

From gratified desire to social-climbing skills: The course of a Greek myth

By. Vikas Datta

Does only economic status determine social class, or do other determinants -- speech patterns, apparel, mannerisms and the like -- play a part? And if so, will changing them mean upward -- and irreversible -- social mobility for all (across gender)? These questions have been much debated, but never so entertainingly as in this play, named after a mythological Greek character, and its numerous adaptations.

First century Roman poet Ovid, in his "Metamorphoses", tells the story of the sculptor, Pygmalion, who crafts a statue of his idea of a perfect woman, falls in love with "her" and then prays successfully to the gods (it was Ancient Greece) to grant her life. Variants and versions of this tale have echoed down ages and traditions, but it is a modern, more figurative -- and realistic -- version that we happen to be more familiar with.

This was the theatrical adaptation by Anglo-Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw in the early 20th century. Though not the first adaptation in modern times -- playwright W.S. Gilbert (of the famous Gilbert-Sullivan duo) produced a stage version in 1871 and a burlesque soon followed -- Shaw's "Pygmalion" (1913) is his most famous and most influential, raising issues of artificial social divides, gender roles

and women's emancipation.

The story begins with a socially diverse crowd, sheltering from rain under the impressive portico of a London church. Some of them get suspicious of a middle-aged man who seems to be noting their words, especially of a Cockney "flower girl" trying to make a sale to an amiable gentleman of apparent military background. The note-taker is, however, no police detective but phonetics specialist Henry Higgins doing research.

As Higgins calms -- or rather upbraids -- the girl for her excessive sensibility and "barbaric" sounds while winning over the crowd by unerringly identifying the area they hail from, it turns out he and the older gentleman, who is Colonel Pickering, author of "Spoken Sanscrit" know of each other by reputation. As they leave for dinner, Higgins bets he could pass off this girl -- "this creature with her kerbstone English: The English that will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days" -- as a "duchess at an ambassador's garden party" with a few months training in accent and instilling some upper-class mannerisms.

And then the same girl, Eliza Doolittle, shows up at Higgins' house next morning and

expresses interest in his offer. Higgins, blind beyond his own skills, takes her up despite reservations expressed rather forcefully by his housekeeper (and to some extent by Pickering) and then by his mother.

Seeing off these and other obstacles like Eliza's "imaginatively moral" father and persevering despite a setback or two, he makes good his challenge. But Eliza, tired at Higgins' treating her as a mere experiment and lack of appreciation, blows her top and stomps off. But what is to become of her, made now too genteel to return to her former life but without the wherewithal to sustain herself in an upper-class existence? And what do Higgins and Eliza really think about each other?

Performed first in early 1914, it went on to inspire English, Dutch and German film versions in the 1930s and the pair of lyricist Alan Jay Lerner and composer Frederick Loewe in 1956 adapted it into a successful Broadway play "My Fair Lady".

Besides becoming an acclaimed, multi-Oscar winning film in 1964 with some of the same cast as the stage version, this slightly romanticised version would go on to inspire plays in languages varied as Gujarati to Georgian and Marathi to Polish, a Bollywood

film with Dev Anand, a Bengali film starring Uttam Kumar, TV series in Turkish and Greek and more.

Lerner's version mostly remains true to the original, though replacing some dialogue with topical songs at suitable spots, reducing presence of characters like the Eynsford-Hills save the infatuated Freddy, and changing venue of Eliza's first high-society public appearance. But the greatest change -- like most stage and film adaptations -- was the about the Higgins-Eliza relationship.

While Shaw's play actually ended with Higgins' loud laughter at Eliza's plans to marry Freddy, its performances ended with a happier ending in line with the audience's expectations. The playwright wasn't amused and used his past as a novelist -- though unsuccessful -- to attach an epilogue, detailing the characters' later life and why Higgins and Eliza are not meant for each other.

Lerner was not convinced and his versions have an ambiguous ending where the two are reunited, after a stormy fight, but in what way exactly is left to the viewer's imagination.

What is more important is the questions it raises about social impact of language and its gender divide, especially how Higgins can swear and be rude to his heart's content but Eliza can't. Have we passed this barrier?

