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**QUEST IN EDUCATION**  
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## Editorial

Dear Readers,

Veteran Gandhian Shri. Jyotibhai Desai who was former President and Management Committee member of Indian Council of Basic Education passed away on 27-2-2024.

Primary research based article by Dr. Nandita Mondal attempts to explore the need of education and training for these iconic lot of service providers to enable them to survive and negotiate with the contemporary time. The research had been conducted through qualitative methods.

Prof. Sunayana Kadle's review article of *India Higher Education Report 2020 Employment & Employability of Higher Education Graduates in India* Edited by N.V. Varghese & Mona Khare provides an in-depth analysis of this evidence-based book with policy imperatives.

Anna Usha Abraham's Review of *Looking Back*, an autobiography of Dhondo Keshav Karve brings out trials and tribulations of Maharshi Karve to fulfil his vision and mission of Empowerment of women through higher education more than 100 years back.

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.

Quest in Education pays respectful homage to the departed soul and publishes an article capturing illustrious life of this committed Gandhian educationist by Smt. Nupur Mitra and an obituary by Smt. Asha Damle. Prof. Vibhuti Patel has written a tribute to a brilliant educationist Prof. Suma Chitnis (1933-2024).

**Prof. Vibhuti Patel**  
**Editor**

**JYOTIBHAI DESAI (5-5-1926 TO 27-2-2024) AND INDIAN COUNCIL OF  
BASIC EDUCATION (ICBE), GANDHI SHIKSHAN BHAVAN, MUMBAI**

**SMT. NUPUR MITRA,**  
President, ICBE,  
Juhu, Mumbai

*Jyotibhai was gentle giant for whom age was just a number. He never came in the way of his actions driven by strong conviction. From a teenager to a nonagenarian his life was a relentless fight for truth and justice. No cause was too small for him. He was a fiery rebel who served his jail time for participation in the quit India movement.*

In 1975 the students of Gandhi Shikshan Bhavan College of Education, Juhu Bombay (The B.Ed. college is now called Smt. Surajba College of Education) were taken on an educational tour to Vedchhi near Surat in Gujarat. I was one of the forty odd students in the trip, which promised to be an exciting one, because we would be staying in a village for the first time and visiting educational institutes in rural areas. Vajubhai Patel the founder director of Indian Council of Basic Education (ICBE) introduced us to Jyotibhai Desai a teacher educator at Gandhi Vidyapeeth Vedchhi. Jyotibhai was a striking personality his simplicity in attire and lifestyle didn't betray his urban upbringing. He took us around the institute and explained how he implemented the Nai Talim method of teaching as propounded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1937. We had many queries which he patiently answered with a smile. Years later in 1999 when as President of ICBE, Gandhi Shikshan Bhavan Juhu Bombay, he came to attend meetings of the managing committee and trustees, the interactions with him increased. His innovative suggestions and several initiatives to better the standard of teaching were very beneficial. I can personally recall that he would seek to every committee member's opinion on different topics under discussion. He was totally democratic in his functioning, he never imposed, instead put his view across in a reasoned manner and decided by consensus. Jyotibhai was blessed with a very good memory. He could recall exactly a year later what was discussed, decisions taken and enquired about follow-up measures undertaken. He smilingly interacted with all at Gandhi Shikshan Bhavan and enquired after their welfare. The last meeting Jyotibhai attended in Gandhi Shikshan Bhavan was in the

summer of 2019. He spent his last years with his wife Maliniben, daughter Swati Desai and son in law Michael Mazgaonkar in Baroda, He breathed his last on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024. Jyotibhai's presence and guidance will be missed by all who knew him and those whose lives he had touched.

### **Early years**

Jyotibhai Desai was born on 5th May 1926 in erstwhile Bombay presidency. He grew up in his maternal grandfather's house in a joint family at Girgaon Chowpatty at Thakurdwar, Mumbai comprising his grandparents, parents, elder siblings and cousins. It was a family of liberal minded people all engaged in some form of activism against British rule. His parents actively took part in the freedom struggle. While narrating how he entered into political activism. Jyotibhai spoke of how when he was barely two and a half years old, his mother put him in a truck full of children, including his elder brother and cousin who were all part of the Vanar Sena, a student volunteer force that helped during the freedom struggle, his father too was a freedom fighter, hence his initiation into activism began as a toddler and continued till the very end.

While recalling his mother's contribution to the country and society Jyotibhai said, she urged her husband to leave the children in her care and join the Salt Satyagraha led by Gandhiji, which he did. She was among the first few women in Bombay to learn to spin the Charkha. She even taught other women to spin. When she passed away in 1976 about three thousand fisher folk came to condole her passing. Hence it was only natural for him to take the path of activism for some cause or the other

### **School Life:**

At the time of admission to a Municipal School in Kandawadi, Mumbai; the school teacher admitted him in grade two directly as he could grasp much better than other students of his age. In a couple of months, he was promoted to grade three and in three months, he was given double promotion to grade five. In other words, his formal schooling started in grade five.

While in his teens, along with his elder brother and cousin, Jyotibhai joined the RSS (Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh) and soon he became the *Shakha*

*Sanchalak*. Infact, he was the first Gujarati to be a *Shakha Sanchalak*. He admitted that he learnt a few good things like living a simple and frugal life and complete dedication to the country. At one of the meeting in the RSS head office in Sandhurst Road, Bombay, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar gave a speech which was blatantly discriminatory and biased against the minority Muslim community. Young Jyotibhai protested and walked out of the meeting severing all links with the RSS, because he believed in the Gandhian ideology of equality among all sections of the Society.

In 1942 his maternal Grandfather passed away and his family moved to Santacruz. He was admitted to Anandilal Podar School in std XI. When the Principal learnt about his nationalistic leanings, he called Jyotibhai, his elder brother and cousin and warned them of strict action, if they took part in Gandhiji's Quit India Movement, the call for which was given in July 1942. This was not acceptable to Jyotibhai and his siblings. The team of three young activists left school and walked out. They felt liberated and free as they could now take part in congress meetings and participate in the Quit India movement.

On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1942 when Gandhiji was arrested, Jyotibhai learnt that Kasturba would address the gathering at Shivaji Park on 9<sup>th</sup> August. Jyotibhai and his team rushed to be at the gathering, only to find a British Sargent and his company detail, preventing people from entering the meeting site.

Defiantly they made their way into the ground. Lathi charge had begun. A young patriot sat himself in the middle of the crowd and refused to budge. Jyotibhai and his team rushed and pitched themselves next to the young protestor. The Sargent warned that he would open fire but the adamant youngsters stood their ground and fearlessly refused to move. The sergeant finally relented and withdrew his troops. This fearless daredevilry was a turning point in his life. He found his purpose in life. Now he did not fear any power, he was determined to defy injustice of any kind and realized protest-yielded results.

After this, he was advised to join college but with a reputation for defiance and protest against the British, no college in British ruled India would admit him. It was Yusuf Meherally then Mayor of Bombay, who recommended his name to the

Principal of Elphinstone College, who admitted him but cautioned him against his political activism. This however didn't deter Jyotibhai. However there was a change in his thinking. From then on, he turned from a hardline protestor to a gentle one.

On the advice of several Gandhians particularly the then Bombay Chief Minister B.G. Kher, he went to serve in rural areas. He moved to Vedchi in Gujarat and took part in the non-cooperation movement.

### **Foray into the Education Field**

He began reading about Gandhian thoughts. It took him a couple of years to understand Gandhiji's philosophy, his ideas on nonviolence -Ahimsa, Gram Swaraj, untouchability and Gandhiji's thoughts on education particularly *Nai Talim*. To learn more about education, he joined the *Balkanji Bari* Training Institute established by Sevak Bhojraj and was fortunate to be guided by Nanabhai and Jugatram Dave, the founding director of the Teachers' Training Centre in Gandhi Vidyapeeth, Vedcchi. Jugatramji was a great leader of the tribal people of South Gujarat and a trusted disciple of Gandhiji besides being in charge of Swaraj Ashram.

In 1957 Jyotibhai completed his Masters in Education from London University. He served as an educator in the Gandhian institute called Lok Bharti in the Sanosara village in Bhavnagar, district of Gujarat. This institute was established for development and education in rural areas. In the 1960's Jyotibhai was invited by Jugatrambahi Dave to help start the teachers training center in the Gandhi Vidyapeeth Gujarat. Here Jyotibhai implemented Gandhiji's ideas on education. In 1975 Jyotibhai did an International Course in Education from Oxford University.

From 1975 to 1982 Jyotibhai was a member of the Gujarat State Education board and from 1990 to 1994 he was a member of the Central Advisory board of education (CABE). Jyotibhai was President of Sevagram *Nai Talim Samiti*, a member of the Administrative Council of Sevagram Ashram. He was the member of the Kasturba Education Committee in Indore and a member of the administrative body of the Gandhi Vidyapeeth, Vedchi.

## **Views of Jyotibhai on Education and Educational institutions**

- A nation and its people can attain true freedom and autonomy only through education
- I don't want to be called a Gandhian educationist though Gandhiji had a deep impact on me.
- I had to change my institutes seven times because of this firm belief in independent thought and action
- In Today's educational institutions there is no scope for children to attain knowledge or to think independently...mainstream education is evolving without any regard to the inherent passion within children to seek and attain knowledge.
- Today's education system makes children helpless and lacking in support. It ingrains with in the child the extremely wrong notion that life is all about getting a job and earning money.
- In an educational system shrunk and limited to classroom and textbook our umbilical code to the society are being cut off students who will in the future have an important role to play in the political formation of this nation should mould their character and develop their personalities, with active engagement with the real socio cultural environment surrounding their lives
- This division of learning into separate subject areas must be avoided at least in the beginning stages of education otherwise it will hamper the comprehensiveness of knowledge gaining. Real education lies beyond the walls of syllabus
- Education has to be removed from the purview of the government States role should be limited to providing the physical amenities required for education. It shouldn't interfere in what the students learn or how they learn..... this does not mean that education should be written off to the multinational corporation or corporate or that it should be open to reckless privatization.....
- There is hardly any doubt that technology has brought about positive manifestation in our lives it is perilous to believe that technological advancement will be the answer to all our social problems. Some of the measures adopted in educational institutions in the name of technology is completely bogus.

