
ENABLING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION- IDEAS FOR ACTION TO CELEBRATE ABILITIES [AN ARTISTE'S PERSPECTIVE]

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Abstract: Educate a woman and thereby educate a nation is a popular saying. Bhaarata, our nation is known to have been led by several women who had deep-rooted knowledge of many subjects and could openly debate with men. The education which a woman possessed was most useful in grooming herself and molding the children from within the family system which was itself a replica of a world class university. Art, culture, skills, values were all part and parcel of the process and means of acquiring knowledge with the larger end of spiritual goals. Education enabled one to pursue the four goals, the Purusharthas with due regard to the Ashramas or stages of life. Women were not expected to earn a living and their knowledge reflected on their position as the backbone of every society to balance a peaceful co-existence. Our legends often quote some occasion or the other where even the deified Lord turned to His spouse for advice at crucial moments. Spirituality is far easier for women to pursue and hence those days, they were kept discreetly away so that they do not neglect the needs of men and families. "In the Vedas and Upanishads, women taught the highest truths and received the same veneration as men" [1]. Education is hardly accessible for girls in all parts of the nation. There are consistent drop-outs from schools due to lack of facilities in rural schools and demands at home to conduct daily chores. *Right to education of every child should be magnified by responsibility to educate, by every citizen.* 'Educate your women first and leave them to themselves; then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them. In matters concerning them, who are you?' [2]

Introduction: Arts: Arts, be it fine arts or performing arts, encompasses a whole stream of visual and spatial geometry, beauty and harmony. While the term modern may permit loud expression, the term classical characterizes subtlety. Either static or movement-based, they always provide scope for imagination and creativity and suggest an enhanced connectivity with the viewers. The multitudinous facets of the format of 'dance' incorporate a strong foothold to explore the plenitudes of time and space. Study of scientific laws of kinetics, kinematics, calesthenics and iconography give a perisopic perception. The structural training and methodology being the hallmarks of tradition become interpolated within a panoramic perspective. "Education in the arts is essential to students' intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth and well-being. Participation in the arts contributes in important ways to students' lives and learning – it involves intense engagement, development of motivation and confidence, and the use of creative and dynamic ways of thinking and knowing. It is well documented that the intellectual and emotional development of children is enhanced through study of the arts. Study of the arts also provides opportunities for differentiation of both instruction and learning environments." [3]

Music cannot be dissociated from life or religion. The strings represent various levels of cosmos. The principles of materiality and spirituality tune in towards a euphoric vibration. Music symbolizes birth, fertility, education, ceremonies and spirituality. The Greek music-god Apollo imposed harmony between

desires and reason, by channelizing human drives through a heightening of consciousness and spirituality. The tripartite Goddess reigning the air, earth and netherworld were shown through instruments. The ambivalent nature, of existence in both celestial and terrestrial led to the division in presentation, emphasizing the superiority of spirit over matter and knowledge over sensuality. Plato, in the 'REPUBLIC' made music one of the fundamental disciplines of his educational program, highlighting the moral values that it entails. The foremost elevation of mind could be facilitated. The symbiosis of various instrumental styles, like percussion and string, balanced the contemplative with the palpable. The sound of the ancient instruments of Egypt kept natural calamities away. The vigorous shaking of instruments conglomerated an array of magical powers, conjuring that movement should never cease. Creatures arise from the state torpor, recharged to recapture and radiate the rapturous sign of life. The harmony in the orbital movement of heavenly bodies and spheres, the felicitous luminescence of the sun's rays, potent during its pinnacle and as it plummets on our earth, the succession of the seasons are all a simulacrum of dance and music and all integral interdisciplinary marvels. The cyclic movement of time as manifested in the twelve zodiac signs is a common symbol in painting and dance. The arena of arts is so replete with effulgence that the acme remains boundless. 'Tala' is absorption and 'Laya' is dissolution and this is significant indeed. Here lies the foundation for the emergence of PRAJAPATI, the creative spirit. Any art that served merely as

entertainment was looked down upon. Nature draws out the best to improvise and extemporize with intricacies exquisitely. The timeless character of liturgy scenically evoked through the medium of art form suggests the glorification of the divine and involuntarily kindles our conduits towards the primordial silence. The communion of all the arts contributes to cohesive transcendence as the most perfect vibration of the ONE ABSOLUTE noumenon lies within the depths of this primordial silence of phenomena.”[4]

