

NEET IMBROGLIO

Test Paper leak into examinations for entrance to professional colleges is a serious issue which needs to be dealt with seriously by both the ruling and the opposition parties. Having registered its protest over leak of NEET papers recently, the opposition must realize this issue has to be sorted out in the Parliament through debate, discussions and possibly a strong legislation. Protesting outside PM’s House as a symbolic act is fine but stretching it too far can only lead to chaos and not show parliamentarians in good light. It’s sad that while the students who were affected by the leaking of NEET paper are hugely upset and the series of such leaks have set in a sense of frustration among them. As such the youth aspiring to get into professional colleges have to endure a lot – social expectations, ambitions, worries about careers, caste reservations and over all the competition. When their hard work is sought to be sabotaged by criminals involved in leaking the test paper. Now others have hijacked their cause. Going by the social media posts of the protesters in Delhi, vested interests seem to have hijacked it from the genuine people. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi said leakage of papers is a serious problem and amounts to playing with the future of the youth. He not only assured strong steps against it but also asked addressing it is a national responsibility. He asked the states to chip in to make crucial competitive exams fair and transparent while evaluating each candidate’s performance. In a democratic system, all issues must be dealt with through debate and legislation; creating chaos and beating policemen is not the way. The government also has to show its intent to swoop down on the cartels involved in paper leaks. The Modi government will have to do a lot more than just routine investigation into the paper leak. An out of box system has to be evolved quickly to fix this problem.

The entrepreneurs building a self-reliant India

Chirag Paswan

When the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted lives and livelihoods in 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recognised that recovery had to reach beyond large industry. It had to reach the smallest producers and enterprises, especially those working in India’s villages and small towns.

The Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme was launched that year under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan with this purpose. It began with a part of the food economy that had long remained outside formal finance and institutional support: the micro-processor already producing, selling and employing a few people, but without the capital or guidance needed to grow. The scheme reflected a conviction the Prime Minister has consistently held, that India’s growth must begin at its base, among people willing to build enterprises of their own.

The credit-linked component of PMFME has now crossed two lakh sanctions. The milestone matters because of the people behind it, entrepreneurs who have entered the formal credit system and secured a real chance to build. It is an achievement worth celebrating, and a moment to honour those who made it possible.

The first of them was Jamnadal Patidar, whose application was the very first sanctioned under PMFME. A tenth-pass entrepreneur with no background in food processing, he began a coriander-processing unit with an investment of Rs 10 lakh. With the scheme behind him, he gained access to finance, machinery and guidance, and his idea grew into a working enterprise that today employs more than five people.

His story makes a simple point. Enterprise is not the privilege of the well-born or the well-schooled. It turns on whether a person with an idea can find the finance, technology and support needed to act on it. By enabling ordinary Indians to build enterprises and employ others, PMFME is carrying forward the Prime



Minister’s vision of turning job-seekers into job-creators.

India has long been home to millions of skilled micro-processors making distinctive local products. What many of them lacked was affordable finance, modern technology, quality certification and a way into organised markets. The scheme was built to close those gaps together, through credit-linked assistance, capacity building, common infrastructure, branding and market linkage, and to bring informal enterprises into the formal economy where they have a real chance to grow. History

Women have been among the principal drivers of this change. Nearly 44 per cent of the two lakh credit-linked sanctions have gone to enterprises led by women, while more than four lakh Self-Help Group members have received seed capital to strengthen and upgrade their businesses. The scheme as a whole has drawn more than Rs 20,300 crore in investment and enabled close to six lakh livelihood opportunities. More than 75,000 units have entered the formal economy through Udyam registration and compliance under FSSAI and GST. For many women, this has meant turn-

ing skills practised within the household or community into recognised enterprises with access to finance, technology and wider markets. Helping many more make that transition must remain central to the phase ahead.

Behind each of these numbers is a wider gain. A working enterprise buys a farmer’s produce, cuts the loss that once followed every harvest, and keeps more value close to where it is made. A local crop becomes a branded product. A household skill becomes steady employment. In time, a district comes to be known for what it makes. This is Vocal for Local in practice, one enterprise at a time.

The sanction that carried PMFME to two lakh went to Inderjeet Singh of Ranchi, who is building a bakery and dreams that his cakes and pastries will one day be known across Jharkhand.

Like Patidar before him, he begins with a small venture and a large ambition, and he begins with the scheme behind him. He is one of thousands of first-generation entrepreneurs PMFME is now carrying from a first sanction towards a thriving enterprise. If Patidar shows how far this journey can travel, Singh shows

that it is still gathering pace.

That is the shape of the road ahead. Opening formal credit to micro-processors was the first task, and the harder, more rewarding one is to help each sanction become a disbursed loan, and each loan a business that trades and endures. A sanction opens the door; our work is to help every entrepreneur walk through it and build something that lasts.

