

# Sree Narayana Guru's Educational Ideals In Light Of NEP 2020 Reforms

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## Abstract

*The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), which was approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020, highlights the future picture and vision of India's new education system. The NEP 2020 is a comprehensive framework for Indian elementary education to higher education system. The policy aims to transform India's education system by 2030. As per the Policy, the changing aims of education system must "move more towards learning about how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative and multidisciplinary, and how to innovate, adapt, and absorb new material in novel and changing fields". Also the Policy deals many aspects like vocational education, environmental education, health education, value education, Concept of Yoga, spiritual education, multi-disciplinary education etc.*

*Sree Narayana Guru, who liberated the society from the depressed and from the clutches of a caste-ridden leadership was a great visionary, saint, social reformer, great teacher, spiritual leader, educationist propagated among the mass the ideal of 'One Caste, One Religion and One God for Man'. Guru stood for the upliftment of the socially marginalized section in the State of Kerala during the end of the 19th century and his preaching influenced the world as a whole. He was such a spectacular visionary that his inspirational thoughts and philosophy on life and education are ever relevant. While analyzing the document of NPE 2020, which is the first education policy of the 21st century, we can see that the aspects dealt in the Policy are the same what Sree Narayana Guru had said in the 19th century. The present study tries to investigate the Educational Thoughts of Sree Narayana Gurudev in the Context of NEP 2020.*

**Key Words:-** Educational Thoughts, National Education Policy 2020, Sree Narayana Gurudev

## INTRODUCTION

Sree Narayana Guru, the ever great teacher of universal religion propagated among the mass the ideal of 'One Caste, One Religion and One God for Man' was a visionary who stood for the virtue of mankind. Tagore says about Guru; "I have never seen one who is spiritually greater than Swami Narayana Guru, of malayalam nay a person who is on a par with him in spiritual attainment. I shall never forget that radiant face illumined by the self-effulgent light of divine glory and those mystic eyes fixing their gaze on a far remote point in the distant horizon". Guru applied the great 'Advaitic Principles' for the benefit of the humanity. He established the theory of "One Caste, One Religion and One God to the humanity" on the basis of the non-dual knowledge of the Universe. Guru's philosophical contributions of Darsanamala, Atmopadesasatakam, Advaita Dipika, Brahnavidya Panchakam, Daiva Dasakam, Homa Mantra, Nirvriti Panchakam, Sloka Trayi, Vedanta Sutra etc. reveals his concepts of Bhana darsana, Consciousness and Non-Consciousness, Unity of Jiva and Brahman. In order to uplift the people from a caste over dominated

culture, Guru propagated the significance of education. According to Sree Narayana Guru, "Knowledge is God" (Kumaranasan, 1906). One of the important message of Sree Narayana Guru, "To liberate through Education, strength through organization" throws his views on education. "If today he is remembered, loved and adored and followed by millions of people, it was because he woke them up from the myopia of ignorance, because he showed them the light of truth, and breathed into their very souls the life giving vitality of freedom" (Jerald. J. Pereira, 1989).

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was approved by the Union Cabinet on July 29th, 2020. This Policy proposes the revamping of different aspects of India's education system in terms of structure, governance, regulation etc. Particularly it aims to create a new system in tune with the aspirational goals of 21st century education, by consistent preserving of the Nation's traditions and value systems. In this article, the investigator tries to trace out the similarities of the recommendations made in NEP 2020 with those of the educational thoughts of Sree Narayana Guru in a qualitative research approach.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The Objectives of the present study are the following

- 1) To analyze the major features of the educational thoughts of Sree Narayana Guru
- 2) To analyze the major features of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020
- 3) To make a comparison between the educational thoughts of Sree Narayana Guru and the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 with respect to
  - a) Universal Access to Education
  - b) Significance of life oriented Education
  - c) Holistic Development
  - d) Sanskrit Education
  - e) Vocational Education
  - f) Skill Development and Self-Reliance
  - g) Moral and Ethical Education
  - h) Adult Education and lifelong learning
  - i) Inclusivity and Social Equality
  - j) Health Education
  - k) Flexibility and Innovation

## METHODOLOGY

Since the Study is of a historical and analytical in nature, the investigator applied a combination of both. Content and document analysis were done for collecting data by following qualitative approach.