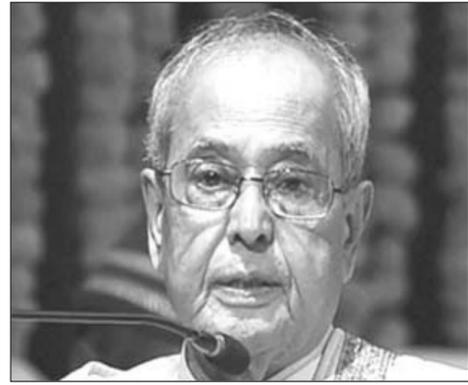
Need to improve research, capacity building in education system: President Pranab Mukherjee

Sonepat (HAR), Mar 19: There is an urgent need to improve the country's education system in terms of quality of instruction, faculty, research and capacity building, President Pranab Mukherjee said today as he observed that no Indian varsity figures among the world's top 200.

Mukherjee also emphasised that the education system should take on the challenge of tapping the 'demographic dividend' while also pitching for a stronger industry-academia partnership. Delivering his address after inaugurating a 3-day international conference at the O P Jindal Global University, here, Mukherjee said that unless we have strong foundations of basic research, our futuristic University plans will be seriously jeopardised.

"Knowledge mobilization through quality higher education is pivotal to the socio-economic development of a nation. Innovation and futuristic universities are the driving force behind this.

"There is an urgent need to improve education system in terms of the quality of instruction, faculty, research and



capacity building," Mukherjee said.

The President said that no Indian university figures in the top 200 universities of the world and transforming our varsities into centres of excellence is the key challenge policy-maker and academic leaders face.

Educational institutions have to gear up to face the socio-economic challenge the country is facing in terms of job creation, Mukherjee said.

"Quality, affordability and accessibility are the three cornerstones of higher education which need to be understood in the Indian context," he said while advocating linkages with the best universities in the world to ensure student mobility, research and joint projects. Mukherjee also

emphasised on the linkages between education and industry.

"Innovation should be linked to the market. Through collaborative work and international knowledge exchange, educational institutes can build a larger influence in the international education arena," he said.

He added that India's education system will have to take on the challenge of tapping its 'demographic dividend'. "We will also have to provide a competent skilled workforce," he said.

The President said that interface between education and industry should be established. "The requirement of today's educational system is to focus on innovation and research," he said. he President said

that it was essential to establish linkages between innovation and the market. Future Universities must establish strong linkages with various stakeholders in society, he added.

An important necessity of modern Universities is to have a chain of inspired teachers who can ignite the minds of students and encourage them to think out-of-the box, Mukherjee said.

"Young boys and girls should be encouraged to have problem-solving minds to enable them to solve problems through their ingenuity," the President further said.

He said that since 2014, the Festival of Innovations (FOIN) is being held in Rashtrapati Bhavan adding that there he has seen how a large number of persons from obscure places and remote villages have tried to solve the problems of society through innovation.

Haryana Education Minister Rambilas Sharma said knowledge, innovation and responsibility have been Indian patents since ancient times. "Knowledge is not only our past, but is our future," he said. Haryana Governor Prof Kaptan Singh Solanki was also pre-

Only good institutions will flourish: Prakash Javadekar



Jalandhar, Mar 19: Union Minister Prakash Javadekar today said that only good institutions will flourish whether in government or private sector.

Javadekar said only that country prospers in the world where its universities prosper.

"Education is empowerment and it brings great transformation in life, society and everything," the Union Human Resource Development Minister said at a Management Conclave-2017 of Lovely Professional University here.

He said private sector is doing well in present time.

"Our government is also working on public-private partnerships, where competition and collaboration between the two will certainly bring out the best of India," Javadekar said.

"We feel, whether government or private, only good institutions will flourish. More an institution will be good, more autonomy it will have," he said.

He said it is a challenge to improve

government education sector and "We will strive to correct it".

"I can say that both public and private sectors can co-exist and make India prosper. We want good education to all," the Minister said.

Explaining about new education policy, Javadekar said it rests on five pillars-- accessibility, quality, equity, accountability and affordability.

"We are striving to make all education systems, prevalent in the country, clean and transparent," he said.

Laying great stress on innovation and research, Javadekar invoked teachers and students to bring out new ideas.

"We are fastest growing country in the world. To keep up pace, innovate ... Research and develop and have as many patents as you can for the betterment of the society. We have great merit-based scholarships for our students to retain best of brains in the country by following 'brain gain and no brain drain'."

In this context, the Minister also shared about Global Research Interactive Network (GRIN), under which students will be provided scholarship and opportunity to work with reputed foreign laboratories and would have liberty to come back to India and continue with their research.

