandhi wrote: ‘At first, I thought I should write a separate letter to Prof. Karve. But while dictating this I thought I would confine myself only to this letter and leave you to introduce Shrimati Urmila Devi to Prof. Karve and let her see both the institutions and make her choice’.^{xxiii}

During the time of turbulence in the Women’s University when there was disagreement between management and the Women’s University officials, Karve, it seems, had informed Gandhi about the same. Gandhi replied to him on 24 May 1934:

I have just received your letter of 15th May. It will give me great joy if the dispute between you and the executors of the will of the late Sri Vitthaldas is amicably settled. And whether it is amicably settled or not I would like the appeal that has been made for donations to your university, to receive a generous response. It is a tragedy that a man of your amazing industry and great devotion to the ideal that he has set before himself should feel the want of funds for the cause to which he has dedicated his life^{xxiv}.

The dispute was finally settled amicably.

Conclusion

On 10 March 1946 Gandhi said ‘Education is that which liberates’—knowledge includes all training that is useful for the service of mankind and liberation means freedom from all manner of servitude. Servitude is of two kinds, slavery to domination from outside and to one’s own artificial needs. The knowledge acquired in the pursuit of this ideal alone constitutes true study’.^{xxv} Maharshi Karve has been a true Karmayogi. He had lived his whole life for the betterment of all, for women. Neither failure nor success, neither adversity nor fame, had altered his course.^{xxvi} Both Karve and Gandhi knew their goal, persisted ceaselessly throughout their life with missionary zeal and transformed the destiny of the Indian women.

Notes and References

¹ For a general idea of the social conditions in India see Syed Nurullah and J.P. Naik, *A History of Education in India During the British Period, Vol.I*, (University of Michigan, 2008) reprint. (2011), reprint. Also see Vibhuti Patel, *Women’s Challenges of the New Millennium* (New Delhi, 2002).

¹ As an ardent believer in female emancipation, Bhandarkar was fittingly made the first Chancellor of the Women’s University founded by Maharshi Karve. See D.G. Padhey, “The Late Dr. Sir Ramakrishna Bhandarkar”, *Subhodh Patrika*, 27 September 1925.

¹ J.V. Naik, “The Seed Period of Bombay’s Intellectual Life, 1822-1857” in Alice Thorner and Sujata Patel (ed.), *Bombay: Mosaic of Modern Culture* (Bombay, 1995).

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¹ See Arun Tikekar, *A Cloister's Pale: A Biography of the University of Mumbai* (Mumbai, 2011), reprint.

¹ Henry Polak, *M.K. Gandhi: A Sketch of His Life and Work* (Madras, 1909), p.19.

¹ During the Salt Satyagraha campaign in 1931 in a speech entitled 'To the Women', CWMG, XXXXIII, pp.185-85.

¹ M.K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place* (Ahmedabad, 1945), pp.17-18.

¹ Aparna Basu, 'The Role of Women in the Indian Struggle for Freedom' in B.R. Nanda, *Indian Women from Purdah to Modernity*, (New Delhi, 1976), p.20. Also see Madhu Kishawar, "Gandhi on Women" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5 October 1985

¹ Cited in G.L. Chandavarkar, *Maharshi D.K. Karve* (1958), p.14.

¹ CWMG, LVIII, pp.188-9.

¹ Ibid, XIII, 'Speech on Indian Women's University', pp.245-46. At another speech in Allahabad on 23 December 1916, Gandhi compared the ancient and modern system of education and said that while elementary education in ancient times taught the students all that was necessary for their occupation; in the modern period, English education had created a wide gulf between the educated few and the masses.

¹ See CWMG, XIII, pp. 318-19.

¹ Introduction by Gandhi in P.J. Mehta, *Vernacular as a Media of Instruction in Indian Schools, and Colleges* (Madras, 1917).

¹ CWMG, XIII, pp.332-34.

¹ See Prabha Ravi Shankar, *British Committee of the Indian National Congress, 1889-1921* for a detailed study of the newspaper *India* and Sir William Wedderburn (New Delhi, 2011).

¹ See Prabha Ravi Shankar, *The Polaks and Mahatma Gandhi, a Unique Association* (New Delhi, 2019). Also see *The Polaks and Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi, 2019).

¹ He praised their courage and patriotism in demonstrating publicly their intention to obtain the right to vote. See "Deeds better than Words", *Indian Opinion*, 26 October 1906.

¹ Millie Polak made a significant observation on Gandhi that he was a great and loving man, who had shown to me and mine an affection that transcended race and sex and time'. See her book *Mr. Gandhi the Man* (London, 1932), p.14.

¹ CWMG, XIII, p.190-91.

¹ Speech at Bhagini Samaj, Bombay, 20 February 1918, CWMG, XIII, pp.332-35.

¹ *Young India*, 1928, 5 April 1928.

¹ Gandhi to Devdhar, 7 October 1928, CWMG, XXXVII, p.341.

¹ Gandhi to Karve, 24 May 1934, *ibid*, LVIII, p.22.

¹ See Harijan, 10 March 1946, p.38.

¹ D.K. Karve, *Looking Back: The Autobiography of Karve* with a preface by F.J. Gould, (Poona, 1936). As Gould wrote 'The narrative is a parable of his career'. The Government of India issued stamps to commemorate Karve's 100th birth anniversary.