## SOURCE OF DATA

Primary source of the Policy document of NPE 2020 published by the Government was analyzed thoroughly and Secondary sources like articles, magazines, documents, Various e-resources and books were extensively consulted to gather data on the educational thoughts of Sree Narayana Guru. A wide array of scholarly works and authoritative texts on his philosophy were meticulously analyzed, providing deep insights into his visionary ideas on education.

## COMPARITIVE ANALYSIS

### ***Universal Access to Education***

Sree Narayana Guru believed in providing education to all sections of society, including the marginalized and oppressed. Sree Narayana Guru championed universal access to education, advocating for the education of all individuals, irrespective of caste, creed, or gender. He firmly believed that education was a powerful tool for social upliftment and equality, aiming to break the shackles of social discrimination and oppression. By establishing numerous schools and colleges that welcomed students from marginalized and oppressed communities, Guru sought to create an inclusive educational environment that promoted social harmony and empowerment. His vision was to eradicate ignorance and provide equal opportunities for all, fostering a society where knowledge and education became the foundation for progress and unity.

NEP 2020 highlights "Special emphasis will be given on socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs)... ensuring that all students have access to a safe and engaging school education environment" (Section 3.1).

### ***Significance of life-oriented Education***

Sree Narayana Guru strongly held that "all sections of the society should receive at least elementary education. First and foremost in educating the poor sections is motivation" (Vivekodayam-Book No.XI ). Guru gave them external motivation through his talks and he firmly advised them that education alone could make the poor secure economically, culturally, and socially. He repeatedly said that education among the poor should be encouraged and Guru realized that only education could make them strong enough to complete with the privileged classes in all walks of life. He wanted to propagation of the idea of education and cleanliness among the people.

NPE 2020 suggests that "The ability to read and write, and perform basic operations with numbers, is a necessary foundation and an indispensable prerequisite for all future schooling and lifelong learning" (NPE 2020: 2.1, Page No.8). The highest priority of the education system will be to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school. (NPE 2020: 2.2, Page No.8).

### ***Holistic Development***

Sree Narayana Guru emphasized holistic development in education, integrating intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth. He advocated for critical thinking, ethical living, and spiritual enlightenment, believing that true education should foster self-realization and universal brotherhood. By establishing inclusive educational institutions, he promoted a balanced approach to life, harmonizing material success with spiritual fulfillment. His vision of nurturing well-rounded individuals continues to inspire modern educational reforms like NEP 2020, highlighting the importance of comprehensive development in education.

NEP 2020 emphasis that "The aim of the education system will be to develop 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" (Preamble).

### ***Sanskrit Education***

Guru started Sanskrit Patsalas at Aruvipuram, Sivagiri and Alwaye. He knew that Indian culture was rooted in Sanskrit language. He wanted all people should learn Sanskrit, get the knowledge of outside world. Social progress cannot be achieved without the development of individuals. According to Sree Narayana Guru, proper education is essential for fulfilling our roles of life, being an individual and as a social member satisfactorily and properly. All development is possible only through education and which is possible through the learning of Sanskrit language. "Narayana Guru attended the classes in the patasala and held discussions with him on Bhagavat Gita, Upanishads, Vasish, Sudha Samhita. Later on, the method of teaching was reformed so that the pupils studied the syllabus of Sanskrit examination"(proceedings, 1905). Narayana Guru tried to promote not only Sanskrit, but also English and Malayalam.

"India's languages are among the richest, most scientific, most beautiful, and most expressive in the world, with a huge body of ancient as well as modern literature (both prose and poetry), film, and music written in these languages that help form India's national identity and wealth. For purposes of cultural enrichment as well as national integration, all young Indians should be aware of the rich and vast array of languages of their country, and the treasures that they and their literatures contain". (NEP2020 -Page 14: 4.15)

### ***Vocational Education***

As per the vision of Sree Narayana Guru, after education, industry is the next important thing for the uplift of the community. He established a weaving school at Varkala, where students were imparted with free elementary instruction in weaving. Guru once said , " Industrial Progress is an important thing for social advancement and elevation of the country. Our children should get training in industrial institutions" (Ravindran, 1906).