Values: The response of aesthetic enjoyment or Rasa is instantaneous in dance, drama or music and gradual in painting or sculpture but all the same, this always lingers in the minds because art truly represents our lives and natural emotive states. Art is also an exalted medium to transcend and elevate from the mundane into the realm of divinity. Our classical arts are known to have emerged from philosophical and spiritual roots and always reinstated Dharma or righteousness. Universal good, love, brotherhood, and unity in diversity are emphasized within the beautiful framework of this discipline. Constructs in performing arts have been contemporaneous despite chasms both in the orient and the occident. While obituaries were laid to some civilizations obliterating their wealth of culture, the few fortunate lands continued as beatific havens and oases of cultural legacies, albeit being bereft of optimal circumstances. It has to be remembered that it is the inherent resilience and strength in these arts that faced all invasions and remained as it was in its intrinsic spirit.

Today, in our education system, thanks to our invaders, much of our ancient traditions have been hurled out of our windows and schools which were open to natural environment and cherished a great relationship between preceptor and taught through **Gurukul** have now become heartless institutes, taking pride in cemented and stoned architecture and producing data-filled operating systems out of human beings. We are consistently focused on creating economic power at the cost of holistic living. If education is concept accumulation, then the greatest phenomenon- Google or the internet could be better teachers. Is gathering concepts and rote memorizing for exams, even remotely the true test of intelligence, presence of mind or competence, actually required in abundance? Should we build the nation with inspired youth working with passion as sensitive and bold leaders or merely create self-centered individuals, bereft of any humanitarian worth at all. Do we not have to drive home the point that they have not only to become creators of wealth but also to be able to sustain wealth in this planet? The increasing number of old age homes, child care centers, junk food joints,

health hazards and innovative support systems that have emerged in the recent past speak volumes of the diminishing time that a typical urban couple can spare for close family members. We have begun to need reminders for every relationship like FATHER'S DAY, DAUGHTER'S DAY and so on.

Sanskrit, the mother of all languages, our very own, is given the same consolatory place as an optional third language whereas it has been adopted in primary education in some western countries. It is acknowledged that learning Sanskrit would pave way to better thinking and values in children. The Sanskrit word *vidya* refers to knowledge and the word *mandir* refers to a sacred place. The Vidya Mandir is a school where knowledge is viewed with reverence. This leads to Viveka or discriminative wisdom. Arts education, not only painting but also performing arts like music, dance and drama, yoga and martial arts have to become embedded in the main curriculum and not just categorized as extracurricular. Arts are inculcated as hobbies alone in weekends or after school hours in some urban private schools but totally absent in most of our rural schools. In government schools, unless it is a part and parcel of curriculum, it is almost impossible to make these children wait after school hours as they have to walk long distances back home or rush to work back home or do other odd jobs. How many privately flourishing dance or music schools are prepared to teach the lesser privileged, free of cost or at subsidized charges after all? This is true all over the world. There are very few nations, like Singapore where scholarships are provided for such endeavours for the exceptionally gifted and talented children. “Education gap grows between Rich and Poor, Studies Say — Education was historically considered a great equalizer in American society, capable of lifting less advantaged children and improving their chances for success as adults. But a body of recently published scholarship suggests that the achievement gap between rich and poor children is widening, a development that threatens to dilute education's levelling effects.”[5]