This must define the next phase of PMFME. We will get credit to promising enterprises faster, help them adopt better technology and packaging, widen their access to markets, and prepare many more of them to reach buyers at home and abroad. And we will stand with our entrepreneurs after the sanction, not only before it, with the steady support that turns a first loan into a lasting livelihood. Food Production

Taken together, these two lakh sanctions are far more than an administrative milestone. Each enterprise that takes root strengthens the economy around it. It buys from nearby farms, creates income closer to home, and gives more women and young Indians the confidence to build businesses of their own.

When we look at Patidar’s coriander unit, the lesson is simple. The first sanction under PMFME went to a man with no established factory and no specialised degree.

What he had was an idea and the will to work; what the scheme gave him was access. Two lakh sanctions later, that opportunity has reached entrepreneurs across the country. Our task now is to help more of them build businesses that survive, employ others and create value where they begin.

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(The writer is the Union Minister for Food Processing Industries; Views presented are personal.)

WHAT INDIA CAN LEARN FROM JAPAN’S TEACHING CULTURE

Sakshi Sethi

Every education system in the world generates instructors. Very few produce teaching cultures. This delicate, almost invisible distinction is what makes Japan worth studying, not for its technology or test scores, but for the silent philosophy that drives what happens inside its classrooms and, more importantly, its staffrooms. Education

Consider Jugyo Kenkyu, or Lesson Study, a collaborative practice that has existed in Japanese education for more than a century. A group of teachers jointly plans a lesson. One teacher conducts it while the others observe how students respond, where they struggle and what helps them understand. Afterwards, the group discusses and refines the lesson. The purpose is not to rate the teacher but to examine the learning. In too many Indian schools, classroom observation still arrives wearing the uniform of appraisal. Lesson Study offers a different possibility: observation as professional cooperation rather than judgement.

The second useful idea is Kaizen, i.e. continuous improvement through small and consistent changes. Indian education re-



mains fascinated by the grand gesture: the new policy, revised assessment pattern or digital platform that promises to transform learning. But transformation is rarely an event. It is an accumulation. A teacher who regularly asks, “What did not work today, and what can I change tomorrow?” may improve more meaningfully than one who attends several ceremonial workshops. Kaizen dignifies the small. Then there is Ho-Ren-So, an abbreviation of h?koku (report), renraku (inform) and s?dan (consult). It is a Japanese workplace principle based on communicating early, sharing relevant information and seeking guidance before problems become crises. Anyone who has

worked in an Indian school understands how much energy is lost when communication fails. Ho-Ren-So is not unnecessary bureaucracy. It is courtesy converted into a system. Schools that communicate early and laterally become calmer institutions, and calm institutions teach better.

Another idea, Omoiyari, means understanding others’ feelings and responding with consideration. In schools, it helps teachers notice a quiet child, an overwhelmed colleague or a parent’s hidden concerns.

A fifth lesson comes from Tokkatsu, or Special Activities, through which Japanese schools integrate cooperation, responsibility and participation into daily life. Students may help clean classrooms, serve lunch and take responsibility for shared spaces. Character is not outsourced to a weekly moral education period. It is built into the ordinary rhythm of the school day. Japan’s insight is simple: character is caught more often than it is taught. If schools want responsible students, the conduct of adults becomes part of the curriculum. A final lesson comes from Japan’s wellbeing culture:

Shinrin-yoku, or forest bathing, the practice of restoring oneself through mindful time in nature. The idea may sound indulgent until one considers teacher exhaustion: correction loads, data entry, duty rosters, administrative paperwork and the emotional labour of managing dozens of children. A depleted teacher cannot remain endlessly patient, creative and compassionate. Rest is not softness; rather, it is sustainability. Japan’s education system is neither free from pressure nor should it be romanticised. The purpose is not to copy another country uncritically, but to identify ideas that can be adapted intelligently. Strong teaching cultures assume that excellence is collaborative, incremental, empathetic and sustainable. As India implements the National Education Policy (NEP), we must ask whether we are genuinely building professional capacity or merely conducting training. Training fills a hall for a day. Culture fills a career. Education

A teacher’s influence begins somewhere very ordinary: in a staffroom where teachers trust one another, in a lesson improved collectively, in a problem communicated before it grows and in the quiet act of noticing a child.

Science & technology in ancient India and its relevance today

Saroj Sharma

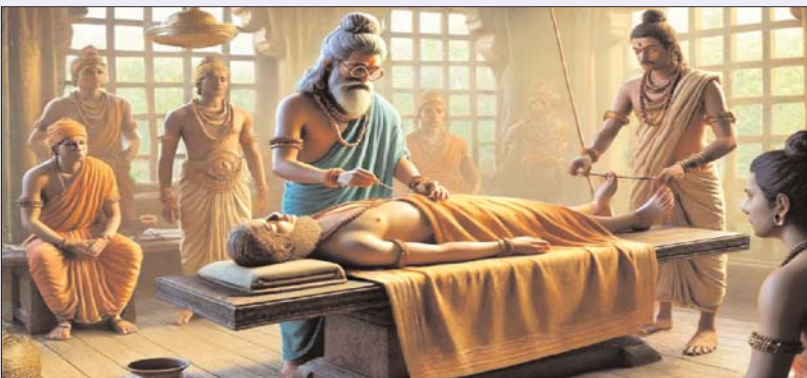
Long before “engineering” became a formal discipline, India was practising it. Between roughly 3300 and 1300 BCE, the Indus Valley Civilization built meticulously planned cities, covered drainage systems, and refined metalwork. The Vedic period added agriculture, further metallurgy, and systematic sky-watching — the base for a scholarly line running from the Rigveda to Aryabhata, Sushruta, Charaka, Varahamihira, and Bhaskaracharya.