As per the National Education Policy 2020, "this policy aims to overcome the social status hierarchy associated with vocational education and requires integration of vocational education programmes into

mainstream education in all education institutions in a phased manner. Beginning with vocational exposure at early ages in middle and secondary school, quality vocational education will be integrated smoothly into higher education. It will ensure that every child learns at least one vocation and is exposed to several more. This would lead to emphasizing the dignity of labour and importance of various vocations involving /Indian arts and artisanship" ( NPE 2020: 16.4, Page 44).

### ***Skill Development and Self-Reliance***

Sree Narayana Guru stressed vocational training and skill development for economic independence. Guru emphasized the importance of vocational training and skill development as crucial elements for achieving economic independence and self-reliance. He believed that education should go beyond academic learning to include practical skills that would enable individuals to earn a livelihood and contribute to their communities. By advocating for the dignity of labor and the value of craftsmanship, Guru encouraged people to learn trades and professions that were essential for self-sustenance. His educational institutions incorporated vocational training programs that equipped students with practical skills in areas such as agriculture, carpentry, and weaving. Guru's vision aimed to empower individuals economically, reduce dependency, and uplift the socio-economic status of marginalized communities through skill-based education.

NEP 2020 upholds "Every student will take a fun course, during Grades 6-8, that gives a survey and hands-on experience of a sampling of important vocational crafts, such as carpentry, electric work, metal work, gardening, pottery making, etc., as decided by States and local communities and as mapped by local skilling needs" (Section 4.27).

### ***Moral and Ethical Education***

Sree Narayana Guru's educational philosophy placed a strong emphasis on moral and ethical values, viewing them as essential components of true education. He believed that education should nurture individuals to become morally upright and ethically responsible citizens. Guru advocated for the integration of ethical teachings into the curriculum, encouraging students to cultivate virtues such as honesty, integrity, compassion, and respect for others. His teachings underscored the importance of leading a righteous life and contributing positively to society. By fostering a strong moral foundation, Guru aimed to create a just and harmonious community where individuals acted with a sense of duty and social responsibility. His vision of moral and ethical education sought to develop character and instill values that would guide individuals in making ethical decisions and leading a life of integrity and service.

NEP 2020 highlights "Education must build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time prepare them for gainful, fulfilling employment" (Preamble).

### ***Adult Education and lifelong learning***

According to the Guru 'a good garden should be there along with the temples and good trees should be grown with platforms around them. People can sit on these platforms and enjoy the breeze. Every temple should have a library where religious books should be available. Temples need spacious rooms where people can congregate and where discourses should be held. They are also intended to give craft based and specialized kind of education and training. These temples are intended to be accessible to members of all castes, lower as well as higher (Mitavadi, 1918). Narayana Guru reminded that nobody should enter into house holding without the completion of education (Nataraja Guru, 1916).

"The opportunity to attain foundational literacy, obtain an education, and pursue a livelihood must be viewed as basic rights of every citizen. Literacy and basic education open up whole new worlds of personal, civic, economic, and lifelong-learning opportunities for individuals that enable them to progress personally and professionally (NEP: 21.1, Page 51).

### ***Inclusivity and Social Equality***

Sree Narayana Guru envisioned education as a powerful tool to bridge social divides and promote inclusivity, aiming to create a society where all individuals, regardless of caste, creed, or social status, had equal opportunities to learn and grow. He established educational institutions that were open to everyone,

challenging the prevailing caste-based discrimination and social exclusion. Guru's inclusive approach sought to dismantle the barriers that marginalized communities faced, providing them with access to quality education and fostering a sense of unity and equality. He believed that inclusive education would cultivate mutual respect and understanding among diverse social groups, leading to a more equitable and cohesive society. Guru's vision was to use education as a means to empower the oppressed, promote social justice, and create a community where inclusivity and equality were fundamental values.

