HOLISTIC LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA
A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH

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The system of education in our country and across the world is witnessing tremendous growth in terms of offering multi-disciplinary opportunities of courses for the students to learn. E-learning platforms have been witnessing an exponential uptake since the pandemic outbreak. Keeping abreast the asks of the Industry 5.0, the NEP–2020 envisioned to "create a model of education aiming not just on the cognitive development, but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st century skills." The current trends of multi country, multi religion, multi-language virtual workplaces will be more a norm in the years to come. Students today need to learn that the big businesses all across the world are all multi-generational and they need to develop the ability to work together in a multi-generational team. This will need them to develop communication and collaboration skills and deepen their ability to accept and adapt. In order to place Indian Universities on the global map, we need to collectively nurture the ecosystem of holistic education and enhance it rigorously.

PRELUDE

विद्यां ददाति विनयं विनयाद् याति पात्रताम् ।
पात्रत्वात् धनमाप्रोति धनात् धर्म ततः सुखम् ।।

Education should lead to sensibility, Sensibility to the attainment of character and qualification, from that comes wealth which leads to good deeds, which ultimately leads to joy.

The real purpose of education is to create a sense of joy, bliss, and happiness of living. Educators, teachers, policymakers and leaders in the education sector need to reflect how we are the enablers for students to reach the ultimate goal of education.

Higher education in India is in the process of large-scale transformation. After three decades, the National Education Policy–2020 (NEP–2020) was launched and half, indicating the importance and priority accorded to education in India's efforts to become a global leader across fields. The policy draft suggests: "Education is fundamental for achieving the full human potential" and in its true sense the NEP–2020 aims for holistic universalisation of education in the country. A visionary policy aimed at disrupting norms, accelerating speed of innovation, making inclusive education a reality and creating an aspiration for taking education to the next level–the NEP will make 2020 a landmark year for Indian education for many decades to come.

REPERCUSSIONS OF PANDEMIC ON EDUCATION

2020 was also a watershed year because the COVID-19 pandemic attacked globally and changed the way we work, learn, communicate, and live as a human society. Human to human connections have been replaced by the virtual world, work from home, and study from home became the norms. The world of business and industry was disrupted like it had not experienced in the last century. Though some countries of the world seem to be moving back to normalcy, many are still in the grip of the second or third waves of the pandemic, plagued by vaccine deficiencies and outages.

All this is rapidly changing the demands of the world from students. What worked in the world yesterday may not work tomorrow. In the light of the above, how can Higher Education Institutions impart holistic education to students, preparing them to be successful, humane, and happy citizens of the world. This article focuses on the changing demands of Industry 5.0 from our students and proposes a new model of holistic education.

EDUCATION 5.0: RETHINKING & REALIGNING WITH INDUSTRY

The NEP–2020 states, "it is essential that an identified set of skills and values are incorporated at each stage of learning" for the holistic development of learners.

A recent report of Mckinsey suggests that by 2022, about 75 million current jobs will be displaced and over 133 million new roles will be created. Currently, we don't know the top 5 jobs of 2030: developments in Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Robitics are changing the job landscape and to top it all, the pandemic has recalibrated, disrupted, accelerated, and turned on its head the way we live, the way we work, the way we study, and most importantly the way we relate to each other as human beings. The last one year has shown us that the most agile, resilient, and adaptable have survived. The industry as well as society expects from our students that they think critically, they should be creative, innovative, able to communicate, and collaborate.

Industry 5.0 will have the following five expectations from our students:

- **Multi-stakeholder Sensitivity:** The world today is a totally interconnected and intermingled place and it no longer serves us to think of our own interests in a silo. A company can have sustainable growth only if it follows a collaborative approach and considers the welfare of all its stakeholders. Students will need to have the ability to cater in the best possible way to every stakeholder of the organisation—customers, suppliers, shareholders, local communities, environment, regulators, lawmakers and more. Multi stakeholder sensitivity will require students to have a broad mindset, an inclusive attitude, a deep ability to listen and a prejudice free mind.

