



Book Review

Title :A Matter of the Heart: Education in India

Author: Anurag Behar

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The author has provided an exploration of Indian education system in his book ‘A matter of heart: Education in India’. Drawing from his long association with school education, Dr.Anurag Behar has given an insightful analysis of the triumph and challenges and conditions of school education in India. The book is focused on the critical roles of teachers in a school and support for public education system rather than the private education in schools. The author has extensively visited remote public schools, met with different stake holders and has noted his observations.

The book is divided into six thematic sections and each section is divided into number of chapters. The book primarily focuses on the paramount importance of community involvement in school management, the remarkable achievements of teachers despite limited physical infrastructure, the necessity for professional development and a new teacher education system, the greater importance of teachers over technology, and the myths surrounding the superior performance of private schools.

Focus on Teachers and Their Professional Development: Teachers play a central role in the education system, and their professional development is crucial. Effective training programs that align with the teachers’ needs and subjects they are familiar with are essential. The author emphasizes that teachers should not be burdened with official duties or ineffective training sessions that do not contribute to their professional growth. Instead, they should be equipped with resources, such as timely delivery of textbooks and increased funding for programs like mid-day meals, to enhance their teaching capabilities. Continuous research and development in teaching methods are necessary to address the complex needs of students, such as their learning patterns, attendance, and time management.

Engagement of Society with Schools:The engagement of society with schools is fundamental in fostering a democratic and inclusive educational environment. Public schools, funded by tax revenue, play a vital role in establishing democratic values in society. The involvement of various societal groups, including parents, local communities, and governmental bodies, ensures that schools operate in a manner that reflects the collective interests and values of the community. The author believes that this societal engagement provides a strong foundation for hope in the future of public education and democracy.

Engagement of Teachers with Pupils:The relationship between teachers and pupils is pivotal for effective education. Teachers who are actively engaged with their students create a nurturing and supportive learning environment. The author's observations highlight that when teachers are passionate about their subjects and dedicated to their students' well-being, it significantly enhances the students' learning experiences. The belief that every child can learn if properly taught and cared for underscores the importance of teacher-pupil engagement.

Public Schools and Democracy: Public schools are seen as better facilitators of democracy compared to private schools. The author argues that public education, accessible to all and funded by public resources, promotes democratic values by providing equal opportunities for every child. In contrast, private schools may perpetuate social inequalities. The focus of public education should be on developing good human beings and a good society, thereby strengthening democracy.

Political Influence on Education: The author highlights the significant influence of politics on the content and curriculum of education. Political forces determine what is considered true knowledge and shape the educational agenda, whether through a planning model or a market model. The author calls for a balanced approach that incorporates a universal set of knowledge while allowing for diverse perspectives. Sensible representatives from society should oversee the educational content to ensure it is inclusive and beneficial for all.

Continuous Research for Complete Teachers: A complete teacher is one who engages in continuous research to address students' needs effectively. This research should focus on understanding the complexities of student learning, attendance, and time management. By investing in ongoing professional development and research, teachers can better meet the diverse needs of their students and contribute to a more effective education system.

Strengthening Public Education: The author argues that the market cannot adequately deliver essential services like healthcare and education. Instead, there is a pressing need to strengthen the public education system. This involves not only providing adequate funding and resources but also fostering a culture of thinking and critical analysis. Developing the ability to think critically is one of the central goals of the school curriculum, which is essential for preparing students to contribute positively to society.

Curriculum and Examination Patterns: The current curriculum and examination patterns may contribute to a rote learning culture. The author questions whether this approach truly prepares students for the challenges of the future. A curriculum that encourages critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving is essential for developing well-rounded individuals who can thrive in a democratic society.

Teachers' Commitment to Education: The author shares an anecdote about a teacher's stand before a Naxalite intellectual, emphasizing the teacher's unwavering commitment to teaching until death. This dedication underscores the vital role that teachers play in shaping the future of society and the importance of supporting them in their mission.

By addressing these key themes, the author provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities in the education system, advocating for a strong public education system that upholds democratic values and prepares students for the future.

The book makes a very engaging reading. Behar has put it in such a lucid storytelling manner that you can not leave a story or an issue in middle. Very few writer has written such a book on education with such a penetration. Each story shows the resilience of teachers or students or parents. The book covers a very wide spectrum of issues i.e from educational policy and practices as well as conditions on the ground. The book is also an inspiration o students, educators, policymakers and other stake holders.

However, although Behar has extensively visited schools, his visits have been limited to those where Azim Premji Foundation is active. Behar has not been able to cover where the foundation is not active. The story of those schools may not be similar with where the foundation had made an innervation in those schools. Though the approach of the book is different, some basic statistics would have further enriched the book further. With deeper exploration and more analytical depth of certain issues dealt in the book, the value of the book could have been enhanced.