**REVIEW ARTICLE OF AN EDITED VOLUME "KABIR VIMARSH" BY
DR. HUBNATH PANDEY,
PUBLISHER: MUMBAI HINDI ACADEMY UNDER AUSPICES OF DR.
BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE,
UNIVERSITY OF MUMBAI, 2022**

Smt. Asha Damle,
Hon. Secretary,
Indian Council of Basic Education, Mumbai 400 049

In an era, when the Mughal Sultanate was coming to an end, there arose on the horizon, an Indian Mystic, poet and saint, who had unshakable faith, undefeated confidence, fearlessness and was a symbol of the spirit of brotherhood. This Luminary saint was known as Sant Kabir. His staunch belief in the unity of all humanity, ignoring all the factors such as caste, creed, religion or language is a concept which far surpassed his times.

Since he believed that God resides in each one of us, he also nullified the fact that he can be cut into pieces of religion, caste, creed for all mankind. He persistently attacked the rites and rituals of established religious through his short and crisp '*dohas*', his poetic couplets.

The author of the book entitled "Kabir Vimarsh" Dr. Hubnath Pandey, feels sad, that such religious rebel, was not given due acknowledgement. Dr. Pandey has, however given a handsome compliment to Kabir, saying that in the 15th century, an illiterate Sant Kabir had already laid down the fundamental human values of liberty, equality, fraternity, and brotherhood, about which we heard much later during the French Revolution.

The learned scholars who have made rich contributions to the English section of "Kabir Vimarsh" have done a very commendable, noble job. The book is a collaborated effort of eminent scholars, who, though their intensive studies, have written about the socio - economic- political religious facets and about their interplay during the 14th Century, the period during which Kabir grew, among a milieu of contexts and cultures.

Scholar Divya Jyoti very precisely, in the context of what she calls "Hagiography" (small legends and stories) has given us socio political details which are well supported by religious documents of the age, chronicles and court documents.

These resources demonstrate to us how venerated Kabir had been in his own time.

Dr. Amita Valmiki has made a comparative study and analysis on the religious beliefs, of Kabir and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, although literally five centuries apart, we find, there are commonalities in their ideologies and philosophies of religion.

Dr. Vasudev Manohar Athalye, through his intensive studies, looks at some definitions, taken from certain Eastern and Western philosophies. Dr. Athalye quotes extensively to demonstrate, how Kabir's definition of religion runs parallel to those quoted by eminent learned luminaries like the great scholar Laxman Shashtri Joshi, the famous philosopher- President of India, Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, the father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, and the most influential philosophers of the United States, William James.

Dr. A.P. Pandey has elaborated on the mystic aspects of the poetic expressions of Kabir. Mysticism exists in all the religions including Islam, Judaism, Hinduism. Most of the mystics remain connected to the main religion. But they interpret the sacred texts a little differently or develop new approaches from their own unique experiences, Dr. Pandey demonstrates that Kabir's mysticism has originated from his deeper insights and personal experiences.

The name of Sant Kabir invokes various perceptions about him. He was looked upon as a Sufi as well as a Yogi. He was claimed by followers of all religions, but he belonged to none, therefore remaining a personality shrouded in mystery. For many critics who have written about him, he remained a champion, "Who laid the foundation of modernity in India." He has been interpreted as someone, who has projected the idea of putting across moral and critical person, who aspires for union with God, not through "Socially constructed and organized religion", but through personal and direct connection with God. "

This concept, says Dr. Divya Jyoti, allows a person to think about the creator according to his/ her own perceptions rationally, and not through "dictated" doctrines and "Principles of organized rituals." God many be Allah, Ram or some Devi, but Kabir felt that this God existed in every human being.

Dr. Divya Jyoti has referred to the South Asian textual sources and has narrated an exchange between Kabir and the Sultan Lodhi of Delhi. When Kabir refused to bow down in front of the Sultan, he was ordered to be killed. This story not only

reflects the power structure rampant among the rulers, but also obedience without question is expected. Any attempt to base the religious- social- political beliefs on rationality are not appreciated. Any dissenting views in these areas were punishable.

Dr. Divya Jyoti gives historical insights of the fourteenth century when Kabir was born. It was said that he was both to a Brahmin mother, who abandoned him, only to be adopted and brought up by a Muslim couple belonging to a "*Julaha*" (weavers) community, who constituted the lower Hindu castes.

The influence of the Jainism and Buddhism was rising, since there were no hierarchies, based on the caste system of Hinduism. This led to the people belonging to the lower caste getting converted into Islam, as a temporary escape from the caste system of Hinduism. Kabir belonged to such a community of weavers in transition.

The period between 12th and 15th century saw a bonding between the Sufis and the Saints with an amalgamation of two cultures earning respect from the Hindus and the Muslims.

Dr. Vasudev Manohar Athalye has called Kabir an "apostle of Hindu Muslim Unity, a social and religious reformer, a *sufi* saint and a voice of secularism." In the period ruled by the Lodhi dynasty, (1451 to 1526), the rulers became increasingly oppressive. They were religious fanatics, their rule being marked by tyranny, injustice, wherein they forcefully converted the Hindus and tortured them. Already there was a sense of fear among the Hindus, with violence continuing in the name of religion, and extreme frustration about their survival. The Hindus lost their confidence, self-esteem and gradually turned towards a God without any attributes and form. (*Nirguna*). The Varna system had its own share in the religious chaos. The society got divided into various smaller groups.

It was at this point this illiterate and ignorant mass of lower- caste people started drifting towards the religion of the rulers. This religion would be less ritualistic, and would also uplift them socially, they felt.