### **Social activism**

Not one to be involved with just one cause at a time Jyotibhai's engagement spread to the social and political sphere on multiple fronts.



Jyotibhai joined Lok Nayak Jayprakash Narayan in helping reform and rehabilitate ‘dacoits’ in the Lakhimpur open jail at Panna in Madhya Pradesh. In his initiative the students of the teachers training college where he was a teacher assisted him. Jyotibhai did not like them being called ‘dacoits’. He said they were people like us who had revolted against injustice and they could be brought back to the mainstream through education, love and understanding their problems,

He was deeply concerned about the exploitation of natural resources be it water, land or forests, as these affected the lives of the helpless rural populace and tribal communities. In the nineteen eighties Jyotibhai was one of the main organizers of the popular movement against industrial pollution of the Tungabhadra River in Dharwad. In 1989 Jyotibhai was arrested along with Medha Patkar and other activists from the *Narmada Bachao Aandolan* construction site for protesting against the height of the dam and the plight of the displaced people.

He was critical of the practice of untouchability which he opposed from the time he was in school. He admitted that he never led a campaign against untouchability because he did not want to sermonize. His life, his living his interaction and conduct were devoid of any biases, be it social, religious or class or caste related. His activism did not remain confined within the Indian shore boundaries. He was among the Satyagrahis who protested American imperialism in the conflict zone of Central America as he was the member of the International Peace Brigade for the displaced people of Bangladesh refugee camp. Jyotibhai and his students helped in the refugee camps of the displaced people of Bangladesh during their freedom struggle in 1971

He even visited North Ireland when the violent conflict between the Catholics and the protestants was at the peak he stayed among the local social activist and helped in the healing process and sharing responsibilities with his hosts in looking after the orphaned children. Such was Jyotibhai’s, missionary zeal to fight for just causes for the exploited. No situation however fraught with danger could deter him. In post-independence India Jyotibhai was jailed five times for protests and campaigns.

### **Jyotibhai’s Persona**

Jyotibhai in his early teenage years transformed into a gentle crusader abhorring the path of violence. This change came about after his study of Gandhian

philosophy during his early Vedchi days. He shunned violence in speech and action following the path of gentle persuasion and discourse as Ahimsa was dear to him. His conviction and resolve wavered or floundered even in the face of strong opposition and violent suppressive moves by the powers that be. Another aspect of Jyotibhai that remained constant was his childlike and enigmatic smile even in the most adverse situations.

### **Jyotibhai as a family man**

Jyotibhai was a devoted family man. His wife Maliniben a strong but gentle woman steadfastly supported Jyotibhai in all his actions. A teacher at the Vedchi Ashram Maliniben adjusted to Jyotibhai's simple and modest lifestyle, as she shared the same views and convictions. Both were liberal minded and maintained an open house. Their warm hospitality is remembered by one and all whose lives they touch in some way or the other. Daughter Swati Desai has also followed in the path of service to society. Both Swati and her husband Michael Mazgaonkar are engaged in bettering the lives of the marginalized remote rural areas especially the tribals of Gujarat. At present they are in an adivasi village in Juna Modasa in Aravali district of Gujarat.

A family totally dedicated to educational and social causes; they have brought a ray of hope to those left behind. We at the Indian Council of Basic Education Gandhi Shikshan Bhavan, Juhu, Mumbai remember with gratitude late Jyotibhai Desai and convey our solidarity to Swati Desai and the social causes she espouses.

### **Acknowledgements**

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- Jyotibhai Desai (August, 2021) 'Let us give up ghost of Development and be a Human', Ahmedabad: *Vichar Valonu* (Gujarati), Vol. 9, No. 8.

## **SURVIVAL NEED FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR DABBAWALLAHS OF MUMBAI**

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*Mumbai takes pride in the presence of the iconic fleet of Dabbawallas around the glittering city of Mumbai who serve almost 200,000 people across the city. The precision with which they work is exemplary. They reach exactly the time that have been decided with their clients, be it hot and humid summer or long period of rainy season while most of the city's transport may fail to turn up on the rain-washed roads of Mumbai. Moreover, they do deliver on bicycle and made their occupation as the most eco-friendly one. Off late, such occupation is facing tough competition from another set of service providers run by the big players like Zomato, Swiggy etc. Now, today the number of persons engaged in the fleet of dabbawallas are rapidly decreasing which is very alarming. It has reached a stage where this particular ecofriendly occupation is getting wiped out. Advancement of technology and algorithm based work allocation in service provider industry coupled with the presence of capital rich multinational are posing difficult challenge to such traditional ecofriendly occupation enormously.*

### **Introduction**

In July, 2005, the incident that brings the bustling streets of Mumbai in standstill with lakhs of officegoers stranded helplessly within waist-high level of water amidst heavy downpour, before even the city limped back on its feet, *Dabbawallahs* were back to their job wading through water to reach food to the people. They legitimately won the symbol of resilience.

The fleet of almost 5000 *Dabbawallahs* in the city have absolutely

impeccable business records to provide the food service at doorstep with six hours every day, six days a week, 52 weeks in a year precisely. The astounding point in this entire business is the mistakes are rare. There is legendary reliability that has been established by meticulous work by this workforce is simply a tale to tell.

Since, its foundation in 1890, This industry has been endured wars, monsoons, riots and a series of terror attacks, all of which created roadblocks for city life except this industry of food service. The semiliterate fleet of workers manage the entire business acumen on the roads of this fourth largest city of the world with a meticulously precision. They are most ecofriendly with the usage of bicycle and perform their tasks days after days without the usage of IT and even a simple device like mobile phone. It was not surprising that it received the critical acclaim from distinguished visitors like Prince Charles of UK, Richard Branson of Airlines and the Fleet of Employees of Federal Express, World leader in logistics industry to say a few. Over the years, the *Dabbawallahs* became the part of important case study that the prestigious Management Schools included into their syllabus. The *Dabbawallahs* are considered as the example of sustainable business enterprise which worked on four strong pillars like organising, precision like system, a meticulous and robust business process and an exemplary work culture. The human capital that it engages are requiring low cost, low skill yet rich in receiver's side as this industry is totally ecofriendly and keep the homemade food available to the gen Z for their wellbeing. The industry became the testimony that the ordinary set of informal workers can achieve the pivotal success of exemplary work in such a huge commercial hub.

In recent past, contemporary society around us increasingly value the Information technology driven education and occupation thereafter as an offshoot. The food service industry is not an exception. The occupation of Mumbai's iconic *Dabbawallahs* are tremendously impacted due to the increasing grip of paws extended by the platform economy based food service like Zomato, Swiggy etc. In this backdrop, we need to relook at the entire business acumen of Mumbai's *Dabbawallahs*. We shall examine in this article the present nature of human capital that it engaged

with and would try to explore what it requires to negotiate and survive in this contemporary time.

## **Nature of future of work : A question**

Our civilisations reflected that with progress of science and technology our economic and social lives are being changed with resultant considerable changes in the education and training for that matter to make people compatible to walk with these changes. Earlier time, it had no impact on unemployment i.e. as it was complemented other set of tasks that had not gone through automation. Errol (2020) opined that advancement in computing power and Artificial Intelligence (AI) calls into question whether future technologies will continue to complement human in non-routine tasks whilst substituting them in routine tasks. At this point, let me organise my article here. The first part of the paper would dismantle the nuances of the business processes of *Dabbawallahs* and the second part will be dealt with the question at hand to conclude. The data for this paper has been collected through the qualitative enquiry done at two different railway junction that are Dadar and Ghatkopar.

### **1.1 Significance of Informal Economy and *Dabbawallahs***

The *Dabbawallahs* stands as a compelling illustration of the significance of the informal economy. While the informal economy often garners concerns, it is essential to recognize that it also offers numerous advantages. These dedicated individuals in Mumbai exemplify the informal economy's positive impact and deserve recognition for their unwavering commitment and diligence.

The informal economy, often viewed with apprehension world-wide in mainstream economics, carries a wealth of merits that must not go unnoticed. The *Dabbawallahs* , a prized asset in Mumbai, epitomizes this notion, and their diligent efforts deserve celebration. What underscores the importance of the informal economy, as embodied by the *Dabbawallahs* , are the following key aspects:

1. **Emergence as a Small Enterprise:** Originating as a small group of

lunchbox couriers, the *Dabbawallahs* have transformed into a highly sophisticated and streamlined network that now caters to millions. Their journey underscores the potential of grassroots initiatives to blossom into influential systems.

2. **Economic Livelihood:** The *Dabbawallahs* have managed to secure a respectable livelihood by providing an invaluable service to their local community. Their contributions underscore the capacity of the informal economy to empower individuals through meaningful work.
3. **Essential Service Providers:** The *Dabbawallahs* fulfill a crucial need for the working populace of Mumbai. Their service significantly reduces traffic congestion by utilizing bicycles and trains for lunchbox deliveries, thereby contributing to the city's sustainability and efficiency.

The informal economy is a multifaceted construct, encompassing both challenges and benefits. While it can give rise to certain difficulties, its role in the global economy is undeniable.

