

# Education, Culture, and Human Values: A Literary-Humanist Critique of Higher Education in Telangana

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**Abstract**—Education, from the perspective of English literary thought, has long been envisioned as a moral, cultural, and humanizing enterprise. Matthew Arnold, John Henry Newman, Rabindranath Tagore, and T. S. Eliot conceptualized education as central to the intellectual, ethical, and cultural sustenance of society, emphasizing character formation, creativity, and moral discernment over mere vocational skill. In Telangana, India's youngest state, higher education has expanded rapidly since 2014, yet it faces challenges including commercialization, institutional imbalance, faculty inadequacies, and ethical compromise. This paper examines the crisis of higher education in Telangana through a literary-humanist lens, arguing that policy interventions alone cannot address the underlying cultural and ethical deficiencies. Drawing upon NEP 2020, AISHE reports, and literary-theoretical insights, the study demonstrates that meaningful reform requires a revival of humanistic values, reimagining teachers as cultural agents and institutions as custodians of intellectual and ethical life. The paper concludes that embedding Arnoldian, Newmanian, Tagorean, and Eliotian principles into contemporary higher education is essential for achieving intellectual, moral, and societal advancement.

**Keywords**— Humanism, Culture, Ethics, Higher Education, Matthew Arnold, Newman, Tagore, Eliot

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education is not merely the transmission of knowledge; it is a process through which human beings acquire moral, intellectual, and cultural depth. In the literary-humanist tradition, education has been consistently linked to the ethical and social development of individuals and society. Matthew Arnold, in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), conceptualizes education as the pursuit of "human perfection," wherein intellectual and moral refinement are valued above material success. Arnold critiques Philistinism, the preoccupation with economic utility and shallow social

achievement, which he perceives as detrimental to the broader goals of culture and education.

John Henry Newman, in *The Idea of a University* (1852), similarly emphasizes the cultivation of intellect and character over vocational efficiency. Newman advocates for a liberal education that encourages critical thought, ethical judgment, and the unity of knowledge across disciplines. Rabindranath Tagore, in the Indian context, underscores the necessity of holistic, experiential education that nurtures creativity, emotional intelligence, and ethical sensibility (*Personality*, 1917). For Tagore, teachers are not mere transmitters of content but facilitators of intellectual freedom, guiding students toward self-realization.

T. S. Eliot, in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), highlights the role of institutions in maintaining cultural continuity and ethical standards. He warns that the erosion of institutional integrity leads to the fragmentation of society's cultural and moral fabric. This framework offers a critical lens for examining the contemporary higher education system in Telangana, which, despite rapid expansion and policy reforms, exhibits signs of structural imbalance, ethical compromise, and a shift from humanistic ideals toward utilitarian, market-driven priorities.

Telangana, formed in 2014 with aspirations of autonomy and equitable development, presents a unique case for analysis. The state hosts prestigious institutions such as IIT Hyderabad, NALSAR University of Law, AIIMS, and numerous public and private universities. However, the higher education landscape is dominated by private colleges, which constitute approximately 85% of undergraduate institutions. Despite initiatives such as DOST for standardized admissions, NEP 2020 reforms, and skill development programs (e.g., EGMM, MEPMA), issues such as faculty

inadequacies, commercialization, and ethical lapses persist. Literacy gaps, especially among rural women, and a mismatch between training and employment highlight the failure of access alone to ensure meaningful intellectual and social empowerment.

This paper situates the crisis in Telangana's higher education within a literary-humanist critique. By integrating Arnold's, Newman's, Tagore's, and Eliot's insights, it explores the ethical, cultural, and humanistic dimensions of education, arguing that the current crisis reflects a deeper societal malaise that policy interventions alone cannot remedy.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Matthew Arnold: Culture and the Critique of Philistinism

Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* defines culture as "the study of perfection," wherein intellectual and moral development are inseparable from social responsibility. Philistinism—the preoccupation with material utility and shallow achievement—threatens the true purpose of education. In Telangana, private colleges often prioritize revenue generation and institutional survival over the cultivation of critical thinking, ethical conduct, or cultural literacy. This mirrors Arnold's concerns about materialism undermining cultural and moral development, resulting in what he calls "anarchy" in social and institutional life.

### John Henry Newman: Liberal Education and Intellectual Cultivation

Newman emphasizes that education should aim at cultivating intellectual autonomy and ethical judgment rather than immediate vocational utility. He stresses the unity of knowledge, warning that excessive specialization and utilitarianism fragment learning. Contemporary skill development programs in Telangana, while beneficial in principle, often produce graduates who are technically trained but lack critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and adaptability. Newman's insights highlight the limitations of focusing solely on employability and technical competence, advocating for a broader liberal education that fosters lifelong learning and societal engagement.

### Rabindranath Tagore: Experiential and Holistic Education

Tagore critiques mechanical, rote-based instruction, advocating education that nurtures creativity, empathy, and ethical sensibility. He envisions teachers as mentors who facilitate self-directed learning, intellectual freedom, and moral development. Telangana's higher education institutions, particularly in the private sector, often rely on contractual faculty and standardized curricula that constrain creativity and critical engagement. The "IDOL" classroom—teacher-centered and rigid—contrasts sharply with the "IDEAL" classroom envisioned in this paper, where Tagore's principles of inquiry-based and experiential learning guide instruction.

### T. S. Eliot: Institutions and Cultural Continuity

Eliot conceptualizes culture as an organic whole, maintained through institutions that preserve ethical and intellectual standards. When universities engage in nepotistic recruitment, plagiarism, and ghostwriting, they undermine both academic quality and the ethical education of students. In Telangana, reports indicate widespread violations of UGC norms and compromised faculty qualifications, reflecting a systemic ethical decline. Eliot's framework underscores the centrality of institutional integrity for sustaining cultural and intellectual life.