One of the central themes in *A Matter of Heart* is the recognition of rural educators as unsung heroes. Behar presents their resilience and commitment to making education accessible despite minimal resources. By highlighting individual stories, he breaks down stereotypes, showcasing the educators' creative solutions and adaptability in adverse conditions. This book is a significant contribution to the discourse on education in India. The book is a powerful insight to the functioning of the schools. The book has been deeply benefited from the personal experience and professional insight of Behar. The book helps to make highly effective and meaningful innervation at a very low cost. As Noble Laureate James J. Heckman has pointed out, 'Childhood skills shape our life's success- low-cost policies can truly strengthen this'. Behar emphasizes that the core of education lies in empathy, stating, 'Empathy matters most, for at its heart, education is a matter of the heart.'"



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Title: Mahatma Gandhi on Education

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The best way to understand Mahatma Gandhi is to read his own writings. The compendium, "*Mahatma Gandhi on Education*," is a reproduction of original writings and speeches on education by Mahatma Gandhi, collected and reproduced by Anil Dutta Mishra's. The book is a detail account of educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi's. As the author has put it, "Gandhi's concept of education is creative, original, revolutionary, skill development based on societal need. It is not based on intellectual romanticism rather beyond Marxism, Macaulay, Gurkul and Madrasah. It was unique, innovative, need base and fundamental and provides an alternative." The book contains Gandhi's unique thoughts on how education should not merely be a process of rote learning but rather a means of holistic human development—integrating body, mind, and spirit. Mishra presents Gandhi's ideas in a structured manner, emphasizing the spiritual, moral, and practical dimensions of education.

The book contains a wide spectrum of subjects of Gandhiji on education with utmost clarity and simplicity. Gandhiji's view on "What is education, women's education, laying strong foundation, need of education, education: ancient and modern, scheme for national education, a teacher, education of children, making of a true student, development of body, mind and spirit, education should contemplate on whole life, science and responsibility, primary education, religious education, sparing the rod, faith, school books, *harizan* education, higher education, vocational education, *Nayee Talim* and so many other dimension on education.

Key Themes of the book:

1. **Nai Talim (Basic Education):** Gandhi's concept of *Nai Talim*, or Basic Education, is the cornerstone of his educational philosophy. Mishra explains that Gandhi envisioned education as a tool for self-reliance, making it vocational and craft-centered. Gandhi believed in the integration of productive work with intellectual pursuits, advocating that students should learn through productive manual labor and practical activities. The book highlights Gandhi's idea that education should promote dignity of labor and develop individuals as self-sufficient and socially responsible citizens.
2. **Moral and Spiritual Development:** Mishra also discusses how Gandhi emphasized the importance of moral and spiritual growth in education. For Gandhi, education was incomplete if it only focused on intellectual or technical skills. According to the book, Gandhi believed that education must nurture truth, non-violence, self-discipline, and character, all of which form the foundation of personal and societal well-being.
3. **Education for All:** The book emphasizes Gandhi's advocacy for universal education that is accessible to everyone, regardless of socio-economic status, caste, or gender. Mishra explores Gandhi's views on eradicating social inequalities through education and empowering the marginalized sections of society.
4. **Holistic Approach to Learning:** Mishra highlights that Gandhi's approach to education was holistic and interdisciplinary. Gandhi rejected the idea of compartmentalizing subjects and believed that education should integrate different areas of knowledge, such as arts, sciences, and humanities, into practical life experiences. This was intended to create a balanced development of a student's personality.
5. **Critique of Colonial Education System:** The book critically reflects on Gandhi's dissatisfaction with the British colonial education system, which he viewed as alienating

Indians from their culture, traditions, and livelihoods. Mishra outlines how Gandhi proposed an education model rooted in India's cultural heritage, local languages, and needs of the masses.

The book is a comprehensive analysis as the author Anil Dutta Mishra thoroughly delves into Gandhi's educational principles, and philosophical insights. The book is a well-researched and presents Gandhi's ideas with clarity, making it accessible to both educators and general readers. The book is very much relevant today this draws connections between Gandhi's educational ideas and modern-day challenges in education. The book encourages readers to reflect on how Gandhi's vision of education can still inspire reform in today's educational systems, particularly in promoting equity, sustainability, values-based education and designing the structure of the primary education

However, the book could have more practical applications by including its implementation in contemporary educational settings. Some readers may find the book's focus on theory heavy at times, especially if they are looking for practical strategies for educators. However, this can also be viewed as strength depending on the reader's interest in philosophy.

Anil Dutta Mishra's "*Mahatma Gandhi on Education*" is an insightful work that brings to life Gandhi's radical ideas on education. It offers a deep and thoughtful reflection on how education can be transformed to serve the holistic development of individuals and communities. Gandhi's ideas, as presented by Mishra, challenge conventional educational practices and call for an education system that fosters not just academic proficiency but also moral integrity, self-reliance, and social responsibility.

This book is a valuable resource for educators, policymakers, and anyone interested in exploring alternative visions for educational reform, rooted in the principles of simplicity, sustainability, and ethics.