Overview: While men are equally apt enough to take to artistic professions and would do so more willingly, if employability gets well organized, women can take advantage of this learning in incorporating better balance between their home and career. Women have won laurels throughout the world with their performance in various careers but at the same time, there is one wave of thought that is getting needlessly promoted and that is the so-called ‘fight’ for women’s **rights**. The extremist ideas give room to negative thinking that a family and career cannot go hand in hand respectively as a happy and successful blend. Ambition gets sacrificed at the altar of a

marriage- so thinking, women are incessantly fighting their own selves at the end of the day. We see plenty of split families in our country these days. Any right which is demanded and enforced by law cannot match that right which is spontaneously bestowed with earned, mutual and lasting respect. Women need not compare themselves with men or act like them. It is not competitive, it is complementary. We have to understand that rights go in hand with responsibility and very often, rights also become a subset of respect. **Stree Shakti** is the energy that enables every movement, action and knowledge and this principle is portrayed as 'the one who rides a tiger'. **Devi**, called by various names, is the combined power of G-O-D as the generative, operative and destructive force. Every religion has similar representations. In Yogic philosophy, SHE stands for fire and in fact, it was far easier for a woman to achieve the highest spiritual goals than man and hence, she was discreetly kept away by the men from many practices in order to reserve her attention on the family. The first **ACHARYA** is the mother. She can uphold her stature when she herself is educated and rightly so. When the mother educates the child about the distinct nature of being a boy or a girl and the joint co-existence of both in this world, it is but for sure that the child would learn to respect this unique aspect of life from that preliminary stage when it is a raw spiritual being. **KINDERGARTEN** lessons are at home! In the rush for admissions into famous schools, much of the rudimentary steps get lost and real joyful growth does not happen in the child's life. In this context, it is important to add that our Indian classical arts, especially dance which is poetry in meditated movement, have immense therapeutic value, enriched by the aesthetic use of hand gestures, breathing techniques, postures and footwork. This kindles the optimum energy levels and can bring about remarkable changes in even disabled children. Medical practitioners also recommend supplementary steps for holistic growth and peaceful inner health.. James J. Heckman, an economist at the University of Chicago, argues that parenting matters as much as, if not more than, income in forming a child's cognitive ability and personality, particularly in the years before children start school. "Early life conditions and how children are stimulated play a very important role.

"A faculty perspective: Why should medical students study literature, film, and the visual arts?

Why should doctors know about the arts? Although there is a long tradition of doctors who have a 'second career' as artists, (Chekhov and Keats are obvious examples), in Britain medical training has become very scientifically driven. In the last few years in the UK there has been an increasing awareness of the value of the arts as a part of the formation of a rounded doctor. In some ways this represents a return to traditional values. lack of a sense of values and interpretations beyond the purely scientific is to the detriment of Medicine and its practitioners".[6] Teaching profession has least aspirants and most of them have hardly any motivation, calling it a thankless job. Besides this, education like every sector in our country also suffers unfortunately, due to disregard of merit and interference of other factors including by and large, the politicizing of education by policy makers. Every woman has to take pride in her motherly instinct and every little girl should feel that it is NOT an insult to cry in compassion.....it is HER NATURE- HER STRENGTH! The need of the hour then, is better values in our children from a tender age that has to be instilled from the family and simultaneously, the primary schools at a time when they have highly impressionable minds. Only a woman can do it. She is 'Mother' above all. It is only a woman who can prepare the child not only to face the university but the entire Universe! Only a woman can bring about change from within. It is sad that the image of a woman is getting increasingly shattered by the depiction of her as an object. Women themselves can stop this trend which is demeaning her dignity in society. If women join hands, they can improve their own lot and take protective action, against crime. She can fight causes of women that are truly facing them in every part of our nation through the powerful tool of education and spreading awareness. Swami Vivekananda understood the day India started neglecting their women, the downfall of the nation started. His quotes on women and womanhood - "If you do not allow one to become a lion, he will become a fox. Women are a power, only now it is more for evil because man oppresses woman; she is the fox, but when she is no longer oppressed, she will become the lion. Our right of interference is limited entirely to giving education. Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do this for them. And our Indian women are capable of doing it as any in the world" [7].

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