- **Multi-Generational Adaptability:** Today's workforce is more complex than ever, making any single demographic lens of limited value. The Global Human Capital Trends Survey 2020 conducted by Deloitte suggests that 70 per cent of organisations believe that leading multi-generational

workforces is very important for their success, but only 10 per cent are ready to address this trend currently. The millennials or the younger generation today are happy among their peers but unable to navigate multi-generational setups. Students need to learn that the big businesses all across the world are all multi-generational and they need to develop the ability to work together in a multi-generational team. This will need them to develop communication and collaboration skills and deepen their ability to accept and adapt.

• **Multi-Cultural Relatability:** India is a unique country. It is as big and diverse as a continent. This size and scale brings forth incredible diversity in culture, language, tradition and lifestyles. Workplaces with people from different states of India are vibrant platforms of this cultural diversity. This gets further amplified when workplaces become international. The current trends of multi country, multi religion, multi-language virtual workplaces will be more a norm in the years to come. Ability to respect diversity and use it as a collaborative springboard will be a key differentiator for long term success.

• **Multi-Career Possibility**: The world of work is changing rapidly, the age of the multipotentialite has arrived. Advances in technology – Automation, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence – means that many types of work are disappearing, as is the old-fashioned idea of 'a job for life'. Pandemic aside, it is said that the average life span is going to be 100+ years and a person might land up having 6 careers throughout his/her lifetime. Our students need to develop the ability to learn and the elasticity for multi-career possibilities.

• **Multi-Choice Opportunity:** Gone are the days when the choices of courses available for students were limited. The system of education in our country and across the world is witnessing tremendous growth in terms of offering multi-disciplinary opportunities of courses for the students to learn. E-learning platforms have been witnessing an exponential uptake since the pandemic outbreak. Statistics from Coursera depicts that

out of 8 crore learners currently on Coursera globally, 1 crore are from India.

Keeping abreast the asks of the Industry 5.0, the NEP–2020 envisions "to create a model of education aiming not just on the cognitive development, but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st century skills." It also states that the "pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centered, discussion-based, flexible, and, enjoyable."

It calls for "step-wise reforms across all stages of teaching learning process to accelerate the movement from the current culture of rote learning towards real understanding and towards learning how to learn."

STRATEGIES OF BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM THROUGH NEP–2020

The guidelines of NEP–2020 necessitate the creation of a multifaceted ecosystem in HEIs for capability enrichment and skill development of the students to meet the industry expectations.

Moreover, the pandemic outbreak has resulted in a paradigm shift in the education sector across the world leading to various challenges open to be addressed by the academicians and educationists. The University of Michigan Healthy Mind study in 2021 revealed that 83per cent of students reported academic impairment due to mental health and 47per cent of students reported depression & anxiety issues. The serious repercussion of the pandemic necessitates HEIs to have a multi-pronged approach towards creating an ecosystem of nourishing intellectual, emotional and spiritual quotients in students so that both the discovery of 'self' from within and its dynamic expression outside, are facilitated.

The topic of Holistic Education has also gained momentum across the society of Policymakers, Thought Leaders, and Seasoned Academicians throughout the length and breadth of the country. Building an integrative and holistic model of education rests upon

the understanding of the core essence of education, which inculcates wisdom and humanity in the hearts and minds of learners. As rightly pointed in the policy document of NEP–2020, "Knowledge is a deep-seated treasure and education helps in its manifestation as the perfection which is already within an individual. All aspects of curriculum and pedagogy calls for reorientation and revamping to attain the critical goal to creating holistic education system."

MODEL OF HOLISTIC EDUCATION

The building blocks of Holistic Education thrive to fulfill the aim of education through the Discovery of Self and Professional Excellence which are considered to be the main pillars of Higher Education System. The educators today are responsible for the intellectual, mental, emotional, and spiritual development of students which calls for a multidimensional and multifaceted approach in the system of education.