### Contemporary Studies

Satsangi (2016) emphasizes that quality teaching in India requires ethical responsibility, interactive pedagogy, and learner-centered instruction. NEP 2020 advocates multidisciplinary education, autonomy, and outcome-based curricula, yet its implementation in Telangana reveals significant gaps between policy vision and practice. AISHE (2016) and subsequent reports document disparities in infrastructure, faculty availability, and access, particularly affecting marginalized communities. These contemporary studies align with the literary-humanist critique, highlighting the ethical and cultural dimensions often neglected in policy analysis.

## III. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite Telangana's educational expansion and policy initiatives, higher education faces declining quality, ethical lapses, and inadequate intellectual cultivation. This study asks:

Why does higher education in Telangana continue to deteriorate despite reforms, and how can this crisis

be understood through the lens of English literary humanism?

#### Hypothesis

The decline of higher education in Telangana is fundamentally a cultural and ethical crisis, arising from the abandonment of humanistic educational values articulated in Arnold, Newman, Tagore, and Eliot.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach:

- Quantitative Analysis: Review of Telangana skill development and employment programs, enrollment data, and institutional distribution.
- Qualitative Analysis: Examination of institutional practices, faculty recruitment, ethical standards, and pedagogical methods.
- Theoretical Framework: Literary-humanist critique, linking empirical observations with principles from Arnold, Newman, Tagore, and Eliot.
- This methodology allows integration of empirical data with ethical and cultural analysis, foregrounding the humanistic dimensions of education.

### V. ANALYSIS

#### Commercialization and Arnoldian Philistinism

The prevalence of private colleges in Telangana reflects a market-driven approach, often prioritizing revenue and enrollment over cultural and ethical objectives. DOST admissions, while equitable in design, cannot counteract the dominance of profit-driven institutions. Arnold's critique of Philistinism applies here: the pursuit of material success at the expense of intellectual and moral development undermines both student learning and institutional integrity.

#### Skill Development and Newman's Liberal Ideal

Programs like EGMM (8,999 trained; 4,509 employed) and MEPMA (109,000 trained; 79,000 employed) indicate a persistent mismatch between training and employment. Newman's ideal of liberal education underscores that education focused narrowly on utility fails to cultivate autonomous thinkers or responsible citizens. Telangana's graduates, while technically skilled, often lack adaptability, creativity, and ethical judgment,

highlighting the limitations of purely vocational models.

#### Faculty, Pedagogy, and Tagore's Vision

Faculty inadequacies, including contractual employment, minimal qualifications, and limited pedagogical training, undermine the role of teachers as cultural agents. Tagore's vision of the teacher as facilitator of creativity and ethical development contrasts sharply with rote-based, compliance-oriented instruction prevalent in many institutions. Transforming classrooms into "IDEAL" spaces, where inquiry, experiential learning, and ethical engagement prevail, aligns with Tagore's philosophy.

#### Institutions, Ethics, and Eliotian Cultural Continuity

Ethical violations—plagiarism, nepotistic recruitment, ghostwriting—reflect systemic institutional failure. Eliot emphasizes that culture is sustained through ethical institutions. In Telangana, compromised integrity threatens the transmission of cultural and academic values, endangering intellectual and moral formation. Institutions must restore ethical accountability to safeguard both education and society.

### VI. FINDINGS

- Shift from Humanism to Utility: Telangana's higher education prioritizes market-oriented outcomes over intellectual and ethical development.
- Skill-Employment Gap: Technical training without ethical and intellectual depth produces graduates unprepared for complex societal challenges.
- Faculty Shortcomings: Contractual employment and minimal qualifications degrade pedagogical quality.
- Institutional Ethics: Widespread violations reflect a broader cultural crisis.
- Humanistic Framework: Arnold, Newman, Tagore, and Eliot offer robust guidance for reform.

### VII. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reviving Humanistic Pedagogy: Teachers must function as cultural and ethical guides. Mandatory Annual Refresher Programs in Teaching (ARPIT) and professional

development aligned with contemporary pedagogy can foster creativity, inquiry, and moral education.

- **Multidisciplinary Curriculum:** Following Newman, institutions should integrate liberal and vocational education, promoting intellectual flexibility, ethical reasoning, and societal engagement.
- **Strengthening Institutional Ethics:** Transparent recruitment, strict adherence to UGC norms, and proactive grievance mechanisms are essential to sustain Eliotian cultural continuity.
- **Infrastructure and Inclusion:** NEP 2020's recommendations on digital infrastructure, research facilities, and access for marginalized students must be fully implemented to reduce disparities.
- **Community and Experiential Learning:** Tagore-inspired experiential learning, including social projects, service learning, and interdisciplinary engagement, can reconnect education to societal and cultural life.

#### VIII. CONCLUSION

The crisis in Telangana's higher education system is as much cultural and ethical as it is administrative. Drawing upon Arnold, Newman, Tagore, and Eliot, this study emphasizes that education must cultivate intellect, character, and cultural consciousness. Policy reforms, infrastructure investment, and skill development alone cannot remedy systemic decline. Higher education must be reconceived as a moral and cultural enterprise: teachers as mentors, institutions as ethical custodians, and curricula as instruments of holistic, multidisciplinary learning. Only through a revival of humanistic principles can Telangana's higher education fulfill its transformative potential, nurturing responsible citizens, ethical professionals, and culturally aware individuals for posterity.

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