It was at this time that some Sufi philosopher saints, who, not approving of the corrupt rituals, brought about a religious renaissance. They sought to establish a common religion applicable to all, devoid of rites and rituals, casteism and excessive pleasures.

It was at this juncture, that Kabir began his active life. Dr. Athalye states about Kabir's religion, that he believed in one God, who was omnipresent, without any

form or qualities. Hence it was useless to say that God dwelt in mosques, temples or places of worship or pilgrimages. Being loving and compassionate towards your fellow beings was the only way to attain God, said Kabir. The social condition of the Hindus, as already mentioned previously, was very frustrating. The Varna system of Hinduism divided the Hindus into various groups driven to the edge by practice of untouchability. Due to the decline of Buddhism and Jainism, and the corrupt practices of Islam, religion remained out of the reach of the common man. The Sufi philosophers continued in their endeavour to propagate a clean common religion acceptable to all. By the time Kabir was born, most of the issues relating to religion seemed to have been resolved.

When Kabir declares,
"This hand never grasped a pen,
the greatness of four ages
Kabir tells with mouth alone."

The poet and eminent translator Mangesh Padgaonkar, interprets Kabir as saying this to remove any inferiority complex in the minds of his listeners, who were illiterates, and belonged to the lower castes. Kabir, using the simple language of these people wanted to emphasize that even the illiterates could be eligible for self-realization.

Dr. Athalye quotes Parashnath Tiwari, an eminent scholar, as attributing Kabir's knowledge of religious practices to his contacts with learned, wise and scholarly men. Apart from a thorough knowledge of Islam, Kabir knew the significant facts about Vedas, Upanishads and the Bhagvad Geeta: he appreciated the good things in the sects like Shaiva, Jain and Shakta. The scholar Mohansing Karki gives credit to Kabir having developed deep interest in learning about various religions, and "being gifted with a sensitive ear, a retentive memory, and a receptive mind."

Mohan sing Karki states further, that it is Kabir's extensive travel in central and Northern India that Kabir considers as a "source of his knowledge, wisdom, experience and word- power."

Scholar G S Das has been quoted as saying that "Kabir had the benefit of long association and communication (with the wise, learned men) which enriched his innate spiritual faculties---- as a result a fusion of many religious and philosophical systems could be seen in Kabir's thoughts." The Bhakti cult, Sufism, Nathpanth, Shakapanth Vaishnavism, and Shaivism, had all sunk deep into his own rigorous spiritual practice.

Dr. Athalye has compared the concept of religion as perceived by the philosophical stalwarts of 19th and 20th centuries from the Eastern and Western worlds. The great Indian scholar, Laxman Shastri Joshi in "Vishwakosh," describes religion as "the worship or adoration of the Divine power in order to attain good and eliminate evil." The scholar states that the highest goal of human life is to attain the ultimate truth which " transforms the human life into perfect and truly fruitful."

According to Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan religion is the art of "self- discovery and contact with the Divine." Mahatma Gandhi has stated, "by religion, I do not mean formal religion or customary religion, but that which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with our maker." William James, the philosopher historian, psychologist and the most influential thinkers of the 19th century America, defines religion as the "feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand "in relation to the divine." He believed that the "perfect contentment, vigour, courage, perseverance, calmness of mind, assurance of security ---- are derived from the personal experiences of sages, saints, apostles, mystical yogis...". The study of the views of eminent scholars of the world clearly state that "the goal of human life is to attain the highest truth, i.e. the Divine."

Various studies have shown Kabir to be an enlightened realised Sufi saint a secular thinker, and a social reformer. His path to God is the path of love. There is only love between the God and the doer. As Shri Aurobindo states, "When all love of the I and mine is dead, then the work of the lord is done."

It is only after this that the transformation takes place. Our own desires set a limit to our lives. When the sense of fulfilment is experienced, life becomes limitless. He compares life full of love with a lotus blooming in water, but untouched by it. The fight is in realizing oneself against enemies such as anger, greed, pride and passion.

I cannot resist the temptation of including this poem, quoted by Dr. Athalye, in which Kabir has, very precisely, summarized his view of true religion:

"If God be within the mosque
then to whom does this world belong?
If Ram be within the image
Which you find upon your pilgrimage,
Then who is there to know what happens without?
Hari is in the East, Allah is in the West.
Look within your heart,
For there you will find both Karim and Ram;

All the men and women of the world\
are his living forms.
Kabir is the child of Allah and of Ram :
He is my Guru, He is my Pir

As a social reformer, Kabir could not see the miserable plight of the masses. He felt that such a society needs restructuring, and in doing so, he suffered a lot of animosity from the established groups of religion. Kabir was one person, who had a direct experience of his God, without any interference from conventional orthodox religion. These personal experiences Kabir sought to express through his poetry. In response to his personal inner voice and dictates of his soul, Kabir has associated the concept of mysticism, with his souls journey to God, in which, the soul elevates itself to get united with the supreme soul.

Dr. A P Pandey, through his intensive study of Kabir's mysticism, as expressed in his poetry, has made this concept very clear through his very befitting and apt quotes from Kabir's poetry.

Word "mysticism" has been derived from the Greek word "Mystikos", which means pursuit of achieving communion with the divine spiritual truth, or God, through direct experience or insight. In such a state, one can say that a true human perception of the world may transcend logical reasoning or intellectual comprehension. Such a person, delving deep into these areas can be called a mystic. This person, seeking unity or oneness is depicted as "Illumination" in Christianity, "Irfan" in Islam, "*Nirvana*" in Buddhism and "*Samadhi*" in Hinduism, and "Moksha" in Jainism. Most mystic teachers do have a connection with the mainstream religious branches, and do have followers through interpreting texts or developing new approaches from their own personal experiences.