The author has decomposed the implications of NEP–2020 into various pathways and conceptualized the ten key building blocks that underpin the model of holistic education system in the country:

1. **Purpose Driven**: Is our education system purpose driven? Is it only meant to give the students a degree or provide them a job with a certain CTC? Or is it ultimately to cherish and imbibe knowledge and integrate values? Jerry Pattengale, who coined the phrase "purpose-guided education", suggested that it prioritises intrinsic motivation and helps students to become more engaged in learning experiences through connecting their beliefs and life goals to curricular requirements. We need to reflect on how we are creating an ecosystem to help our students discover their life purpose and provide them with the means and platforms to move towards it.

2. **Full Brain Engagement**: We have traditionally spoken about the right brain /left brain engagement. We as educationists now need to move the focus to full brain engagement which also includes the midbrain of the students. In the Programme

on Art of Living is taught '*Medha Yoga*' Programme to the children starting from the age 6 years which nourishes their midbrain and results in full blossoming of their consciousness this indeed is the seed of creativity, intuition, and innovation. There are cases where enversized designed by Spanish childrens downloaded Sanskrit shlokas Sri Sri Ravi Shankar from memory without any formal education in it. There are mind boggling instances where children are able read with blindfolds.

There are many as per psychologists faculties of our consciousness which can be accessed and utilised for the holistic development of students.

3. **Full Sensory Engagement**: Auditory, visual, and kinesthetic abilities of the students should be utilized fully for learning. Students may have a preferred sensory learning style. They may opt for one sense over another depending on the subject sometimes. Some students find it easier to learn through hearing (auditory), some through seeing (visual), and some through touch and movement (kinesthetic). We need to reflect how much of it is combined in a way that is personalized for the capacity, capability and preferences of students.

4. **Multi-mode Learning**: The future of learning is blended learning. Combining classroom teaching with technology is no longer a fad; it is essential for survival. Blended learning has the potential to harness the trends implied by the recent changes in the education sector and reshape the basic operations of educational systems. By integrating new forms of online instruction, learning management systems, and increasingly rich device experiences, blended learning can enable more dynamic and rich learning experiences.

5. **Focus on Capability**: Model education system should provide a platform for development of conceptual knowledge and skills among students. The reality of the world today necessitates learning based on enhancement of capability. It is important that all Academic knowledge gets translated into employable

skills, making education practically relevant and industry aligned. The University Grants Commission has also envisaged the roadmap of capacity building among students in HEIs by creating Learning Outcomes Based Curriculum Framework (LOCF) for various programmes.

6. **Full Focus Learning**: HEIs are required to evolve the teaching pedagogy to make education more experiential, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, industry focused, discussion-based, flexible, and also enjoyable. Internships and on-the-field training are imperative to enhance the learning experience of the students. Academia and Industry collaboration can foster new avenues of learning for the students.

7. **Balanced Learning**: Institutions should create an ecosystem to develop resilience amongst the students which enable them to learn the ability to balance their mind, emotions, and feelings. Education must build a strong character of students which enables them to be rational, compassionate, caring, at the same time professionally driven. This can be achieved by introducing the students to *Yoga, Pranayam*, *Sudarshan Kriya*, and meditation. Research studies at Yale University and Harvard University present compelling evidence that emotional and mental wellbeing of students improve by practicing *Sudarshan Kriya* and meditation on a regular basis.

8. **Continuous Learning**: The pursuit of knowledge is meant to be ongoing throughout the life of an individual. A research study published in Forbes suggests that lifelong learning can lead to a more fulfilling and healthier life in the long run. With advancement in healthcare, the average lifespan of people is expected to increase from 90-100 years which will mean that as adults we will have upto six careers in a lifetime. Universities and HEIs need to develop lifelong learning programs, with specific focus to mid and senior age learners. The concept of lifelong and continuous learning would facilitate in meeting the requirements of the Multi-Career possibility.

9.   **Ancient Vs Modern Learning**: As educationists, we must reflect upon the way the students associate themselves with the teachings of ancient scriptures as well as modern studies of cutting-edge technologies. Knowledge of the past can create a strong foundation for learning needed for the future. The stronger the roots, the healthier the fruits. A model education system is one which ensures a healthy blend of both: eastern philosophy and tradition with the cutting edge, western (scientific) temperament.