## 1.2 Historical Background and Evolution

The historical background of Mumbai's *Dabbawallahs* dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The term "*Dabbawallah*" originates from the Marathi word "dabba" meaning lunchbox and "wala" meaning carrier or person. This intricate lunch delivery system started around 1890 during the British colonial era when a Parsi banker wished to have his homemade lunch delivered to his workplace. Unable to find a reliable means of transportation, he employed a person to carry his lunchbox. This small incident marked the inception of what would become a well-organized and iconic institution in Mumbai.

As the city's industrial and commercial landscape evolved, more people migrated to Mumbai in search of better livelihoods. This surge in population created a demand for convenient and efficient lunch delivery services for workers. The *Dabbawallahs* capitalized on this demand and gradually developed an intricate system to cater to the growing needs of the city's workforce.

Over the years, the *Dabbawallahs* refined their operations and established a complex network involving collection from homes, transportation by bicycles and local trains, and accurate delivery to the recipients. Despite challenges posed by Mumbai's congested streets and rapid urbanization, the *Dabbawallahs* persevered and maintained their high level of service quality.

The *Dabbawallahs'* reputation for accuracy, punctuality, and reliability gradually earned them recognition beyond Mumbai's borders. Their remarkable efficiency and minimal error rate of less than 1% drew the attention of researchers, business schools, and management experts worldwide. Over the time, the *Dabbawallahs* are not only an essential part of Mumbai's cultural and economic fabric but also stand as a symbol of diligence, teamwork, and grassroots innovation. Their historical journey from a small lunch delivery service to an internationally acclaimed example of efficient logistics showcases their adaptability and commitment to their craft.

### **1.3 Operational Structure and Process**

The operational structure and process of Mumbai's *Dabbawallahs* are renowned for their efficiency and precision. This complex system involves an organization and a meticulously orchestrated sequence of steps to ensure the accurate and timely delivery of lunchboxes to thousands of customers across the city. The following outlines their operational structure and process:

#### **1.3.1 Operational Structure:**

1. **Divisions:** The *Dabbawallahs* are organized into various groups and supervised by a leader called "Muqaddams," each responsible for a specific area or neighborhood in Mumbai.
2. **Teams:** Within each Muqaddam's jurisdiction, there are multiple teams of *Dabbawallahs*. Each team typically consists of a leader and several members.

3. **Roles:** The teams are responsible for collecting lunchboxes from customers' homes, delivering them to workplaces, and returning empty containers to the homes in the afternoon.

### 1.3.2 Operational Process:

1. **Morning Collection:** The process begins early in the morning, as *Dabbawallahs* collect lunchboxes from customers' homes. These lunch boxes are often color-coded and labeled with specific markings for identification.
2. **Sorting and Grouping:** At a central location or railway station, the collected lunchboxes are sorted and grouped according to their destination areas. This meticulous sorting ensures efficient distribution.
3. **Transportation:** *Dabbawallahs* utilize bicycles to transport the grouped lunchboxes to railway stations. At the stations, they expertly load the lunchboxes onto local trains based on their destination stations.
4. **Delivery and Exchange:** At the destination station, another team of *Dabbawallahs* awaits to collect the lunch boxes. They then distribute the lunchboxes to their respective recipients at workplaces, ensuring accuracy and timeliness.
5. **Return and Collection:** After lunchtime, the empty lunchboxes are collected from workplaces and transported back to their respective homes using the same system of bicycles and trains.
6. **Sorting and Return:** The empty lunchboxes are again sorted and returned to the customers' homes in the afternoon, completing the cycle.

The *Dabbawallahs* grouped them in almost 200 units (rough estimation) where each group is comprised of 25 people. Organizationally this is very flat and fuels the smooth operation. The local groups have autonomy at their hands to operate at their local levels. Centrally it is managed by a management committee elected by the people at the local groups. The entry of new person can be done by depositing the amount which is ten times of estimated calculated income from the local area or one can say, from the local area of operation.

This well-organized yet decentralised operational structure, built upon years of



experience and intricate communication, allows the *Dabbawallahs* to maintain their exceptional accuracy and punctuality. Their commitment to teamwork, precision, and adherence to well-defined processes has enabled them to stand as a remarkable example of efficient logistics and service excellence.

The *Dabbawallahs'* traditional operations are characterised by their intricate coding system, teamwork, and a strong sense of community. Each lunchbox is marked with a unique color-coded symbol, which helps them sort and deliver thousands of lunches accurately across Mumbai's vast urban landscape. This system has been instrumental in maintaining its renowned accuracy rate.

The Suburban railway system enabled the *Dabbawallahs* to create a regulatory mechanism in a very precise way. The trains stop at the major stations for 40 seconds and for 20 seconds at the interim stations. The loading and unloading of dabbas have to be done within that time period.

To ensure the delivery on time, the contingent generally keeps one or two extra manpower at hand in each locality. At the time of emergency the extra person will pick up the thread to continue the work process. Generally the newer entrants into the occupation get trained under the older group members. All are required to know all types of work like sorting, loading, unloading and pick up and drop. There are cross training happening for people to work in each segment of the entire work process to ensure the mission of *Dabbawallahs* that is delivery of food on time. Therefore, there is no workforce division of labour.

#### **1.4 Cultural Significance**

Mumbai's *Dabbawallahs* hold substantial cultural significance by transcending their role as lunchbox carriers. They foster a sense of community among themselves and forge connections within the larger society they serve. Their unwavering punctuality and accuracy have earned them accolade and reputation as symbols of trustworthiness, contributing to the city's efficiency and fast-paced lifestyle. Rooted in tradition, their color-coded system and personal interactions preserve Mumbai's cultural heritage while adapting to modern demands. These *Dabbawallahs* also symbolize the value of diligence and commitment

in everyday tasks, reflecting the city's work ethic. Their recognition has spread internationally, reflecting their role as local icons embodying Mumbai's resilience and unique ethos. Thus, they stand as cultural icons embodying values of community, tradition, reliability, and hard work, reflecting the diverse and dynamic identity of Mumbai.

They follow strict discipline and rules. The members of the fleet generally have their lunch only after all dabbas are delivered. They do monitor themselves on job and the mistakes are immediately pointed out. They are very much strict in enforcing time schedule both end i.e. at delivery as well as pick up point. If any customer is late in preparing the dabba ready to hand over to the respective *Dabbawallah* at the local level, they give a verbal notification to the person concerned and on repeating such incident, they do not fail to do away with the particular customer to cater to their larger base of customers. Stay put to their mission of delivery on time is of prime value to them.

Established in 1890 by Mahadeo Havaji Bachche, the system has existed without modern technology until recently. Trust forms the bedrock of the *Dabbawallahs'* operations. Customers entrust their meals to the *Dabbawallahs*, believing they will be delivered accurately and promptly. This mutual trust is built over years of consistent and reliable service. Most *Dabbawallahs* have personal relationships with their clients, allowing for a sense of familiarity and accountability.

They work in teams that are highly coordinated and organised. Each team member trusts their colleagues to fulfill their respective roles with precision. There is minimal supervision, as they rely on each other's commitment to their shared purpose. The *Dabbawallahs* operate under the guidance of a few experienced leaders elected by their peers. These leaders are entrusted with decision-making and dispute resolution. The trust placed in these leaders stems from their deep understanding of the organisation's values and their commitment to maintaining the system's integrity.

**Impact on Business Growth:** The reliance on trust has propelled the *Dabbawallahs* business to new heights:

- **Customer Retention and Expansion:** Customer loyalty directly results from the trust built over the years. Satisfied customers refer new clients, leading to organic business growth.
- **Efficiency and Reliability:** Trust in team members' abilities eliminates the need for constant supervision, allowing the *Dabbawallahs* to focus on their tasks. This operational efficiency has enabled them to handle many deliveries daily.
- **Adaptation and Innovation:** They trust in their leaders allows for flexibility in decision-making and implementing new ideas. This adaptability has enabled them to incorporate modern technologies, such as coding systems, for efficient routing.

While the *Dabbawallah's* reliance on trust has been pivotal to their success, maintaining trust in a changing environment presents challenges. As Mumbai evolves and work patterns shift, they must find ways to adapt without compromising their core values.

Their remarkable success story is a testament to the power of trust in business operations. Their model offers valuable insights into how to trust, when deeply ingrained in an organisation's culture and practices, can drive growth, efficiency, and innovation. As the business landscape evolves, the *Dabbawallahs'* commitment to trust is an enduring lesson for both traditional and modern enterprises.

## 1.5 Impact of Technological Changes

- **Digital Divide:** Not all *Dabbawallahs* have equal access to or familiarity with technology, potentially creating a divide within the workforce.
- **Balancing Tradition and Innovation:** Finding the right balance between tradition and technological innovation is essential to preserve the *Dabbawallahs'* unique identity and strengths.

- Adjusting to Changing Lifestyles and Preferences
- **Time Constraints:** Modern work schedules and longer commutes have led to tighter time constraints, affecting when and what individuals eat.
- **Digital Convenience:** The rise of digital platforms for food delivery has introduced convenience, allowing customers to order meals easily.



## **Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic triggered Lockdown:**

The lockdown declared during the COVID-19 pandemic gave a blow to the *Dabbawallahs* business. Many of them needed an alternative source of income. Since they were surviving on their meager income earned through customers, they had no savings for situations like these. Many *Dabbawallahs* returned to their villages where they could afford rent and farm their piece of land to survive. At that moment, the HDFC Bank came to the rescue of 5000 *Dabbawallahs* existing at that time. The bank manager ensured that every dabbawalla received a monthly ration resolving the issue of food. They did not stop here but provided educational supplies to the children of these *Dabbawallahs*, including Tablets for online learning. They were also offered other essentials like clothing, etc. Those who had returned to their villages were delivered these supplies to their places, so every *Dabbawallah* was included. While interviewing them, we could see how grateful these *Dabbawallahs* were for this assistance from the HDFC Bank during tough times. Much more can be done for the social security of the Mumbai *Dabbawallahs*. As a matter of fact, the *Dabbawallahs* found this period paralysed their entire business acumen built over 130 years in just almost overnight and reduced them reaching on the verge of barely surviving. The pride that they have associated with their occupation as ever ready to serve their customer, the core mission of their organization received a lethal blow.