Dr. Pandey observes, that the influence of "Shankaracharya's theory of *Advaitavad* seems to have exercised a strong influence on Kabir's mystic thought."

Kabir was, in the true sense of the term, a mystic poet. His was a blend of Hindu Religious Philosophy (being a follower of Swami Ramanandacharya) and Islamic philosophy, being brought up in a Muslim family. Also having closely experienced his contemporary poet and philosopher, Shaikh Taki, he gained insights, which Kabir used profusely in his poetry. Kabir's mysticism can broadly be seen in the areas of emotion, meditation, and nature.

Kabir cannot imagine himself to be separated from his God, and suffers, since he wants to capture his God in his own, innermost eyes. His restlessness is evident in the following lines:

"Ease neither at day nor at night
Even in dream there is no ease
Ram forsaken has ease neither
In shade nor in sun" says Kabir.

Kabir asserts that God can only be realised through rigorous course.

"One cannot smile and get the Lord
Only those who weep can get
If to smile he did respond
None would be Lord bereft."

In the Meditational mysticism, Kabir emphasized that "Sadhana" is one of the surest ways of Union with God. In devotional Meditation, the *Atma* (Deelcee) tries to access *Parmatma* (Hejceelcee) through consistent and rigorous meditation. This is also called "Yogic" meditation. Kabir has very imaginatively presented a picture of God:

"God has neither mouth nor forehead,
Handsome or ugly he is not,
He is thinner than flower's fragrance,
Thus, of unique essence He is wrought."

Kabir tried to explain his theory based on solid foundation of knowledge.

He emphasized that our senses are the barriers, because they obstruct the flow of our thoughts and knowledge and cloud our minds. In the Bhagvad Geeta, Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to first control his senses and kill this evil (desire) which obstructs the knowledge of *Nirgun Brahma* and *Saakar Brahma*.

Kabir's poetry also reminds us of the Metaphysical poets in English literature of 16th and 17th centuries, especially John Donne who held at times, angry conversations with God emphasizing on the spoken word and free verse.

Kabir also uses paradox in his poetry, where he says,

"I am neither a speaker nor hearer
I am neither a servant nor master
I am neither a bond nor free
I am neither detached nor attached
I am far from none : I am near to none."

In his mysticism of nature, Kabir experiences the presence of God in the sun , moon, stars, mountains and forests. The rain from the clouds has been experienced as a Divine blessing, soaking his body and soul and made the nature lush green.

Says Kabir,

" Love clouds have gathered
It is raining down on me,
My entire soul is soaked in it
All round there is greenery"

Kabir's simple illustrations from nature can be easily understood by the common man:

"As the fragrance in the heart of flower
As reflection in a mirror
Like that is the Lord staying always
In my minds bower."

A similar trend of nature mysticism can also be found in English and American literature. Prominent poets in this trend include Wordsworth, Whitman, and our own Rabindranath Tagore, who seemed to have been profoundly influenced by Kabir, and translated his `100 poems which, according to Tagore, have a flavour of Mysticism.

According to James Causin, the Irish-Indian Critic, editor, poet and teacher, Kabir's "religion is without the theology, though not without personality, his philosophy is without argument, though not without rationale ...: "

As Dr. Hubnath Pandey himself has pointed out that the founding principles of the French Revolution- Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Brotherhood- had already been laid down by Kabir in the 15th Century the same principles of global peace, unity, natural and social justice, equality and harmony have been echoed by Dr.

Bhimrao Ambedkar, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, President- Philosopher Dr. Radhakrishnan Father of the nation. Mahatma Gandhi and many other illustrious poet philosophers. As rightly pointed by Dr. Hubnath Pandey, we failed to notice this poet- saint who has demonstrated, through his sharp and pointed '*dohas*' (verses), how man himself has made smaller pieces of God, restricted to smaller regions and making these an excuse for propagating hate and war.

Getting to know about the life and times of Kabir Das is a reward in itself: It offers a fund of knowledge, wisdom and advice in very simple language : it makes the reader and scholar feel proud of the fact, that such an enlightened person lived in the 15th century in India.

Retrospection:

As a young school girl studying in Uttar Pradesh (Now Uttarakhand), being introduced to the Doha's of Kabir, instantly evoked awe, respect and admiration for this saint poet.

कांकर पाथर जोरि कै मस्जिद लई बनाय,
ता चढि मुल्ला बांग दे क्या बहरा हुआ खुदाय

Belonging to a Muslim Julaha family, the above statement would have been considered as sheer audacity : but that was the fearlessness and commitment of Kabir, as he pointedly said,

सतसैया के दोहरे, ज्यों नावक के तीर
देखन में छोटे लगै, घाव करें गंभीर

He relentlessly championed the doctrine, that god is dwelling in each one of us, there cannot be any reason for religion being based on caste, creed, sects or gender,

These thoughts remained with me, till I heard the word "Humanism". Contemplating upon it as a young teenager, I felt this needs to be the true religion of the world.