The Minister also took part in tricolour 'Unity walk' along with 3,500 LPU members forming grand tricolor by wearing tricolor T-shirts.

LPU Chancellor Ashok Mittal also spoke on the occasion.

HRD to seek fellowship refund from IIT scholars if they leave midway



New Delhi, Mar 19: Selected PhD fellows at the IITs will receive Rs 75,000 per month under the Prime Minister's Research Fellowship but will have to return the entire amount if they leave the course midway.

The proposed fellowship, having the refund clause, will be awarded to those who wish to seek admission in PhD courses directly after their B.Tech programme.

The scheme by the HRD ministry, however, is yet to get the Cabinet's nod.

At present, there are 25,000 scholars enrolled in different PhD programmes in the IITs and those opting for doctoral degree directly after completing their masters get Rs 25,000 per month.

"To improve the quality of research, more students need to be encouraged to register for direct PhD programme after completing their B.Tech courses. Therefore, a lucrative scheme has been devised where students will get an amount as good as salaries paid by the MNCs," an HRD ministry official said.

"However, to ensure that the students don't use the opportunity as a stop over arrangement, a refund clause has been inserted," the official said.

The fellowship was approved last year by the IIT Council, the highest decision making body for the institutions, headed by HRD minister Prakash Javadekar.

The first batch of the fellowship programme is likely to start from this academic year and 1,000 fellows will be inducted into it.

Cabinet approves setting up of 50 Kendriya Vidyalayas

New Delhi, Mar 19: Fifty new Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) will be established across the country to provide quality education to around 50,000 students with the Cabinet giving a go ahead to the project.

The schools, which will be set up under the civil/defence sector for classes 1 to 5, will "provide quality education to approximately 50,000 students in addition to around 12 lakh students already studying in present KVs," an official statement said.

The new KVs for which 650 regular posts will be created, will "address the educational needs of eligible students with high quality standards and will play a role of pace-setting educational institutions in the districts concerned," it said.

By providing a common syllabus and system of education, the KVs are intended to ensure that the children of government employees do not face education disadvantages while their parents are



transferred from one location to another.

The schools have been operational for over fifty years.

At least 4-acre of land is required in a city and beyond that in other areas for setting up of a Kendriya Vidyalaya.

Other norms include concentration of 500 employees in defence or Central government and minimum potential enrollment of 200 children for classes I to IV.

"The school grows every year with addition of one more higher class and, when the school grows upto class XII and becomes a full

fledged school with two sections in each class, there shall be a requirement of about 4,000 regular posts of various categories including around 2,900 teaching posts and about 1,100 non-teaching posts," it said.

The total project cost based on Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) norms for the proposed 50 new KVs is Rs 1,160 crore.

There are at present 1,142 functional Kendriya Vidyalayas under the KVS including three abroad at Moscow, Kathmandu and Tehran.

HAPPY RETURNS OF THE DAY

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

Free of Cost

Name :

Date of birth :

Address :-

Namita

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Cabinet nod to bill granting degree awarding power to 15 IITs

New Delhi, Mar 19: The long pending move to accord degree-granting powers to 15 Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs) set up through public private partnership (PPP) finally got Cabinet approval on Wednesday. The Cabinet also approved setting up of 50 new Kendriya Vidyalayas at a cost of Rs 1160 crore.

The IIIT Bill had been one of the many thorny issues between the HRD ministry and the PMO around the time when HRD minister Smriti Irani was replaced by Prakash Javadekar. One of the key differences with the PMO over the Bill was on the degree of

autonomy to these institutes and specifically the role of the President of India as Visitor to the institutes.

It is learnt now that the ministry finally gave in to the PMO argument and the provisions to enable the Visitor's role in appointment of the directors and chairpersons at the IIITs have been done away with. As per the draft IIIT Bill, the Visitor was to be the apex authority to all IIITs.

The PMO is learnt to have pitched complete autonomy for the institutes with minimal or no governmental role in the appointment process.

While the ministry had earlier agreed

to considerably pare down the powers and role of the IIIT Council to make it a purely advisory body unlike the IIT Council whose decisions are binding on all IITs, it had concerns about the PMO's suggestion to drop all role in the key appointments as well.

The Bill will declare the 15 IIITs on PPP mode as 'Institutions of National Importance' with powers to award degrees. This will entitle them to use the nomenclature of Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) or Master of Technology (M.Tech) or Ph.D degree as issued by a university or an institution of national importance.