## **Conclusion**

Now, this recent past pandemic opened a flood gate for platform economy based food services backed by multinational capital rich companies who are utilizing the Algorithm based customer service to cater to the need of the hour to be entirely contactless. Secondly, the lifestyle pattern changed as most of the jobs were being done from home. People prefer to order and get served with the food at doorstep. This change happened almost overnight and continued in many workplaces. Although life came back to normalcy, the trend stayed back. This has posed a serious challenge to the occupation of *Dabbawallahs* of Mumbai. This chain of services was broken due to prolonged lockdown and subsequent changes in economic and social order in larger society to be precise. The personalized ties between the *Dabbawallahs* and the customers being severed. The leadership is also perplexed to handle such an attack on occupation. Since the *Dabbawallahs* are at the peripheral region of informal economy which is predominantly labour extensive, low cost, low earning segment, there was very less preparedness to switch the jobs to survive. People from this occupation

hardly left with resources, time and capacity to cope with sudden job loss.

The present generation of customers dwell in the time where they switch from accumulation of goods to the accumulation of experiences. Here to survive with customer service based industry, one needs to be ever innovative and entrepreneurial to extend the form of personalised service with different skill sets. The lack of education and lack of proper training to build such capacity is the mainstay of the grievous situation that the occupation is facing today. The inner strength of such occupation like making homemade food availability, ecofriendly usage of bicycle and train coaches coupled with proper soft skill sets on the part of the service providers should be brought forth into the limelight by the leadership of the organization. Imparting training into the entire segment of human capital and introduction of experiential learning among them could possibly bring back the occupation from the edge.

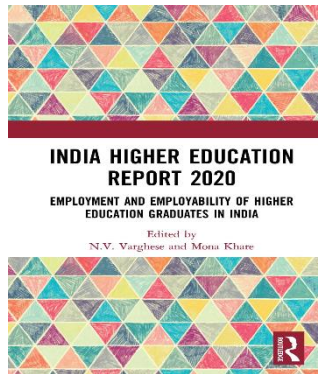
### **Acknowledgement**

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## BOOK REVIEW



***India Higher Education Report 2020 Employment & Employability of Higher Education Graduates in India* Edited by N.V. Varghese & Mona Khare, Delhi: Routledge, 2021, pages 356, ISBN9781003158349**

**Reviewed by**  
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### **Introduction**

The state, industry, and higher education establishments' contributions to the employment and employability of educated youth in India are critically examined in this book. The book covers a wide range of subjects, including the skills gaps in higher education graduates' employability, curriculum and skill training systems, formal and informal modes of skill formation, the crisis of rising unemployment in India, migration, education, and employment, the effects of gender, caste, and education, general, technical, and professional education, vocationalisation, qualifications frameworks, and skill certifications, industry-academia links, entrepreneurship education and executive education, and sustainable employment. The book focuses on recent data, empirical evidence, and theoretical ideas on the major problems and obstacles facing graduates of higher education seeking employment in a knowledge economy that is being driven by the unparalleled growth of higher education and growing digitization. In response to current changes in the evolving landscape of higher education, it provides effective case studies of institutional solutions, examples of policies and

procedures, as well as viewpoints from various stakeholders, including employers, employees, professors, and students. Their opinions regarding the future needs of the labour market on young people entering the workforce across all industries, subject areas, and genders are also investigated.

### **About the Editors of this book:**

**N.V. Varghese** is Vice-Chancellor, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) and the founding director of the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education at NIEPA, New Delhi, India.

**Mona Khare** is Professor and Head, Department of Educational Finance, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, India. She is associated with various government bodies and international education forums in research, consultancy, and advisory activities.

### **Preface:**

In the preface N.V. Varghese, has explained the important role played by higher education in promoting economic growth, social progress, and human development. The present India Higher Education Report (IHER 2020) is sixth in the series initiated by the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE) of the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration. The series is envisaged to provide an in-depth analysis of some of the critical dimensions of higher education in India, with contributions from eminent scholars engaged in research, policy, and planning in higher education. IHER 2020 is devoted to the theme of employment and employability of higher-education graduates. The aspects covered in the volume include issues related to jobless growth and the employment and unemployment trends; informal modes of skill formation; and the role of industry in skill building.

**The first Chapter is: Employment and employability of higher-education graduates: an overview by the Editors: N.V. Varghese And Mona Khare In this chapter the authors have mentioned about NSSO i.e. the National Sample survey reports** which has explained the situation of jobless growth and states that this would lead to may lead to massive levels of unemployment in the country and especially among the educated people and the transition of India from a situation of ‘jobless growth’ to ‘job-loss growth. The chapter explains about unprecedented expansion of higher education, the reasons for the same and the data about despite educated youth they are unemployed as they do not have the necessary skills. The research



findings related to the reasons for unemployment of youth have been reported. A lot of facts and reasons for unemployment have been discussed, which give the readers a comprehensive situation about the employment challenges for the young graduates. A lot of facts related to the economic growth and employment. The jobless growth in India has been discussed supported by research findings. Data between 2004 and 2011, based on the NSS surveys, stating that the sector contributing the maximum to employment generation is construction has been reported in the chapter. as researched by the World bank report 2019 have been quoted in the chapter. The employment by educational levels of the disadvantaged and by caste and level of education have been discussed and relevant data has been produced in the tabular form. The authors have given a gist of the chapters written by the various authors and explain the contents of the book.

**In fact, this chapter gives us the total idea related to the contents of the report. The authors have given detailed references at the end of the chapter.**

The present volume of the India Higher Education Report on the employment and employability of higher-education graduates comprises chapters written by eminent academicians, policy experts and practitioners. These are organized under four themes:

- (Part I) Economic Growth and Employment of the Educated,
- (Part II) Graduate Employability and Skills Mismatch,
- (Part III) Education and Skill Formation,
- (Part IV) Education–Industry.

### **Part I: Economic growth and employment of the educated**

The section has five chapters addressing the phenomena of falling Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPRs) with increasing levels of education and the relative trends across regions, gender, and social groups. Employment and employability of higher-education graduates: an overview by the Editors: N.V. Varghese And Mona Khare has been numbered as chapter 1, the Part 1 starts from chapter 2.

**Chapter 2:** The title of this chapter is - **The crisis of jobless growth in India.** This chapter is jointly written by Rajat Kathuria and Ujjwal Krishna.

**Rajat Kathuria** is Director and Chief Executive at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi, India. He has worked with the World Bank, Washington, DC, as a consultant and carried out research assignments for several international organizations,

including ILO, UNCTAD, Linne Asia, the World Bank, and ADB. He is founder member of the Broadband Society for Universal Access and served on the Board of Delhi Management Association. He is on several government committees and on the research advisory council of State Bank of India.

**Ujjwal Krishna** is a specialist doctoral research scholar at the Institute for Human Security and Social Change, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

The writers in this chapter, discuss several reasons why India's growth has not led to the creation of good jobs or a decrease in inequality. They draw attention to the widening wage-profit differential in the industry sector's net value added and wonder if the service sector can handle the hordes of incoming immigrants and lessen the growing disparities in both human and physical capital. They debate whether skill development ought to be viewed as a public good. Various initiatives currently being undertaken by the Indian government have been discussed, largely in line with the theoretical fixes to the factors underlying the market failure of skills, while their shortcomings were also flagged.

The authors conclude that if India is to face the reality of service-sector-led growth, then in a world increasingly characterized by the redundancy of lower-order tasks, skill development is essential to make India's youth automation-resilient.

### **Chapter 3 : On the persistence of informal work and self-employment in India,** by Vasavi Bhatt and S. Chandrasekhar,

**Vasavi Bhatt** is PhD Scholar at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai, India.

**S. Chandrasekhar** is Professor at Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai, India. He served as Advisor to the President of the Confederation of Indian Industry and Co-Chairman and Managing Director of Jubilant Bhartia Group. He is a recipient of the Fred H Bixby Fellowship awarded by Population Council, New York, as well as the Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development.

The focus of this descriptive chapter is on the persistence of Indian workers engaged in household industry or unincorporated enterprises and workers who are self-employed. It discusses the issue of Indian workers' continued employment in unofficial businesses and self-employment. They track changes in the number of workers employed in home and non-household industries at the subnational level and study trends and patterns of workers involved in household enterprises and self-employment. Along with looking at self-employed people's incomes and educational attainment, they also assess the efficacy of policies

aimed at boosting the productivity of unofficial businesses to help them succeed. The authors conclude that despite India's GDP increasing by 6.7 times in the period 1991– 2011, there has not been a discernible decrease in the level of informality or self-employment. Nor has there been a shift from OAE to establishments. The analysis reveals that informality exists in reasonably visible numbers across all educational levels. A long-standing concern is the low productivity of informal enterprises. Evidence from PLFS confirms the belief that the average earning of the self-employed is inadequate for a decent livelihood. The emerging challenge, we argued, is the absorption of those planning their transition from education to work.

**Chapter 4 is Migration, education and employment in India**, is by S. Irudaya Rajan.

**S. Irudaya Rajan** is Professor at Centre for Development Studies, Kerala, India. He has coordinated seven major migration surveys in different states of India. He was Chair Professor of research unit on international migration, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. He is associated for research with the European Union, the International Labour Organization, the International Development Research Centre, the Canadian Institute of Health Research, the World Bank, the International Organization of Migration, the South Asian Network of Economic Institutes, the Rockefeller Foundation, UNESCO, among others.