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BOOK REVIEW

ENQUIRING MINDS

Front for Rapid Economic Advancement of India (FREA)

CURATED BY MEERA SAVARA, Shakti Trust, 2022

Prof. Dr. Sunayana Kadle

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The book - ENQUIRING MINDS Front for Rapid Economic Advancement (FREA) of India has been curated by Meera Savara. Meera Savara, PhD, is a researcher and writer involved in the non-profit social sector. This book of 154 pages has been published in India in 2022 by AuthorsUpFront publishing Services Private Limited for the Shakti trust. Shakti Trust is a not- for - profit organisation.

The book is about **the front for Rapid economic advancement of India or FREA**. FREA was started in 1968 by graduates of Indian Institute of Technology in Bombay. They ran an Involvement program which took over 350 students from different professional colleges all over India to more than 40 rural and Urban projects across the country. The design of the project was dialectic. Every student was assigned to a specific task suitable to his own interest and their performance in the task inspired them to begin asking questions about the issue about development about education and values. The book is based on the memories and stories of over 50 people involved in FREA at some time or the other.

The contents of the book are as follow: The book begins with Acknowledgements to all the FREAITes who have shared their memories and experiences. The author also has thanked all the people she has mentioned in the book.

The Forward has been written by Pankaj Sekhsaria, PhD, Associate Professor, Centre for Technology Alternatives for Rural Areas (CTARA), IIT Bombay. In the forward he has shared his experiences on how he got into FREA and about how he was a part of the idea of writing the book related to the experiences of people. He writes that the book is inspiring for readers. This is because the stories are of the various people who have experimented to bring about a change in the society and learnt through their experiences.

He further says that the book is excellent as it provides hope and new possibilities that never go away.

This is followed by an Introduction by the author, wherein she shares her story of how she got associated with FREA. She explains the situation of India at that time and formation of FREA in 1968 at IIT Bombay. She explains that she was a part of the planning and execution of the Involvement Programme (IP) of FREA. She writes about the vision of FREA. She further writes that after 50 long years, when the members of FREA met at reunion and expressed how the involvement in FREA had changed the life of many, the thought of writing the book and sharing stories of people associated with FREA through her book, came to her mind.

This book explores different facets of the unique experiments 50 years after it began, through the memories of those who participated in it. It is a book that invites the reader to think about what inspires individuals to find out more about themselves and the society they seek to change

The book is divided into Seven sections

The first section- Meet **the people**, covers the stories of people associated with FREA and what they are doing at present. In this part, AG Rao, Dilip Thakore, Javed Anand, Ajit Balakrishnan and Nalini have shared their stories and experiences when they were a part of FREA. They further explain how their experiences with different communities gave them an insight into their problems and issues. Further how these insights changed their lives and developed various skills while interacting with communities and working for them. Though these people did not remain as a part of FREA after some time, they felt that the experiences have made them better as a person. This is because they got acquainted to the realities of life.

The stories of the people associated with FREA are interesting to read. These stories and experiences shared by them, make us reflect about ourselves and motivate the reader to do something different than the normal routine things in life.

The second section is titled **The Beginnings** the mood of the times and the start of FREA. The author in the first two pages has explained the turbulent situation in India in 1960 when India was defeated by China. It explains about the political and economic situation and the student protests and the National spirit and feeling of community that was alive in students, which motivated students to work in rural areas. The author tries to convey that FREA was founded against this backdrop. The founders of FREA, GD Agarwal and PK Mehta along with few Indians in USA deeply felt the need for contribution to National Rejuvenation. This part of the book takes us into history and the situation of India at that time. The reader can

picturize that era. The author through tells us the milieu in which FREA was born. The perspectives that contributed to the birth of FREA have been explained.

The third session: **The Involvement programme:** FREA's Flagship Programme. This part is very interesting to readers. The projects that were undertaken by FREA all over India are discussed. Through these projects, how the experiences were gained and the through reflections how the people involved had taken decisions and how there was a change in the mindset while interacting with the communities and participation in the rural development programmes. The list of the various programmes undertaken in all over India is given in this part.

Some of the projects taken by students are: helping in construction of dam in Orissa, doing economic survey of Adivasi villages in Orissa, help in digging well in Bihar, water table survey in west Bengal, Nutrition programmes in Bihar, planning of lift irrigation schemes in Gujarat, preparation of for need of roads in agricultural areas in Rajasthan , Digging tanks for rain water harvesting . It really makes one feel touched with the kind of efforts put in by the people in FREA.

The Fourth section- **Non-Organization** is about the effort's behind the scenes that made FREA possible. Here the entire Infrastructure of FREA has been explained which gives readers information on FREA and its activities and its growth.