10.   **'Full Being' Learning**: We generally think of ourselves as the body, but we are much more. The environment or our surrounding is our first body because if something bad happens around us, we automatically feel agitated. After the environment/ surrounding, comes the body, mind, thoughts, feeling, and then the self. An education system which focuses on the full blossoming of the being is meant to have a lasting impact not just on the learner but also her/his family members, colleagues, society, and community as well. This will nourish the different subtle levels of existence of the human being, building a full nourished confidence and a strong stable personality.

The model of Holistic Education as depicted as in figure 1 rests upon four key indicators, namely purpose, teaching pedagogy, learning process, and outcomes. The fulfillment of each indicator will be helpful for an HEI to create an ecosystem of Holistic Education for its students.

The overarching model of Holistic Education has the strength to empower the students to develop multi-stakeholder sensitivity as the experiential learning augments the opportunities for the students to interact with the stakeholders of various organizations as part of their course curriculum. It also seeks to encompass and integrate the purpose of developing good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper and creative imagination, with sound ethical moorings and values having multi-generational adaptability and multi-cultural relatability for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society, which is the spirit of NEP–2020.

Moreover, such a model of Holistic Education seeks to imbibe the highest standard of multi-disciplinary teaching and research built by the ancient Indian Universities like Takshashila, Nalanda, and Vikramshila University that enables the students to have multi-choice possibility in terms of selecting the courses of study as well as instill a variety of skills in them to get well-versed in multiple careers.

Fig -1 Model of Holistic Education
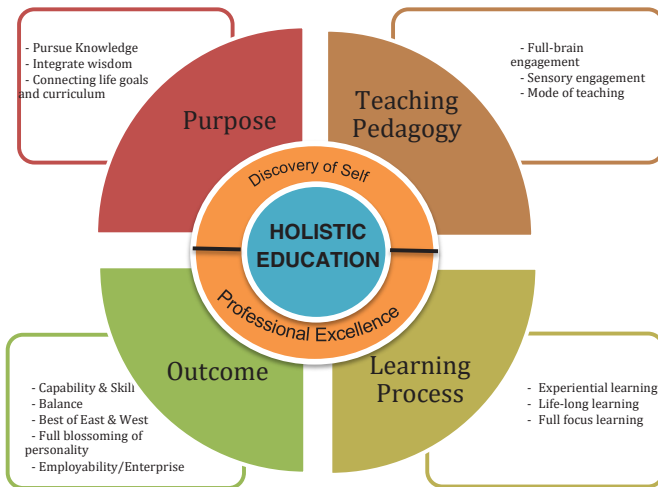
As suggested in NEP–2020, the model of holistic education aims to integrate the boundaries of various disciplines of education. The path of reengineering the education system from the step of understanding the purpose of education till reaching the planned outcomes of education has to be flexible enough to allow breaking the existing silos. It calls for autonomy and decentralization at the level of regulatory bodies to empower the HEIs.

HOLISTIC EDUCATION & EXCELLENCE: A CASE OF SRI SRI UNIVERSITY

Sri Sri University believes in the principle '*Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam*' (yoga brings skill in action).

Excellence in life is achieved when there is union and harmony between mind, body, and breath. Excellence is an academic process of motivating the students to learn in ways that make a sustained, substantial, and positive influence on how they think, act, and feel which defines the core values of 'Learn-Lead-Serve'. Excellence can be measured by one's inner strength to handle situations with balance and ease. Emerging as a centre for premium education in India, Sri Sri University is setting benchmarks of excellence by offering holistic education that combines Western innovation with the ancient values and wisdom from the East.

The University fosters holistic development amongst the students through the following pillars:

Sadhana: At Sri Sri University, the students are offered a powerful Induction Programme which equips them with the tools like yoga, pranayama, and meditation to enrich their intelligence/intellectual quotient, emotional quotient, and spiritual quotient.