The author writes, In the context of India, education is seen as a foremost tool of social mobility, with education levels and employment prospects known to have a direct relationship. Since globalisation, there has been a significant increase in general international mobility for employment and education, particularly in the Global South. India now has the second-highest rate of growth in foreign student mobility, after China. The author examines internal student movement in India and its subsequent ties to the global work-study interconnections, considering the rising body of literature highlighting the relationships between education and job prospects worldwide. As a result, the chapter argues that in such a scenario, internationally comparable factors are at play even domestically in the context of migrant student aspirations and family decision-making, while also highlighting the poor provision and limited accessibility of higher education for students from migrant-origin states (such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar) that prompts their out-migration to several "educational hubs" elsewhere.

**Chapter 5, Declining labour-force participation in India: does education and training help?**, by S. Madheswaran and J.K. Parida

**S. Madheswaran** is Professor and Head, Centre for Economics Studies and Policy, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, India.

Formerly, he was Advisor, Planning, Programme Monitoring and Statistics Department, Government of Karnataka and First Chief Evaluation Officer, Karnataka Evaluation Authority. He has coordinated and edited the Redesigned Economic survey of Government of Karnataka and New Evaluation and Monitoring Policy 2010, Youth Development Report, GOI, 2016–2017, in addition to several national and international research assignments.

**J.K. Parida** is Assistant Professor, Department of Economic Studies, Central University Punjab, India. He was former Deputy Director, National Institute of Labour Economics Research and Development, NITI Aayog, Government of India, and has published widely.

This chapter examines the trends and patterns of India's labour force participation by age, gender, and educational attainment. It also looks at sector-specific employment trends and describes how unemployment and the work force's disenchantment have been rising recently. They predict that, should the demand-side problems not be promptly addressed, the LFPR of educated young will rise sharply soon, confirming the "U" shaped hypothesis. The chapter contends that in such a situation, internationally equivalent variables are at work even domestically in the context of migrant student aspirations and family decision-making, citing "educational hubs" elsewhere.

#### **Chapter 6, Trends in employment and unemployment in India: dimensions of gender, caste, and education, by Rajendra P. Mamgain and Khalid Khan**

**Rajendra P. Mamgain** is Chair Professor, S.R. Sankaran Chair (Rural Labour) at National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Hyderabad, India. With over 25 policy-oriented research studies to his credit, he has authored/co-authored many books and research papers in various national and international journals of repute.

**Khalid Khan** is Assistant Professor at the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, India. His research interests are economics of education, labour economics, and ageing with a focus on marginalized groups and social exclusion.

This chapter looks at changes in population labour force participation rates among various socioreligious groups. To gain important insights into the types and quality of jobs available to workers from various socio-religious groups, the gender and caste hierarchy in labour force participation rates are also examined. They stress that despite having a relatively higher labour-force participation rate (LFPR), they continue to experience social exclusion and discrimination in various forms daily, poor quality of employment, and a low human capital base, all of which are contributing factors to the labour force's slow development. The

chapter is concluded by a thought that, there is a challenge, that is to ensure social justice along with the economic justice by encouraging the participation of women and socially marginalized groups in the labour market with remunerative income.

## **Part II Graduate employability and skills mismatch**

Part II comprises three chapters, each of which explore the issue of graduate employability and skills mismatch in India, a challenge possibly more complex than the one faced by other nations, given India's demographic bulge at the center and massification of its higher-education sector in recent years. The three chapters assess the multidimensional nature of the problem of graduate employability explained by both supply and demand-side effects.

### **Chapter 7, Skills mismatch of higher-education graduates in India: factors determining employability quotient, by Mona Khare**

**Mona Khare** is Professor and Head, Educational Finance, CPRHE/National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, India, and member of the 15th Finance Commission for Education sector funds estimation, Govt. of India. She has been associated with UNESCO, the Asian Productivity Organisation, the British Council, Commonwealth, SAARC, World Bank, and government bodies in research and consultancy, is twice-recipient of 'Young Economist Award' by the Indian Economic Association and has been awarded by the Government of Madhya Pradesh for their Distance Education Programme (EDUSAT). She was a member of Commonwealth Education Ministers Conference Drafting Committee of the post-secondary forum for SDGs.

The author in this chapter, aims to give a comparative viewpoint on the main players in the issue of employability skill gaps among higher education graduates in India, including employers, new hires, students, and teachers. This chapter identifies three main kinds of gaps that contribute to the current problem of educated young not being able to find and keep a job in the labour market. The survey was conducted extensively across various higher education institutions and specific industries. The author also lists the family, educational, and personal characteristics that could affect a graduate's employability. The authors feel the need of strengthening of industry-academia linkages and employer-student interactions in various forms—formal, informal, long duration, short duration, on-campus, field-based are imperative for graduates' sustainable skill development. They explain at the end of the chapter that the capacities and competencies in the higher-education sector for effective skill building exercise

are deficient, which can be changed only with active industry engagement. Work life exposure to both teachers and students is required. Tripartite arrangements between higher education, industry and skills training institutions to provide short duration futuristic high-tech skills that may be required in all domains may be explored.

It is time that the ad hoc nature of industry–academia interaction ends as a policy prescription.

**Chapter 8, General, technical and professional education: employability skill gaps,** by Ritika Sinha

**Ritika Sinha** is Associate Professor at CBSMS (Post graduate department of Management Studies Bangalore Central University), India. She has over 19 years of postgraduate teaching and research experience in the field of finance & marketing in the MBA departments of reputed universities. She has authored books in the area of economics and business environment and has published widely.

The author gives information about the skill gaps that exist among workers in the general, technical, and professional education sectors. This chapter examines the domain-specific trends in graduate employment and employability as well as the variations in their employability skill gaps. It is based on the evidence that one's study discipline becomes very important in case of specialized/technical jobs but a large set of study disciplines cuts across various industries. The chapter has reported several studies related to skill development and the data has been interpreted in the tabular form. The author has explained that one of the biggest challenges higher-education institutions face today is in terms of enhancing employability of graduates irrespective of the nature of their degree. It is critical for the curriculum to keep pace with the fast-changing job market- place with technological advancement and globalization.

**Chapter 9, Education, skills mismatch, and wage differentials,** by Sahana Roy Chowdhury, Catherine Bros, and Sayoree Gooptu .

**Sahana Roy Chowdhury** is Associate Professor of Economics at International Management Institute, Kolkata, India. She has been consultant at NIPFP and Fellow at ICRIER, Delhi. She is currently Editor-in-chief of the journal *Studies in Microeconomics*.

**Catherine Bros** is Associate Professor of Economics at Université Gustave Eiffel, Paris, France, and an invited scholar at International Management Institute, Kolkata. She currently serves as an associate editor of the journal *Studies in Microeconomics*. Her research interests are provision of public goods,

decentralization, and social fragmentation primarily focused on the Indian subcontinent.

**Sayoree Goptu** is a PhD scholar in the Department of Economics at Jadavpur University, India. She has qualified for UGC and NET-JRF, and her research revolves around the areas of economics of education.

In this chapter the three authors examine the issue of whether general education or vocational training yields more returns in India's manufacturing and industrial sectors. They do a statewide investigation to see if the degree of industrialization in any state can account for some of the over-education that exists in that area. They discover that the size of the manufacturing or industrial sectors affects the returns on formal vocational training. The authors have explained that, as and when an economy matures, it needs to reshape its skill set by suitably identifying the skill types education that yield maximum returns to the society, the skills that help the economy to grow faster and channelize fiscal resources in the desired direction.

**Part III Education and skill formation** has five chapters that provide an over-view of this shift in India and discuss both formal and informal modes of skill delivery in higher education. The part also describes various initiatives taken up in India in recent times.

**Chapter 10, India's National Skills Qualifications Framework and employment: the promise and the reality**, by Santosh Mehrotra

**Santosh Mehrotra** is Professor of Economics at the Centre for Labour, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India. He spent 15 years with the UN, was head UNI-CEF's global research programme at Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, and was chief economist, Global Human Development Report New York. Formerly, he was Head, Development Policy Division of Planning Commission, Government of India. He was also the Director General (2009–14) of the National Institute of Labour Economics Research, Planning Commission.

The author in this chapter, highlights the need for streamlining Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems, creating the National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF), and enhancing the value of TVET by offering training based on occupational standards, as is currently done in a number of nations worldwide. This chapter offers a critical evaluation of India's NSQF and the country's numerous post-secondary vocational education and training programmes.

**Chapter 11, Curriculum and pedagogy in higher education for skill development**, by Nikhil Agarwal and Aprant Agarwal.

**Nikhil Agarwal** is an innovation and policy expert and currently CEO of IIT Kanpur Foundation for Innovation & Research in Science & Technology (FIRST), India. Also, he is Vice Chairman, Mahaashmita Livelihood Rural Accelerator Program (MILAP), Government of Maharashtra. He was former CEO of the Andhra Pradesh Innovation Society (APIS), Government of Andhra Pradesh.

**Aprant Agarwal** is a freelance researcher and a social scientist.

This chapter highlights the value of new curriculum frameworks that track workforce advancement and assist higher education institutions in achieving exponential growth, as well as the necessity of introducing skill development courses on a demand basis. Through the convergence of education, skill, industry, and government initiatives, the chapter proposes a pedagogical approach that views skill development courses not only as ways to increase employability but also as job creators when these graduates /skilled workforces pursue individual and/or group-based entrepreneurship. The writers have highlighted the skills of Complex problem solving, Critical thinking Creativity People management Coordinating with others Emotional intelligence Judgement and decision-making Service orientation Negotiation and Cognitive Flexibility for the 21<sup>st</sup> century graduates. The higher-education system in developing countries such as India should be more agile, futuristic, pragmatic, and endowed with essential resources. The higher-education institutions should embrace the changes and design the curriculum that can train the new India for years to come.