NEP 2020 stresses "To make education more inclusive, the policy calls for a major effort from both the public and private sectors, combined with community engagement and support" (Section 6.5).

### ***Health Education***

Sree Narayana Guru gave significant importance to health education. He wanted man to follow the five purities of body, words, mind, senses and the house for a healthy and prosperous life. According to him the man who observes these five purities will be agile, smart, long-living, healthy and famous (Vivekodayam, 1910).

NPE 2020 gives paramount importance to the healthy lifestyle and habits of students by saying that "the nutrition and health (including mental health) of children will be addressed, through healthy meals and the introduction of well-trained social workers, counsellors, and community involvement into the schooling system. All school children shall undergo regular health check-ups especially for 100% immunization in schools and health cards will be issued to monitor the same" (NPE 2020: 2.9, Page 9).

### ***Flexibility and Innovation***

Guru supported innovative approaches to education tailored to the needs of individuals. Sree Narayana Guru was a proponent of flexibility and innovation in education, advocating for teaching methods that were adaptable to the unique needs and potential of each individual. He recognized that a one-size-fits-all approach was inadequate for fostering true learning and personal growth. Guru encouraged educators to employ creative and diverse pedagogical strategies that could engage students effectively and inspire a love for learning. His educational institutions often integrated practical skills with traditional academic subjects, ensuring that education was relevant and beneficial for real-life applications. By promoting an adaptive curriculum and experiential learning, Guru aimed to cultivate critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and creativity among students. His vision was to create a dynamic and responsive educational environment that could evolve with changing societal needs and empower students to reach their fullest potential.

NEP 2020 urges "The curriculum and pedagogy will be transformed by 2022 to minimise rote learning and instead encourage holistic, inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning" (Section 4.6).

## **FINDINGS**

Based on the analysis of Sree Narayana Guru's educational thoughts in comparison with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, several key findings emerge:

1. **Universal Access to Education:** Both Sree Narayana Guru and NEP 2020 emphasize the importance of providing education to all sections of society, including marginalized and oppressed communities. They advocate for inclusive educational environments that promote social harmony and empowerment through equal access to quality education.
2. **Significance of Life-Oriented Education:** Guruswami stressed the transformative power of education in uplifting economically and socially disadvantaged groups, aligning with NEP 2020's focus on foundational literacy and numeracy as essential for lifelong learning and personal development.
3. **Holistic Development:** Guru's vision of holistic education, integrating intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth, resonates with NEP 2020's goal of nurturing well-rounded individuals capable of rational thought, ethical behavior, and creative imagination.
4. **Sanskrit and Vocational Education:** While Guru advocated for the learning of Sanskrit and vocational skills like weaving for economic independence, NEP 2020 emphasizes the integration of vocational education into mainstream schooling to enhance skill development and promote the dignity of labor.

5. **Moral and Ethical Education:** Both Guru and NEP 2020 stress the importance of moral and ethical education in developing responsible citizens with strong ethical moorings and values, essential for societal well-being.
6. **Inclusivity and Social Equality:** Guru's inclusive approach to education, challenging caste-based discrimination, parallels NEP 2020's call for inclusive education practices to bridge social divides and promote equity among diverse social groups.
7. **Health Education:** Guru's emphasis on health education aligns with NEP 2020's focus on the holistic well-being of students, including nutrition, mental health, and regular health check-ups in schools.
8. **Flexibility and Innovation:** Guru's advocacy for innovative and adaptive teaching methods resonates with NEP 2020's emphasis on transforming pedagogy to encourage inquiry-based, discovery-based, and analysis-based learning, minimizing rote learning.

## CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis reveals striking similarities between Sree Narayana Guru's educational philosophy and the foundational principles and recommendations outlined in NEP 2020. Both emphasize education as a tool for empowerment, social justice, and national progress, highlighting the enduring relevance of Guru's visionary ideas in shaping contemporary educational reforms in India.

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