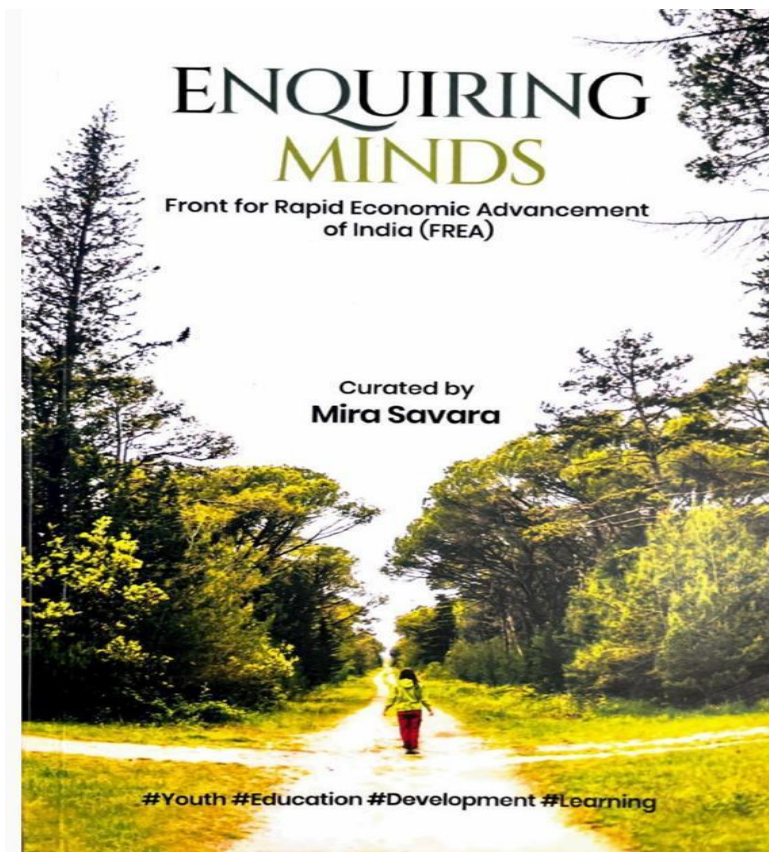
The fifth section is **Encounters** which explains how FREA changed the lives of the people it touched . This chapter talks about the people who either had a very short-lived association with FREA directly or indirectly with the personnel attached to FREA, yet they left an impression. Stories of such people have been told in this part of the book. The author in the last part of this chapter explains that due to political situation of emergency, the opportunities for involvement programme became fewer and fewer and faded away gradually. FREA was handed over to Akshara a women's resource center which is active today.

The Sixth is the **Reflections:** The learnings from the experiment. FREA has waned away. In this part the reflections on why the project had waned? or were the goals fulfilled? What was the goal? have been discussed. Several FREA members have shared their opinions on the programme and their learnings.

The seventh section **The Non Conclusion-** Here a very active member of FREA who played a significant role in building FREA, AK (Dunu)Roy, has shared his experiences of the four year learning with FREA.

I would like to thank the author for writing this book which is based on the experiences which are very reflective and thought-provoking to the readers. The book quotes several stories and real-life experiences encountered by the people involved with FREA. The book is the story of the people of FREA. The book records the achievement of FREA in rousing young people and committed students to work in the field of rural development to bring about social, gender and environmental change. All members on high positions and yet have tried to do something for the society unconditionally. All stories tell the reader that the tasks undertaken by the members inspired them to begin asking questions about the issue about development about education and values. This is what experiential learning does to people.

It is a book that invites the reader to think about what motivate individuals to find out more about themselves and the society they seek to transform.



TRIBUTE TO ELA BHATT (7-9-1933 TO 2-11-2022)

Prof. Dr. Vibhuti Patel,
Trustee,
Indian Council of Basic Education, Mumbai

Introduction

Indian women's rights movement has lost a visionary and powerful leader of poor and marginalised women workers and self-employed women facing intersectional vulnerabilities in the labour market, factor market and product markets in the informal sector. Her passing had created an immeasurable void in the democratic spaces that strives for dignity of individual and social cohesion. Elaben always stood by the underserved sections of society in the urban, rural and tribal areas. Elaben supported the survivors' of 1969 communal riots and 1980 anti-reservation riots in which the Dalit families were attacked. I, as student of M.S. University and member of Study and Struggle Alliance in Vadodara, got in touch with Elaben during early 1970s when the textile mills were closing their doors for the women workers. We were working for textile workers of Vadodara. At that time, Elaben was a young lawyer of Textile Labour Union founded by Gandhiji and Anasuyaben Sarabhai.

Secular Humanist who stood by the Dalit, Adivasis and Religious Minorities

In 1969, Gujarat had experienced extremely violent communal riots targeting Muslim localities, shops and bustees. In a highly charged environment of religious bigotry, Elaben stood tall among the survivors of riots- mainly widows, orphans, elderly who had lost their young boys and men, property, shops and homes and had lost all hopes of rebuilding their devastated lives. Elaben not only extended her helping hand in relief operations but also encouraged these 'women headed households' to start business as vegetable vendors, hawkers of food items, weavers of handloom, artisans producing handicrafts, embroidery workers and come together under the umbrella of SEVA women's cooperatives. When they were prevented to sell their products in the streets of central Ahmedabad, she encouraged and joined them registering their protest in the form of peaceful sit-ins in front of the District Collector's office.

Formation of Self-Employed Women's Association

Elaben formed world's first women's trade union, Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) with an aim of fight against exploitation and discrimination in the labour market and in course of last 50 years, put in place structures and systems for income generation programmes, self-employment, social security, housing rights, financial inclusion, health insurance and human development investment through collective efforts of the working-class women. During this year of Golden Jubilee Celebration, there are so many inspiring and evocative stories and vignettes have been shared in SEVA's monthly newsletter, Anasuya in Gujarati and Hindi!

Friend of Women's Rights and Women's Studies Movement

In 1981, Elaben invited me and Trupti Shah who was active in Manthan, Vadodara to, conduct cultural workshop at the newly established trade union office of Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) that was formed in 1972. It was very insightful to discuss with Elaben and her enthusiastic and erudite husband, Prof. Ramesh Bhatt who taught economics at H. K. Arts College of Gujarat University. Elaben found reaching out through cultural medium of songs, street plays, documentary film screening, photographic memories, storytelling, and exposure trips extremely valuable to develop synergy among women members of SEWA. We stayed at her home and enjoyed simple Gujarati meal warmly served by her and her husband, Prof. Rameshbhai Bhatt. At SEVA, Bhadra, Ahmedabad office, she also introduced us to different divisions and production units of SEVA in that building. We had great time singing feminist songs, improvising plays and experimenting with street- theatre format and watching documentary films in Gujarati on legal rights of women made by Dinazben Kalwachwala of India Space Research Organization (ISRO), Ahmedabad. She translated her favourite song, **We shall overcome** into to rustic/colloquial Gujarati as '*Ame Paar Karishun*'.