**Chapter 12, Skilling India: vocational orientation to higher education, by Pankaj Mittal**

**Pankaj Mittal** is Secretary General of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) and has held senior positions with the University Grants Commission. He was former Vice-Chancellor of Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya, Haryana, and recipient of many awards and honours such as Fulbright Nehru Scholarship grant for educational administrators, the President of India Award in 2017 for Digital Initiatives in Higher Education, First Padma Shri Subhasini Devi Award 2018, and Qimpro Gold Standard Award for leadership in Education for 2018.

This chapter emphasizes the role of entrepreneurship and the steps needed to support it, as well as the impact that skill development has on our nation's economy. While offering a blueprint for India, other worldwide vocationalisation approaches that have been embraced by various developing countries throughout the world are also examined. The authors conclude that which the growing technology, the learners need must be handled differently



and they must be prepared for jobs which are very different and thus they have to be prepared with different skills for employability. Several personal and social skills popularly known as soft skills are essential for enhancing employability and self-employment, for which the higher-education sector must proactively work

together with the employer segment and reorient as well as revamp itself accordingly.

**Chapter 13, Skill universities in India**, by S.K. Shukla and Komal Raghav  
**S.K. Shukla** is Professor and Head, Economics Department, Jiwaji University, Gwalior, India. A D.Litt. and with more than 35 years of teaching experience, he has published in various national and international journals and has authored textbooks of repute. He was Past President of Madhya Pradesh Economic Association in 2009–2010. He has been associated with the UPSC and PSC of various states.

**Komal Raghav** is Post-Doctoral Fellow, Economics Department, Jiwaji University, Gwalior, India. She has qualified for UGC-NET and has eight years of teaching experience.

This chapter examines how skill integration in Indian universities has developed over time, leading to the establishment of universities with specialized curricula. Through in-depth analyses of several areas using case studies of five skill colleges in India, the chapter presents an overview of skill institutions in that country. The authors have concluded that in order to facilitate skill universities, the UGC must allow them to follow a distinctive organizational and governance structure. A regulatory body was proposed for these skills universities with the name ‘National Council for Vocational Education and Training’. This body should be established at the earliest opportunity. Skill universities have a bright future. To achieve their objectives, there is an urgent need to have more coordination between the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). This will help in promotion of skill universities exclusively running skill-based courses. The universities should have proper infrastructure and qualified faculty members having specialization in skill-based programmes.

**Chapter 14, Informal modes of skill formation**, by Vineeta Sirohi

**Vineeta Sirohi** is Professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi, India. She is consulted by UNESCO, the World Bank, and ILO

and is a National Awardee for Innovative Research Paper in a National Seminar by NCERT.

The chapter emphasizes the trend of more graduates entering the unorganized sector and the reality that many skilled workers in the unorganized sector obtained their knowledge either through formal schooling or informal training combined with non-formal training. In terms of learning objectives, learning time, or learning assistance, non-formal training is more structured than informal learning. Usually, the latter does not result in certification. To explain informal modes of skill formation, the author traces the concept's historical development, provides a theoretical framework for them, and identifies the main types of informal skill formation that are currently in use. The authors at the end conclude with the advantages of informal skill development explaining that the advantage of informal skill development methods is that they allow individuals to determine how, what, when, where, and with whom to gain new skills. Learning happens on an individual basis and is not governed by rigid systems or deadlines. Participating in this type of skill development offers a broad approach to workforce skill development, assisting individuals in obtaining formal qualifications and social skills.

**Part IV Education–industry relationship** has three chapters, each dealing with a distinct aspect: industry–academia linkages in professional education, entrepreneurship education, and executive education. Each chapter provides a case study.

**Chapter 15, Industry–academia linkages in India’s technical education sector**, by Raj Agarwal and Anuja Pandey

**Raj Agrawal** is Director of All India Management Association (AIMA-CME), India. He was earlier Director of IILM Academy of Higher Learning, Greater Noida. “Visiting Research Professor” in Montana State University, Billings, Montana, USA. He is currently a consultant in UNCTAD and resource person in Globalisation of Service Project of William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

**Anuja Pandey** is Associate Professor, Marketing & Retail, All India Management Association, India. She is Managing Editor of AIMA’s Journal of Management & Research and Head–AIMA India Case Research Centre (ICRC) and Program Director of AIMA’s Post Graduate Management Certificate programmes.

The chapter Examines India's technical and higher education systems, concentrating on the effects of industry-academia relationship. They contend that even with the nation's extensive network of technical and professional education, the industry-academia relationship's actual potential remains minimal. The writers also offer suggestions for fostering ties between industry and academia. The critical factors that are currently crucial in making academia and industry linkages successful have been listed in this chapter. The Role of government, AICTE, and the UGC in this regard has been cited at the end of the chapter.

**Chapter 16, Refueling entrepreneurship education in India: a case study,**  
by Kavita Saxena

**Kavita Saxena** is an educator in marketing management and entrepreneurship with over 16 years of experience in academia and industry. She is involved in mentoring start-ups and teaches courses related to entrepreneurial marketing, small business promotion, design thinking, and digital marketing. She has handled several national and international projects and has published widely.

The chapter proposes that due to the dearth of formal employment opportunities, promoting entrepreneurship as a career option among youth is desirable for individuals as well as for economic development. Discussing the growing importance and evolution of entrepreneurship education in India, the author highlights the existing gaps and challenges of this small sub-sector. The authors have explained that the awareness and education play a vital role in instilling entrepreneurial intentions and mindsets, interventions through entrepreneurship development programmes and training are being highly recommended. By commercialising research as a new business opportunity, a collaborative working approach that unites government, industry, and universities to support creative business initiatives through research and development, can aid in the transfer of laboratory-based research to the market. Several recommendations to strengthen entrepreneurship education in India have been given for primary school level, secondary school level and University level.

**Chapter 17, Executive education and career advancement: sustainable employment,** by Neetu Jain and Ajay K Jain

**Ajay K. Jain** is Professor with the Management Development Institute, Gurgaon, India Formerly, he worked in Aarhus University (triple crown accredited), Denmark as Visiting Professor. He is a visiting faculty to University of Free State (2009), South Africa, IULM University Milano, Italy (2013), Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow (2007–2009), and All Indian Management Association, New Delhi.

**Neetu Jain** is Associate Professor at the Behavioural Science Indian Institute of

Public Administration, India. She has more than 19 years of teaching, training, research, and consultancy experience.

This chapter explains the value of executive education for career planning and gives a general review of this Indian subsector. Through a case study, the chapter offers a critical assessment of the implementation and effectiveness of such courses, based on an examination of the training needs of a subset of working executives in India. The authors conclude that there is a need for a paradigm shift in the way we impart executive education and that currently, the focus is more on imparting knowledge than developing soft skills such as interpersonal skills, decision-making skills, behavioural skills, and right attitudes.

### ***Conclusion:***

Thus, the IHER 2020 addresses a range of topics pertaining to the workforce and preparedness for the workforce in India among graduates of higher education. The report emphasizes the precarious macroeconomic conditions of jobless growth and the severity of graduate unemployment, which is exacerbated by educated youth's lack of employability skills. As the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes, there is a growing worry about the skills gap, which is being reflected in the integration of skills and vocational orientation in higher education.

Every chapter in this report has been written with exhaustive research. Many research studies and findings have been quoted in each of the chapters. Every chapter of the book is very informative. A list of references is provided after each of the chapters and the readers through the references can further collect information about the topics. The book is very useful for academicians and researchers in the field of higher education public policy, political economy, political science, labour studies, economics, education, sociology in general as well as for policymakers, professional organizations and associations, civil society organizations and government bodies. It would be valuable resource material for students who are perusing studies related to the area of employment and skill. Readers will get a lot of insight into the subject. The whole report is comprehensive and written in detail. In response to current changes in the evolving landscape of higher education, it provides effective case studies of institutional solutions, examples of policies and procedures, as well as viewpoints from various stakeholders, including employers, employees, professors, and students. Their opinions regarding the demands of the labour market in the future for young people entering the workforce across industries, subject areas, and gender are also investigated.

**OBITUARY TO THE EMERITUS TRUSTEE  
OUR RESPECTED LATE JYOTIBHAI DESAI**

**BY SMT. ASHA DAMLE**  
Former Hon. Secretary,  
Indian Council of Basic Education



I joined the Gandhi Shikshan Bhavan, on the behest of our ex-president of Indian Council of Basic Education, Smt. Lata Karim in 2010. In 2012, I was introduced to our Managing Trustee Shri. Jyotibhai Desai, about whom I'd heard a lot. I was surprised to find him speaking to me in chaste Marathi. A lean and thin figure, with sharp and alert observation, was what I immediately spotted. As I saw him unfold in the meeting, I could experience the Gandhian in him - simple, minimalistic, resourceful, and a sincere, dedicated educationist, who insisted that all possible resources be made available for the learning of the students.

The history of our independence struggle has been dotted by luminaries from various fields, who were highly eminent and educated from abroad and had a lion's share in gaining our independence. But I consider myself very fortunate to have met one such personality in flesh and blood who had done his Master's in Education from London and International Course in Education from Oxford. He was a rigorous socio- political activist, set, up his own Teachers' Centre in Vedchi, Gujarat Vidyapeeth where he implemented the Gandhi & Philosophy in "Nayi Talim" and where he undertook the project of village reconstruction in Vedchi. The collaboration with Medha Patkar, the committed social activist in '*Narmada Bachao Andolan*' he was full of zest and enthusiasm, and was jailed in Quit India Movement. As if this was not enough, he was involved in the case of reformation and rehabilitation of surrendered dacoits in open jails.

