

Publication: Mint	Date: 09.09.2022
Edition: Bangalore, Mumbai	Page No: 12
Authors: Mr. Ajay Piramal and Monal Jayaram	
Headline: Re-imagine literacy to develop compassionate nation builders	

GUEST VIEW

Re-imagine literacy to develop compassionate nation builders

Let's highlight social, emotional and compassion literacy as a key pathway for India's development



AJAY PIRAMAL & MONAL JAYARAM are, respectively, chairman, Piramal Enterprises Ltd., and director, Piramal Foundation

His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, says: "Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive." Traditional Indian learning systems focused on creating well-rounded individuals by developing the heart (compassion and love) and mind (cognitive development). Sadly, literacy is now viewed largely as acquisition of language skills and numeracy, when in today's strife-ridden world, values of compassion, empathy and love are urgencies to be developed at an early stage in learners who can contribute to the betterment of society. Re-imagining literacy as it existed in the traditional Indian learning system, in the context of today's times, thus becomes imperative.

It is noteworthy that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has recognized this pressing need and stipulated that we "create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education, including Sustainable Development Goal 4, while building upon India's traditions and value systems." The NEP lays particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each individual.

Nurturing care and compassion when young: Research has shown that teaching-learning methods based on common sense, experience and scientific findings can cultivate key values like compassion, love and empathy.

Viewed from this lens, cognition is incomplete without the development of the heart. What is needed is a new-age literacy model involving teaching-learning methods that encourage the development of the heart and mind together. We must inculcate pro-social capabilities, interpersonal abilities and emotional resilience in children in their early learning stages, all of which are powerful levers to create caring young individuals. This will enable them to manage their emotions, demonstrate compassion and empathy, form healthy relationships, navigate life situations and go on to become nation-builders.

Additionally, ethical literacy can spark an inner recognition of the interdependence of life, integrity and humility, and of the fact that we exist in this world not only for oneself but for others. This awakening of the self is '*Seva Bhaav*' in its purest form and will go a long way in making India a land of equal opportunity, harmony and peace.

It is heartening to see the adoption of this re-imagined concept of literacy gathering momentum. Through its collaboration with Emory University, Piramal Foundation has partnered with the governments of Rajasthan and Odisha to implement compassion-based teaching-learning methods. As a consortium partner of Project Sampurna, it

also supports the government of Jharkhand to implement this form of literacy. The governments of Delhi and Uttarakhand are also implementing such methods, with encouraging outcomes. This testifies to the growing acceptance that true transformative change can be enabled by developing well-rounded, compassionate individuals.

The wheels of change have been set in motion and the difference it makes is palpable. As a class 10 student at a Jhunjhunu school says: "By learning about my emotions, I am becoming more compassionate to myself and others."

Bishwaranjan Sasmal, special secretary in the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe department of Odisha, says, "This is a priority for Tribal students as they have strong minds, but need to be strong in the heart, and for their holistic development."

The time has come for literacy re-imagined this way to find its rightful place in school education, as we move away from the standard narrative that equates literacy with language and numeracy to establish a counterfactual narrative that lays emphasis on social, emotional and compassion literacy.

This calls for all key players—governments, social sector organizations and corporate India—to help this new narrative take root. This will lead to lasting change, bringing us closer to our vision of the country and help achieve our Sustainable Development Goals.

A transformed Bharat led by compassion-literate leaders: We see the next generation in Bharat@100 as compassion-literate, we see Bharat as a nation that cares, a country of confident, wise learners and leaders who demonstrate compassion and empathy. We see a nation without barriers, devoid of conflict and strife. Nothing is more important in our education system than nurturing compassion-literate learners, imbued with *Seva Bhaav*, who will evolve into leaders of tomorrow committed to the country's development. Our future depends on them.

QUICK READ

We ought to redefine literacy in a way that goes beyond mere language skills and numeracy, expanding it to include the compassion and empathy that a strife-torn world badly needs.

These values were part of our traditional learning systems and India's new education policy also recognizes their need. Future generations of compassionate learners will serve us well.

[Re-imagine literacy to develop compassionate nation builders](#)

His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, says: "Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive." Traditional Indian learning systems focused on creating well-rounded individuals by developing the heart (compassion and love) and mind (cognitive development). Sadly, literacy is now viewed largely as

acquisition of language skills and numeracy, when in today's strife-ridden world, values of compassion, empathy and love are urgencies to be developed at an early stage in learners who can contribute to the betterment of society. Re-imagining literacy as it existed in the traditional Indian learning system, in the context of today's times, thus becomes imperative.

It is noteworthy that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has recognized this pressing need and stipulated that we "create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education, including Sustainable Development Goal 4, while building upon India's traditions and value systems." The NEP lays particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each individual.

Nurturing care and compassion when young: Research has shown that teaching-learning methods based on common sense, experience and scientific findings can cultivate key values like compassion, love and empathy.

Viewed from this lens, cognition is incomplete without the development of the heart. What is needed is a new-age literacy model involving teaching-learning methods that encourage the development of the heart and mind together. We must inculcate pro-social capabilities, interpersonal abilities and emotional resilience in children in their early learning stages, all of which are powerful levers to create caring young individuals. This will enable them to manage their emotions, demonstrate compassion and empathy, form healthy relationships, navigate life situations and go on to become nation-builders.

Additionally, ethical literacy can spark an inner recognition of the interdependence of life, integrity and humility, and of the fact that we exist in this world not only for oneself but for others. This awakening of the self is 'Sewa Bhaav' in its purest form and will go a long way in making India a land of equal opportunity, harmony and peace.

It is heartening to see the adoption of this re-imagined concept of literacy gathering momentum. Through its collaboration with Emory University, Piramal Foundation has partnered with the governments of Rajasthan and Odisha to implement compassion-based teaching-learning methods. As a consortium partner of Project Sampoorna, it also supports the government of Jharkhand to implement this form of literacy. The governments of Delhi and Uttarakhand are also implementing such methods, with encouraging outcomes. This testifies to the growing acceptance that true transformative change can be enabled by developing well-rounded, compassionate individuals.

The wheels of change have been set in motion and the difference it makes is palpable. As a class 10 student at a Jhunjhunu school says: "By learning about my emotions, I am becoming more compassionate to myself and others."