In 1981, during anti-reservation agitation in Gujarat, she vocally supported the reservation policy enshrined in the Constitution of India and when angry anti-reservation rioters came to burn her house and pelted stone at her, Elaben and Rameshbhai stood peacefully, firm, and poised. Robust women's rights movement and nascent women's studies movement stood by courageous Elaben and invited her to address plenary of the First Women's Studies Conference hosted by SNTD Women's University in Mumbai. When IAWS was formed, Elaben and several office bearers of SEVA became not only its life members, but also actively participated in the IAWS Conferences.

In 1985, Elaben led SEWA's delegation at the United Nations End of the Decade and we witnessed her humane style mentoring and hand holding of SEWA members in those 10 days of the International Conference in which there were delegates from 165 countries.

Shramshakti Report, 1988

In 1986, when Elaben became member of Rajya Sabha, both Dr. Neera Desai and myself visited her at her official Delhi residence. She welcomed us with great affection and enthusiastically showed us her labour of love, vegetable garden that she had nurtured. She chaired the National Commission on Self Employed Women in 1987. When she decided to come up with *Shram Shakti* Report profiling macro analysis of women in the unorganised sector workforce, hundreds of women's rights activists, scholars, researchers from all states and union territories of India who were inspired, led and mentored by Elaben supported her initiative voluntarily by collective data, providing case studies, field reports to produce a mammoth *Shram Shakti Report*, 1988. We, as *Narimukti* Collective of Gujarat, translated *Shramshakti Report* into Gujarati in 1989. Mahila Daxata Samiti Delhi and Mumbai published its Hindi and Marathi translation respectively.

Legal Reforms for labour Standards, Social Security, Social Protection of Workers

Under her leadership SEVA played pivotal role for enactment of The Unorganised Workers Social Security Act (2008), National Rural Livelihood Mission (2011) and Street Vendors Act (2014). In the II Labour Commission's Report only 2 chapter- on informal sector and child labour stand out for their commitment to social justice and workers' rights. For both these chapters were drafted by the SEVA team.

Elaben's Contribution to The Elders, formed on the 89th Birthday of Dr. Nelson Mandela:

In 2007, South Africa, Elaben was invited to attend the meeting convened by Dr. Nelson Mandela, Graça Machel, and Desmond Tutu in Johannesburg in which group of world leaders arrived at a consensus to contribute their wisdom, independent leadership and integrity to tackle some of the world's toughest problems under the banner of The Elders. Its commitment is for peace building, peace keeping and peace-making in the conflict zones, resolving cross-border disputes, sustainable development goals. Elaben Bhatt was particularly involved in The Elders' initiative on equality for women and girls and campaign titled,

‘Girls, not Brides’ against child marriages in Asia and Africa. In 2009-2010, Elaben made 2 visits to the conflict zones of the Middle East with Elders delegations and averred that, ‘Nonviolent work demand more hard work than fighting’ and ‘cowards use weapons’. In 2011, She visited Bihar with the fellow Elders- Mary Robinson, Desmond Tutu and Gro Harlem Brundtland. Together, the Elders and had a dialogue with the members of *Jagruti*, a youth-led project aimed at preventing child marriages in Bihar, and motivated the state government of Bihar to make concerted efforts to prevent child marriages with the help of community based development investment in education, nutrition and women empowerment.

Elaben’s Persona

Several obituaries by her colleagues and admirers have described Elaben as a ‘gentle revolutionary’. Elaben won the hearts of activists and academicians, researchers and policy makers by her polite but firm style of communication, her refined sense of humour, warm hospitality that had a personal-Elaben touch, her courage of conviction and creative methods of finding solutions to unfolding challenges in the changing socio-economic and political realities that threatened the survival base of the urban, rural and tribal women. She was a secular humanist not only in her speeches but also in praxis. Recipient of Padma Shree, Padma Vibhushan, Magsaysay Award for Community leadership and *Frances Legion d’Honneur*, Right Livelihood Award, Indira Gandhi International Prize for Peace, *honoris causa* from Harvard-Yale-SNDT Women’s University and many more; as well as innumerable prestigious awards from the state and non-state institutions all over the world; Elaben remained humble and accessible to all of us till the last day of her life. As she spoke slowly and in a non-threatening manner, she could reach out to her listeners effectively-may they be young students, working class women, elderly artisans, erudite professionals, funders, global politicians, and firebrand journalists. As Chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Ahmedabad during 2015-2022, Elaben firmly adhered to Gandhian principles of non-sectarian and pluralist approach in governance.

Selfless Life Lived with Honesty of Purpose

Elaben, as a true Gandhian followed the principles of simplicity, dignity of sweat labour, decentralization, economic self-sufficiency, cooperation, equality, non-violence, peacemaking, peace keeping, peace building, actions guided by human values of ethics and justice, social solidarity, empowerment of village production units and sustainable future by living in harmony with nature. She considered poverty and hunger as structural and systemic violence. Her inspiring values and beliefs conveyed in these statements, ‘Let diversity be maintained, grow,

flourish....’. ‘Think correlatedly, creatively and respond with empathy and social solidarity when you face challenges in life’.