Regarding education in schools in today's scenario, he felt that "students were "not being nurtured, but oppressed." As an "anarchist" (which word he used to describe himself) he did not want students to be "fettered within any structure". He did not favour a centralised education system. He thought that the "umbilical cords to the society are being cut of " and " wrong notions of life were taught." He strongly felt that "teaching through an artificial separation of subjects is an entirely wrong approach." Our current system of education he said "was a façade of curriculum for lack of vision and creativity". His philosophy of "not stopping the students from expressing themselves" and saying that "wild ideas are okay among children", reminds us of Tagore's experimentation. This stands in direct contrast in today's mainstream education system based on rote learning.

I doubt, that in our lives, we will get to meet another such iconic person. Let his restless soul rest in eternal peace.

**Acknowledgement : “A Gandhian revolutionary: an interview of Jyotibhai Desai” by A.K. Shiburaj, on February 28, 2024.**



## TRIBUTE TO PROF. SUMA CHITNIS ( 1933-2024)

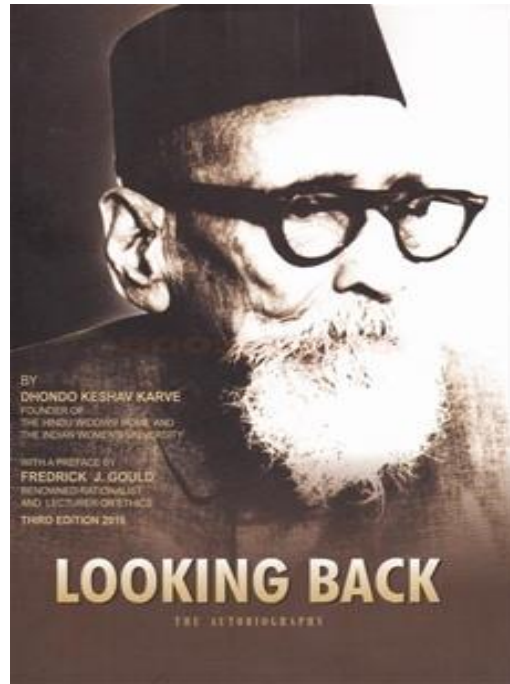
BY PROF. VIBHUTI PATEL,  
ICBE, Mumbai



During 1980s and 1990s, Prof. Suma Chitnis always had her enigmatic presence in the seminars, workshops, conferences and academic meetings. She was an Hon. Vice Chancellor of SNDT Women's University during 1990 to 1995. I got to work closely during 1090-1992 when she introduced Diary for every student, foundation course on Women in Changing India, Cultural programme for the SNDT Women's University employees and passed an order that made me Director (I/C) of Research Centre for Women's Studies and I was hesitant as I was just 35 years old. She took initiative and convinced me to accept post-doctoral fellowship from the Commonwealth to work at the London School of Economics. She changed the format of the conventional beauty contest of SNDTWU to TALENT CONTEST and gave it an appropriate name, MISS TEJASWINI. As a young academic, I was highly impressed by her intellectual endowment, refined sense of humour and forthright attitude in the professional life. While working at the Sophia Centre for Women's Studies and Development, in 2002, I approached Prof. Chitnis to join the Advisory Committee and she readily agreed. A chance meeting at the airport in the pre-pandemic period when I saw her sitting in a wheelchair. When I greeted her, she smiled and told me that she was happy that I had joined the Research Unit established by her in 1974 (now known as Advanced Centre for Women's Studies supported by University Grants Commission).

Rest in peace and power, Prof. Suma Chitnis. You were looked after so well in loving and caring company of your 2 generations of family members You have left amazing memories of secular humanism and building institutions and individuals!!

## BOOK REVIEW



***Looking Back* By Dhondo Keshav Karve (autobiography) Preface by Fedrick J Gould, Published by Mr. B D Karve, Secretary, Hindu Widows' Home Association, Hingne Budruk, Poona, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. in 2016. Printed by Mr. A V Patwardhan, Rs. 200/-. ISBN: 987-81-920642**

**BY ANNA USHA ABRAHAM**

We are often reminded not to judge a book by its cover, and more often than not, it has been proved true. But Fedrick J Gould (Renowned Rationalist and Lecturer on Ethics), did just that, and yet hit the nail on its head!!

In his preface to Karve's Autobiography, *Looking Back*, Gould says that at the very first meeting he "could recognize the true pioneer type in Mr Karve". He goes on to say, "Mr. Karve had the Arjuna gleam in his Brahmin eyes, the gleam that tells – not of dreaminess which only dreams, but of dream- genius that frames a noble conception and proceeds to plan, with concertation and business capacity, schemes for the service of humanity, and goes out into the wide world and realises the plans".



This autobiography is perhaps a testimony to this very statement. The book also beautifully narrates life in pre-independent India and the exemplary efforts of different individuals who contributed to the legacy of education in India.

**Looking Back**, is an autobiography of Dhondo Keshav Karve whose dedication to the cause of women's education was lifelong. Karve's steadfastness to implement his then-progressive ideas, without forcefully shaking the prevalent social ethos is evident in every one of his decisions and actions all through his life. He had all the qualities of a true entrepreneur. He was committed to the cause of women's well-being and education and embraced personal hardships by living a frugal life to achieve his vision. His honesty, democratic values, commitment and meticulous planning attracted the magnanimity of fellow citizens without whose help he would not have been able to achieve what he did. This book needs to be read and appreciated keeping in mind the era when the events occurred and understanding the binding social norms prevalent in that period. Karve's approach was never overtly radical when dealing with society, but was meticulous and effective. He dealt with one cause at a time and was careful not to overreach. Dhondo Keshav Karve is credited with having founded the first women's university in India. One of the other major social issues that Dhondo Keshav Karve (18 April 1858 – 9 November 1962) took on was widow marriage. It was a time when girls were married off at the age of 8 and often became widows even before they assumed marital life! Yet the society insisted that these young widows shave their heads and lead a life of penury for the rest of their lives!

To mitigate this pervasive social practice that left so many young girls with no childhood and a bleak future, Karve started a widow's home where he began educating these young widows. The home provided a safe space for widows to lead a purposeful life.

He did not impose his personal "agnostic" views on them, as he knew that the more crucial issue was to provide a home for these young girls. The home restricted its activities to providing education to the women or rather young girls and they were free to either follow social customs or discard them. True to himself and his convictions, he married a widow after the untimely death of his 1<sup>st</sup> wife and braved social ostracization.

The first few chapters of this interesting book ogives a vivid description of life in an Indian village. Karve spent his early childhood in Murud, a small island off Mumbai.

He describes Murud as “previously a jungle and served as a burying or cremating ground of the people from the neighbouring village Asud”. He writes that the land in Murud was allotted to 13 Chitpavan Brahmin families and it slowly grew into a village with marked areas for people from different castes. The village was noted for Vedic learning and in the year 1834 a government school was opened in Murud.

Karve credits the headmaster of his school in Murud, Mr. Soman, for introducing him to the idea of social reform. Mr Soman used to get Karve, who was then studying in class 4, to read out the newspaper every evening to people visiting the temple. Mr Soman felt this would make people interested in reading and knowing about the issues facing the country and the world.

The school in Murud was a Marathi medium school and Karve only got the opportunity to learn English at the age of 18. Karve knew the importance of the English language and all through his life insisted that English be a compulsory subject for education.

Murud only had a primary school and so Karve completed his matriculation from Robert Money School, a missionary school in Bombay. In the open entrance exam for college admission Karve, stood 16<sup>th</sup> and got himself admitted to Wilson College as they offered him a scholarship. However, for his 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years, he moved to Elphinstone College. During most of his stay in Bombay, he shared accommodation with Mr. Joshi who had come 3<sup>rd</sup> in the open exam and became his lifelong friend. Karve acknowledges that Mr. Joshi had exposed him to “all sorts of political and social questions” and that perhaps he had formed his agnostic views from reading Spencer whom Mr. Joshi introduced him to.

After completing college at the age of 27, Karve took up a job as a teacher at Presidency High School. He also earned extra money by giving private tuition. But Karve was not satisfied with merely taking care of the well-being of himself and his family and so financially supported many other young relatives to study further. During his early days of study and work, he used to keep aside Re 1 per month for charity purposes. Karve always believed that the community was responsible for the progress and well-being of those members not as fortunate. As a young student, he started a Murud fund which went on to help build a higher secondary school in the village.

Karve was always eager to experiment with what he had read. Even though society was not ready for many of the progressive ideas that he had read, he was willing to try them in his life. His son was schooled at home. Initially, his wife taught the child and at the age of eight, he was sent to live in the family of a trained teacher who also had a son of about the same age.

Karve went against the wishes of his family and performed the thread ceremony of his son in Bombay instead of the pomp and ceremony generally done in Murud. The money thus saved through this was sent to the Murud Fund so that the interest earned from the money could be spent annually for the education of girls. He also gave his mother money to spend on what he called “her ideas of religion and social duties”.

His wife passed away in Murud, just before he left to take up a job in Pune. He could not go for the last rites as it was during the rainy season when Murud was inaccessible. Yet again, he spent very little for her obsequies and gave the money that he would have otherwise spent, to the Murud fund to educate girls in English in her memory.

The Murud Fund was conceived by Karve and his friend when he was still in college. The money was collected from the people of Murud who were employed elsewhere. They were urged to contribute a pie of their earnings for the welfare of Murud. As mentioned earlier, Karve believed it was the responsibility of the community to support the less fortunate members and was also able to influence many others to do the same.

Although the widow remarriage Act was passed in 1856, the 1<sup>st</sup> widow remarriage took place in Mumbai in 1869. Widow remarriage was such a revolutionary idea that in 1871, a debate on whether widow remarriage was allowed in the Shastras was organised between the Orthodox and Reform parties, under the sanction of Shankaracharya. Five members from each side debated on the topic. It was finally put to vote and the Shankaracharya voted against widow remarriage.