Centres of learning such as Nalanda, Vikramshila, and Takshashila brought philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and medicine together under one roof. Aryabhata’s Aryabhatiya (c. 499 CE) worked out trigonometric formulas, argued that the Earth itself moves, and calculated its circumference at 39,968 kilometres. Bhaskaracharya’s Lilavati laid early groundwork for algebra, and Brahmagupta set out the rules for negative numbers. The Sushruta Samhita is the earliest known text on detailed surgery, including plastic and cataract techniques, while the Charaka Samhita reads like an

encyclopaedia of internal medicine. Nagarjuna’s Rasashastra covered medicinal preparation, the Surya Siddhanta calculated eclipses and planetary motion, and Varahamihira’s Panchasiddhantika merged five astronomical traditions into one. The rust-free Iron Pillar of Delhi (c. 400 CE) still puzzles metallurgists, and Vastu Shastra drew its architectural principles from the sun’s movement, wind, and a balance of five elements. We live amid artificial intelligence, generative tools, private spaceflight, AR/VR, 5G, drones, humanoid robots, and 3D printing — alongside deepening environmental crises, rising mental health difficulties, and ethics that haven’t kept pace with the technology. That gap is worth naming — and worth asking what earlier Indian thought, built around balance rather than pure output, might still offer.

Ayurveda and the Practice of Staying Well

Ayurveda, India’s traditional medical system, treats mind and body as one connected whole. Its purpose is captured in a well-known line: “Swasthasya swasthya rakshanam, aturasya vikar prashamanam cha” — protect the health of the well, and cure the disease of the



sick. That aim hasn’t aged. Ayurvedic learning follows daily and seasonal rhythm. Dinacharya prescribes waking before dawn, exercise, bathing, and reflection. Rutcharya divides the year into six seasons — Shishir, Vasant, Grishma, Varsha, Sharad, and Hemant — each calling for dosha adjustments; summer’s rising Pitta and Vata, for instance, call for cooling foods and plenty of water. Diet follows six tastes — sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter, and astringent — eaten according to one’s digestive strength, since, per the Charaka Samhita, weak digestion is the root of nearly every illness (“Roga sarve mandagnau”). Mentally,

Ayurveda describes temperament through three gunas — Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas.

The stakes are real: diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and heart disease are now widespread enough to strain health systems worldwide — only one country has more adults with diabetes than India. Ayurveda’s answer — dosha balance through Dinacharya, Rutcharya, and the Trayopastambha, or three pillars of health — speaks directly to this. Recognition extends well beyond India: the WHO estimates 80–90 percent of people worldwide use traditional medicine and now treats such systems as essential

healthcare, reflected in its choice to host the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in India. AIIMS Rishikesh has run a Tridosha-based AYUSH department alongside conventional treatment since 2017, the same year the All India Institute of Ayurveda in New Delhi became fully operational; the National Institute of Ayurveda continues expanding research and training.

Children today carry real strain from exam pressure and constant social media exposure. Patanjali answered this centuries ago: his second yoga sutra, “Yogashchitta vritti nirodhah,” defines yoga as the stilling of the mind’s fluctuations — peace through mastering restlessness, not eliminating its causes. The National Education Policy 2020 makes a related point, insisting self-understanding deserves as much attention as academic content.

India’s older texts — the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Ayurveda — treat mental health as one part of a wider picture spanning body and spirit. The Atharvaveda’s descriptions of mantras and healing sound anticipate what’s now marketed as sound therapy and mindfulness.

Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras set out an eight-limbed path — Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi — for developing body, mind, and spirit together. Practised regularly, it builds flexibility, strength, and immunity, supports digestion and breathing, eases stress and anxiety, sharpens concentration and memory, and nurtures self-knowledge, a steadier outlook, and empathy.

Global recognition is hard to overstate: when the UN marked the first International Yoga Day on June 21, 2015, 177 countries backed it. India has since made yoga compulsory in schools, and institutions as prominent as Harvard and Stanford now research its effects.

A similar pattern holds for the environment. Despite real scientific progress, climate change and lifestyle disease keep worsening, partly because students rarely learn to treat environmental care as central rather than optional. Older Indian thought treated nature as alive and conscious. The Atharvaveda’s line “Mata Bhumi Putroham Prithiviyah” — the Earth is our mother, we are her children — framed protecting the planet as a spiritual duty.