Elaben was a product of freedom movement and put into practice, Rabindranath Tagore’s verses *Ekla Cholo Re*, when faced with adversities in her public life. She had a harmonious personal life. While working with poor women at the grass roots level, she acquired new wisdom from the grounded reality. Whether it was a matter of desirable rate of interest to be charged by SEWA Cooperative Bank or launching SEVA Insurance Programme, she consulted the members of SEWA. Currently SEWA Bharat has 21 lakh members in 18 states of India and luminaries such as Renana Jhabvala and Mirai Chatterjee who dedicated their whole life for the mission of SEWA and Elaben’s dream of empowerment of unorganised and informal sector workers. ILO has recognised SEVA as a Trade Union.

During the lockdown in 2021, It was such a moral boost to find you on zoom platform of Citizens Forum by Bharti Sinha Sahay when I made presentation on Gender Responsive Budgets. Your presence and encouraging comments meant a lot to me. We wanted you to address IAWS members, but now we have to satisfy ourselves with your inspiring memories. Dear Elaben, we promise to continue your legacy of making dedicated efforts for social security, social protection of the unorganised sector workers and will amplify their voices. My heartfelt condolences to Elaben’s daughter-Amimayiben, son-Mihirbhai and their family members, her colleagues and millions of members of SEWA.

I would like to end this tribute with beautiful verses of *Our Deepest Fear* by Marianne Williamson that was often recited by Dr. Nelson Mandela.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness
That most frightens us.
We ask ourselves
Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?
Actually, who are you *not* to be?
You are a child of God.
Your playing small
Does not serve the world.
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking
So that other people won't feel insecure around you.

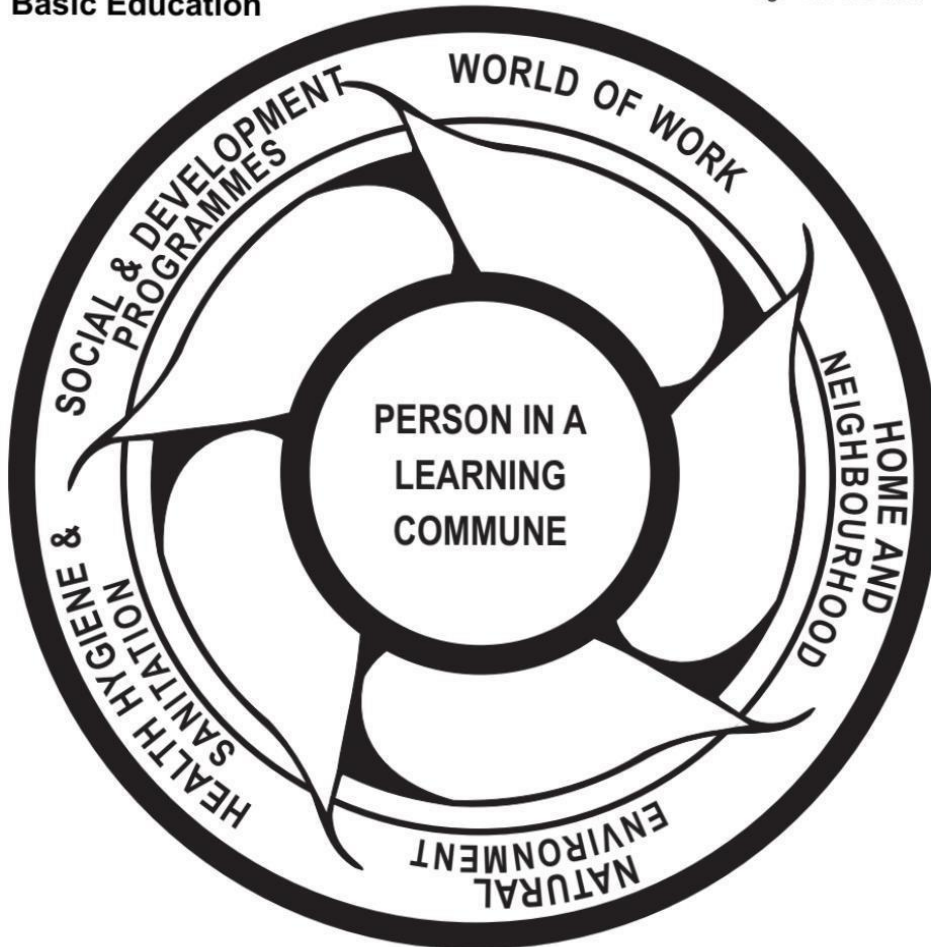
We are all meant to shine,
As children do.
We were born to make manifest
The glory of God that is within us.
It's not just in some of us;
It's in everyone.
And as we let our own light shine,
We unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.
As we're liberated from our own fear,
Our presence automatically liberates others.
Dear Elaben, your presence had a liberating influence over all those whose lives
your touched. Rest in power Elaben. We promise to follow in your footsteps
wherever we are.

GANDHI SHIKSHAN BHAVAN

Functional Education

Indian Council of
Basic Education

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Development of well-integrate personality is possible if :

- a. Educational experiences and work experiences interweave, intersect and reinforce each other.
- b. Students and teachers participate actively in the community services such as adult education, promotion of better health, hygiene and sanitation etc.
- c. Curriculum provides for self-directed learning and
- d. Education concerns itself with the development of the human person.

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