Karve also recounts how he had seen the plight of widows at Narsoba Wadi, a sacred place on the banks of the river Krishna where sick people, repentant women, persons possessed by ghosts and evil spirits spend their time in the service of the temple and supported themselves begging.

He confesses that although intellectually and emotionally he was entirely in favour of widow marriage, in the early days he would abstain from openly dining with persons who had married widows, as he believed it would harm the good work that he was doing in Murud!

There are many examples to show that Karve always weighed the consequences of his actions and took the path that, according to him, was more beneficial to the cause he was engaged in at that period. He recounts that when he wished to start the widow marriage association, he chose the path that had the least resistance i.e. without bringing in the complications of inter-caste marriage and registration or other modified forms of marriage.

In 1893, Karve married a widow after the death of his first wife and faced social ostracization by the very same community he supported all through his adult life. He was not allowed to attend the meeting of the Murud Fund that he had established and also had to stay in the outhouse of his family home in Murud. All the people of the village stopped talking to him.

Inspired by Pandita Ramabai, who started Sharada Sadan, a widows' home run on Hindu lines, Karve started the Hindu Widows Home primarily to provide a safe space and educate widows in the year 1896. This hostel was attached to the government girls' high school and the training college for women until the year 1899 when it moved to a rented home in Pune. Although Ramabai a Konkanashta Brahmin had become a Christian, she ran the home on Hindu lines. However, in 1893, 10 inmates got baptised to Christianity and the Home had to subsequently close down to social pressures. Karve writes, "From the orthodox point of view the marriage of widows was not so objectionable as their conversion to Christianity".

Karve, gives a vivid description of Mumbai in the 1900s. The chawls were then mostly inhabited by middle-class Brahmin families to whom he would appeal to contribute to the welfare of the Widow's Home. Karve also gives us a glimpse of how the Plague had drawn clear lines between the rich and the poor. He describes that third-class passengers on trains to Bombay were detained and had to undergo a medical examination. Authorities would disinfect baths and fumigate beddings to avoid the spread of the Plague. These travellers were often quarantined too.

In 1907 Karve began the Mahila Vidyalaya for poor girls from the home of a friend. One of the conditions for admission was that girls should remain

unmarried until the age of 20. In 1913, this Vidyalaya was amalgamated with the Widow's Home.

His next project was Matha which was founded to conduct the workings of Widows' Home, the Mahila Vidyalaya and other institutions by spiritualising social and educational work. He started this along with Mr N M Athavale and a widowed lady. This Matha was supposed to be answerable to God and to serve according to their light and creed. This institution became a subject of controversy as it was likened to mediaeval monasteries for nuns although there was nothing mystic about the Matha. Karve recollects that the controversy sorted itself and the Widows' home, the Mahila Vidyalaya and the Math were later combined into a single vigorous organisation by 1915.

Karve's persuasive and non-confronting methods are best evident in how he managed to get his wife's sister Mrs Parvatibai Athavale, an orthodox Brahmin widow, to receive formal education and handle the workings of the widow's home. Mrs Athavale even travelled to the USA and lived there for 2 years while supporting herself by working in the homes of respectable families. The entire description provides us with an understanding of how the combined restrictions laid down by the government and society had truly imprisoned women in every way.

There are other examples of Karve using soft persuasive methods that were able to positively impact the destiny of many women in Maharashtra. His encouragement and emotional support gave women the courage to pursue education and change the course of their otherwise bleak future. This autobiography perhaps establishes the fact that education could be a passport to financial independence that results in a positive impact on one's personal life and has a greater impact on the community and nation.

Karve recollects that it was by mere chance that he read a booklet that was sent to him by Babu Shiva Prasad Gupta about the Japanese women's university which triggered him to start thinking of a women's university in Maharashtra. In 1915 the Widows' Home passed a resolution that they would "establish a women's university for Maharashtra to give education through the medium of Marathi with the English Language as a compulsory subject...".

At the National Social Congress that was held in Bombay in the Pendall of the National Congress on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1915, Karve in his presidential address announced the idea of starting a women's university on the lines of the Japanese women's university. The idea that started as a university for women in Maharashtra soon grew to become the Indian Women's University with support

from the likes of Rabindranath Tagore, Dr Annie Besant, eminent persons in Madras, Punjab, Jalandhar etc.

The 1<sup>st</sup> batch of the college of the University started on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1916 by the Hindu Widows' Home Association. The progress of the University during the first four years was very slow. Capable professors were secured for the college but the number of students was very small. Many people, according to Karve, especially the older graduates of the premier universities were opposed to the idea of the Indian Women's University where the medium of instruction would be in the local language. They wanted the English language to continue to retain its predominance. Many were opposed to a separate university for women and argued that "the sole object of a University is the promotion and advancement of learning. There is no sex in Knowledge". This sentiment was shared by the Committee appointed by the Bombay Government in 1924 to consider what reforms were necessary at Bombay University. Yet the Indian Women's University carried on against all odds.

The book describes in detail the various crises Karve faced while setting up and running the various projects he had undertaken. Each of the crises is unique and worth reading and reflecting upon. It was only when he was assured that the project could manage on its own that Karve ventured to start a new one. In 1935 when the university was well established, Karve established the Maharashtra Village Primary Education Society. In addition to teaching children of school-going age, these schools were envisaged to try and keep up the literacy of adults by attracting them to small libraries attached to the schools.

While Karve and his family lived a frugal life, he also spent his time meeting and persuading people to support these causes. He travelled across India and the world to collect funds and people often gave magnanimously. Some of the regular and larger benefactors were Vithaldas Thackersey, S N Pandit, G C Whitworth, N M Wadia Trust, M K Gadgil, Dr. Annie Besant, Miss Krishnabai Thakur, Mrs Parvatibai Athavale, Mrs Venubai Namjoshi, Seth Mulraj Khatan, Babu Shiva Prasad Gupta, Gandhiji, Mr. Kasturiranga Iyengar contributed to making it possible.

Karve worked as a professor in Maths at Ferguson College, Pune at the invitation of Professor Gokhale who was his classmate at Elphinstone College. Ferguson College was managed by the Deccan Education Society which had members like Lokmanya Tilak and Professor Gokhale as life members.

Karve retired from Fergusson College in the year 1914. Most of the activities he supported were while holding a full-time job. This proves that if one is passionate about something, a lack of time and resources is never a hindrance.

To sum up, Karve's contribution to women's education in Maharashtra is tremendous. Reading the book gives us many insights into Karve's personality and life in India during the late 1800s and early 1900. It demonstrates that discussions and meticulous planning are key to the success of a project apart from total commitment and hard work. It is possible to say that Karve's commitment, honesty and gentle persuasiveness contributed hugely to his success. Definitely a must-read book.

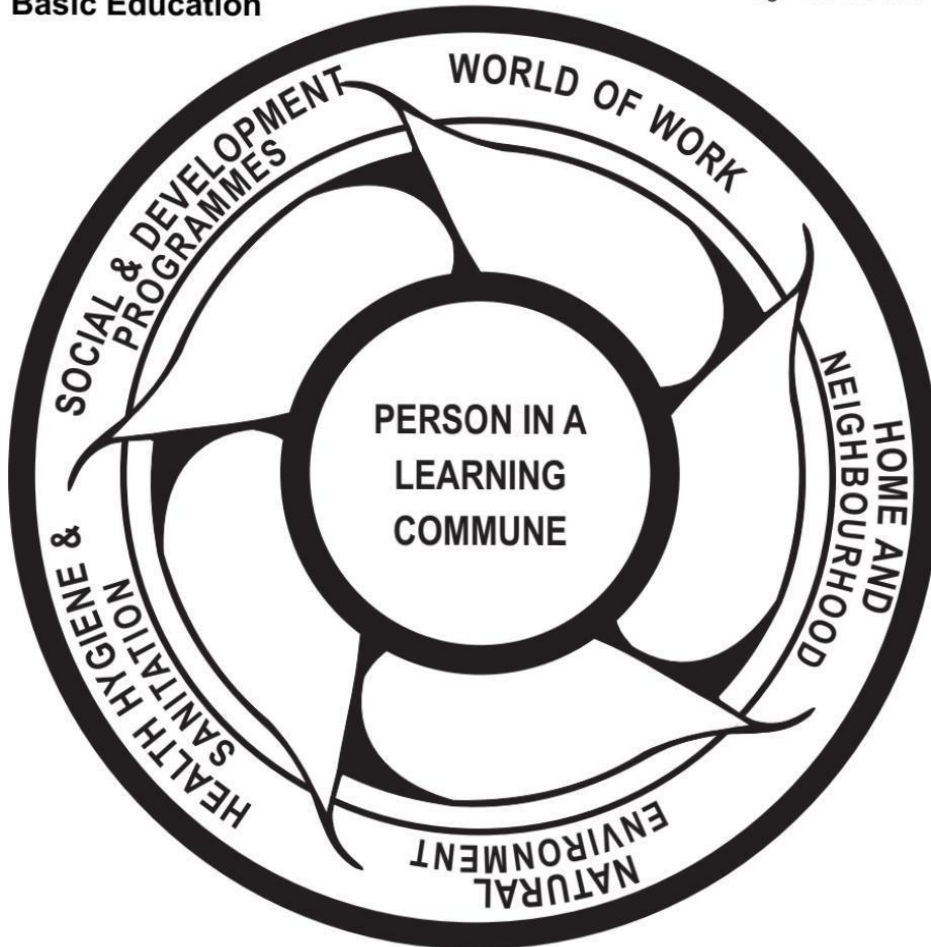


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