During the week long Induction Programme, the students participate in 'YES!+ (Youth Empowerment & Skill Workshop) which is a flagship Programme offered by The Art of Living specially for Youth. YES!+ is a brilliant mix of antiquity and the contemporary. It is a smooth blend of ancient wisdom, *yoga*, *pranayama* (breath control), and meditation, fused with contemporary intellectual exchanges, music, and games. The Programme charges the students with a fresh breath of vigor, enthusiasm, excellence, and responsibility and helps them to discharge stress, inhibitions, bad habits, and barriers.

To keep pace with the changing dynamics of the world outside, the students practice daily *Sadhana* together in the morning which not only aids in mental clarity but also makes them confident, courageous, collaborative, creative, and compassionate.

Sri Sri University also offers a unique and profound credit based Course called 'Happiness Connect' to its students which enables them to excel with a rational perspective and a peaceful mind. The course aims to instill human values, ethics, and cultivate skills to meet the professional responsibilities with clarity of mind, purity in heart, and sincerity in action. It also allows them to explore and discover

from within the essence of education which is also a part of the core of NEP–2020. During the academic year 2020-21, over 95per cent of the students in the University opted for the Programme and had demonstrated shifts in their personality in terms of dynamism and positive outlook.

Seva: For the educated youth to become the flag bearers of important societal changes, it's necessary that they grow in an environment witnessing social responsibility at the core of individual and organizational development. Keeping that same tone of faith, Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR) is of topmost priority Sri Sri University. The University believes that key changes occur through community participation and societal transformation. Sri Sri University nurtures leaders of the next generation with the mindset to serve. The students participate in various community development programmes which not only give them a platform to exhibit the classroom learning in terms of organizing, team building, time management, etc. but also make them sensitive and compassionate human beings. The University has collaborated with various organizations and corporate houses to provide training in Leadership, Women Empowerment, Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Environment Protection among others to the local village community. Under the Sri Sri Koushal Vikas (SSKVK), Schneider Solar Electrician Training Center was set up in the premises of Sri Sri University in association with Schneider Electrics wherein over 900 trainees were imparted skill development training in different sectors like solar electrification, security guard training, hospitality, housekeeping, to name a few. A training and skill development center under the name VIDYA (Construction and Skill Training Centre) was formed under the PMKVY Project of the Government of India and SSRDP. It focuses on providing vocational skill development training like masonry, bar bending, and steel fixing for the underprivileged and school drop-out youths.

Synergy: Sri Sri University had conceptualized since its beginning the value of interdisciplinary studies which is also the mandate of NEP–2020. The impressive list of 50+ Programmes (including undergraduate, post-graduate, and doctoral programmes) offered by Sri Sri University

in diversified fields ranging from Architecture to Health & Wellness, from Management Studies to Arts, Culture, and Indic Studies, from Agriculture to Artificial Intelligence is a testimony to its commitment to develop a centre of multicultural studies as envisaged in NEP–2020. Sri Sri University has taken the following initiatives in coherence with NEP–2020:

- **Integrated System of Medicine**

  Sri Sri University has conceived from the very beginning the various aspects of the holistic and integrative system of medicine by setting, Programmes in Osteopathy, Yogic Sciences, Naturopathy under the Faculty of Health & Wellness which shall be integrated with Allopathic Hospital.

- **Faculty of Emerging Technologies (FET)**

  As Technological innovation and advancements have brought about massive societal change, so to groom the student as per the guidelines of NEP–2020 along with the needs of ongoing Industry 4.0 and the incoming Industry 5.0, SSU has launched the *Faculty of Emerging Technologies (FET)* to develop technology leaders who are industry-ready in the field of business analytics, artificial intelligence, machine learning, etc.

- **Sri Sri School of Cyber Peace**

  Sri Sri University has also signed an MoU with CyberPeace Foundation for the creation of Sri Sri School of CyberPeace, which is the first of its kind in the world for offering Programmes in the field of Cyber Security, Cyber Defence, Digital Forensic & Incident Response, etc. These Programmes will have a 65 per cent focus on practical hands-on experiential learning to make the students industry-ready which is the mandate of NEP–2020.

