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Pedagogy

Entrepreneurship is a Mindset



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**ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IS A MINDSET**

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Entrepreneurship cannot be created by giving students training. It can thrive only when children develop curiosity, thinking skills, and a desire to learn.

As an educator and observer of human development, I've come to a firm belief: entrepreneurship is a mindset, not a certificate. And we are fundamentally misunderstanding how to cultivate it, particularly in our children.

The Illusion of Value Education

I recall when Prof Dr. Anil Sahasrabudhe, as the head of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), mandated that every college must teach global value education. A noble

intent, but the execution? Flawed. Look at the review of the teachers assigned to this in engineering colleges—they are often the most unqualified, put there because they weren't deemed fit for technical subjects. The class becomes a mere formality, a way to fill the timetable and finish the syllabus. There is no value education happening there. I know what real learning requires. I've been teaching the Bhagavad Gita in Malayalam for almost 20 years, and it now reaches an audience of 1,00,000. It takes a lifetime to learn and become part of such a text.

The Catchy Word and False Promises

Now, entrepreneurship itself has become a catchword. The government pushed for it, and suddenly, everyone's an entrepreneur! How many companies have registered in India in the last two years? Millions of people who were otherwise perfectly well were working in registered companies. Similarly, the drive to teach entrepreneurship has become pervasive. We used to have projects for B.Tech students, but since "nothing was happening," the government stopped them.

Now, the new mandate is: 4th-year students are "sold out" to companies, with the idea of "Make them entrepreneurs, teach them all." I truly don't understand this approach. Producing an entrepreneur never happens. Entrepreneurship is a mindset. I cannot force someone to become a value-driven person by putting them in a class if they haven't got that foundation. I believe the great teacher Vasishtha could do it with Rama—Rama was given 18 days of class, which became the first lesson, with the Yoga Vasishtha as the textbook. But, I doubt we have a Vasishtha today who can make a Dharma-Dharma person like Rama in 18 days.

Krishna taught the lesson to Arjuna, but it's crucial to remember that the Bhagavad Gita was not taught to everybody in the Mahabharata. It is not for everybody. When there is a powerful tagline, we must not apply it universally. We must shape the right people for it; it's a mindset that needs to be allowed to bloom.

Triggering the Fire

Another catchword is Design Thinking. I've conducted workshops on this, even in numerous engineering colleges in Cochin. Design Thinking is not about making everyone a designer. It's about giving a trigger to those who already possess that innate ability. They can turn that trigger into a fire; I cannot make the fire. I can only trigger them and provide the right environment. If this fundamental understanding is lost, we will continue down a path of futility. Imagine 3,00,000 students graduating in India with certificates claiming "genuine research work." Do you genuinely believe we have that many genuine inventions in India? No. It's a copycat job. A genuine startup mind emerges only when you have a fresh mind to think. Freedom is essential. I often wonder if Shankaracharya or the great saints of India would have developed into the thinkers they were if their parents had both been teachers who may have been stricter at home and thus stifled the ability to think. Very rarely do we see this thinking ability cultivated.

The Consequences of Pressure and Unaligned Aspirations

I think of the beautiful Telugu movie, Pressure Cooker, where the US-based parents desperately wanted their child to become an engineer, while the child aspired to be an entrepreneur. The answer is right there in the movie. Kota Factory and Crash Course also

illustrate the problem of a system that puts children into a rigid course structure.

I was in Delhi between 2007 and 2009, and as part of my strategic planning job, I had to read 18 newspapers daily. I was struck by the statistics of suicide at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). Most of those who committed suicide were in master's programs. They are brilliant, but they fail because they are unable to reach the level of aspirations put upon them.

If we want entrepreneurs, we must cultivate curiosity and the learning drive from early childhood. That's why I insist on the importance of the age 3 to Grade 3 period. It's when the 3H—Hand, Head, and Heart—must work together.

For management, I have a formula: $P = A + S + O$. Performance (P) equals Attitude (A) plus Skill (S) plus Opportunity (O). Opportunities are plenty. Skill might be lacking for some, but even if skill and opportunity are there, without the right attitude, people become lazy (Tushni bhava, as Vivekananda called it). Conversely, if you have a lot of attitudes, but opportunities are lacking, you become depressed, which is when people come to me as a psychotherapist.

This balance is a lifelong learning process that must stem from our traditional knowledge. We shouldn't aspire to heights, but rather aspire only when we can inspire people. The mantra has become "Aspire, Inspire, Success" (IAS). I conducted a survey among children in a school to determine how many want to become IAS officers. Everyone raises their hand. Then ask them how many states are in India—they won't know. I'm telling you, this is no exaggeration. I have asked engineering college professors with PhDs in technical subjects, "Who is the Prime Minister of India?" and some don't know. The social concern is lost. If we cultivate social and spiritual understanding, we will gain intellectual power. With emotional content, they will become philosophically good and physically stronger. We are lacking in all this. It must be a holistic treatment beginning from childhood. It is possible. We have to make it happen. We must redesign the whole social web. If we do, I am sure we will become much stronger.

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