- **Faculty of Contemplative and Behavioural Sciences**

    In 2020, Sri Sri University pioneered in creating the Department of Contemplative and Behavioural Sciences (DCBS) under the *Faculty of Contemplative and Behavioural Sciences* which is one of its kind in the world. In consonance with the NEP–2020, DCBS is all about upholding, nurturing, and integrating (research in) the rich multi-disciplinary global heritage of 'contemplative paradigms' and 'ancient Indian Knowledge traditions' with 'modern approaches' in order to build a critical mass of practitioners, through scholarship, training, and field practice, embarking on a journey towards Self-realization.

Satsang: Satsang is the most obvious exemplification of our commitment to make life a celebration. The students of Sri Sri University come together every week to organize Satsang. It gives the students an opportunity to sing and dance and reflect on the deeper questions that give meaning to life. The enriching experience of such togetherness transcend cultures and bring students from various backgrounds, states, and countries together to enjoy music, celebrate life, and meditate. Such soulful interactions bring together the scattered minds and let them experience a higher state of consciousness.

Silence: Silence is the seat of innovation and is an important foundation for our actions to be right and successful. This awareness often gets lost in the middle of our noisy and busy lives. At Sri Sri University every academic year 8 is commenced with 3 days of Silence Retreat wherein students, staff, and Faculty members dive deep within themselves by observing silence, powerful breathing exercises, and timeless wisdom to relax, refresh, and rejuvenate.

Symbiosis: Sri Sri University cultivates the ecosystem of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakkam*' wherein belongingness is cultivated amongst the students towards each and everything existing in the world. Students learn to embrace others as their very own in such an

environment. The Sri Sri Gurukul and Sri Sri Gaushala built at the campus are testimony to its commitment to nurture this symbiotic relationship.

- **Sri Sri Gurukul**

    With the vision and mission of reviving & sustaining the ancient Indian tradition of Vedic wisdom, Sri Sri Gurukul has been established in the premises of Sri Sri University wherein, 39 students from Odisha, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and North East are learning Samveda, Atharveda, and Yajurveda. Alongside the Vedas, they are also imparted education from the general curriculum. (students of Sri Sri University play a great role in teaching general subjects to the students of Gurukul). It's a beautiful amalgamation of the values and cultures of the east and the west. The University aids in providing accommodation, meals, education, stationery, clothes, and other basic requirements for the students of Gurukul. Daily chanting of vedic *mantras* help to keep the environment *Sattvik* (spiritually uplifted) and spreading positive vibrations in the campus.

- **Sri Sri Gaushala**

    Sri Sri Gaushala was started in 2020 with the aim to revive the gaushala system as well as preserve indigenous cattle breeds, the Sri Sri Gaushala at Sri Sri University today houses 42 indigenous breeds of cows and calves. They provide pure A2 milk, and other dairy products along with manure for organic farming.

Spirituality: Sri Sri University envisions to impart holistic and value-integrated education in order to develop visionary thinkers with social-consciousness to lead and precipitate inevitable changes, with the summative call for learn-lead and serve. The world today needs spiritually Smart citizens to bring harmony and create a one world family which is interconnected and interdependent. The University offers the students various avenues to explore and nourish their inbuilt virtues which have the capacity to impart true intelligence and dynamism.

Shanti & Samriddhi: At Sri Sri University believes in complete prosperity of an individual. Prosperity of state of mind is the first step towards the full blossoming of the consciousness of an individual. Sri Sri University has adopted a unique approach where academics effortlessly blend with spirituality. The modern and well-researched curricula, seasoned faculty, industry exposure, innovative pedagogical practices, state of art infrastructure make the academic process engaging and fruitful along with giving opportunities to the students to explore themselves from within and find the bigger purpose of their life.

CONCLUSION

"Education is often seen as only lit path in the pursuit of happiness. Only an education that can nourish inbuilt virtues can impart true intelligence."

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Ji

The implications of holistic education in building our nation is impeccable. The holistically blossomed students of today will portray themselves as thought leaders of tomorrow. India has had a long and illustrious history of holistic education system. In order to place Indian Universities on the global map, we need to collectively nurture the ecosystem of holistic education and enhance it rigorously. Let us work towards recreating the history of Nalanda and Takshashila University and offer our rich heritage of the best education system for the world to explore.