

2004  
DURGABAI DESHMUKH MEMORIAL LECTURE



Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh  
1909-1981

**GLOBALISATION : DEMYSTIFYING ITS  
KNOWLEDGE AGENDA FOR  
INDIA'S EDUCATION POLICY**

Prof. Anil Sadgopal

COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND  
INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

## **DURGABAI DESHMUKH**

A brief life-sketch

### **PERSONAL**

Date of Birth : 15 July 1909 (At Rajamundry, Andhra Pradesh)  
Maiden Name : Durgabai Rao  
Date of Death : 09 May 1981 (at Hyderabad)  
First Marriage : At the age of eight (separated after three years)  
Marriage with : 22 Jan. 1953  
Dr. C. D. Deshmukh

### **ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS**

1939 : M. A. Political Science, Andhra University  
1941 : B.L., Madras University

### **SOCIO-POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

1921 : Protest against status of Devadasis,  
Muslim women and widows  
1930 : Salt Satyagrah Movement  
1931-33 : Imprisoned thrice, Insisted on staying in class C  
1946 : Member of Parliament

### **IMPORTANT INSTITUTIONS BUILT**

1922 : Balika Hindi Pathasala Kakinada (at the age of 13)  
1937 : Andhra Mahila Sabha, Chennai/Hyderabad  
1944 : Blind Relief Association of Delhi, New Delhi  
1953 : Central Social Welfare Board, New Delhi  
1964 : Council for Social Development, New Delhi

### **AWARDS/DISTINCTIONS**

1946 : Member, Constituent Assembly  
1952 : Member, Planning Commission  
1963 : Doctorate *honoris causa*, Andhra University  
1971 : Nehru Literacy Award  
1975 : Padam Vibhushan  
(Dr. C. D. Deshmukh also received this award  
in the same year)

### **INTERNATIONAL AWARDS**

1978 : Paul G. Hoffman Award  
1978 : UNESCO Award

## **COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Council for Social Development (CSD) started as an informal group of social scientists, social workers and planners committed to the national ideals of social justice and equality. Late Dr. (Smt.) Durgabai Deshmukh, the guiding spirit of the CSD, organised a Study Group of Social Welfare to review the situation in the developing countries and suggest ways for promoting social development. The CSD was given a formal status as an affiliate of the India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi, in 1964. When the activities of the CSD increased, the Board of Trustees of the IIC decided that the CSD should be an autonomous organisation and accordingly the CSD was registered in 1970 under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. It, however, continues to have a special relationship with the IIC.

The main objectives of the CSD are :

- (a) to undertake and/or promote the study of social development;
- (b) in furtherance of that end, to undertake studies;
  - (i) in the national/regional policies of social development;
  - (ii) in the process of planning in social development; and
  - (iii) in the interaction between social and economic development at various stages of national growth in developing countries; and
- (c) in particular to plan and promote;
  - (i) studies in techniques of social planning and programming;
  - (ii) inter-disciplinary research;
  - (iii) socio-economic/occupational surveys;
  - (iv) motivation for social change; and
  - (v) socio-psychological studies in rural areas.

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## DURGABAI DESHMUKH MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

<b>Year</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Topic</b>
1992	Dr. Suma Chitnis	The Institutionalisation of Social Purpose*
1993	Dr. Vina Majumdar	Women and the Political Process*
1994	Dr. Karan Singh	Population and Social Development in India
1995	Dr. Kiran Bedi	Concept of Management in Government
1996	Dr. Vandana Shiva	Trading our lives away: Free trade, women and ecology*
1997	Ms. Leila Seth	The Girl Child and Social Development*
1998	Swami Agnivesh	Towards a Spiritual Society* (text in Hindi)
1999	Justice Shri M. N. Venkatachaliah	Human Rights and Women in India
2000	Professor Leela Dube	Social Development and Social Research*
2001	Dr. N. H. Antia	Women and Health*
2002	Professor Mushirul Hasan	Islam, Culture & Politics: Awadh society in 20th Century*
2003	Dr. Pushpa M. Bhargava	The promise and problems of today's Biology and Biotechnology and their applications*

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KNOWLEDGE AGENDA FOR  
INDIA'S EDUCATION POLICY**

by

**Prof. Anil Sadgopal**

15 July 2004



**COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

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## **PROF. ANIL SADGOPAL**

Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (1968) from the California Institute of Technology, USA; Fellow of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai (1968-71); resigned from TIFR to organise a rural education and development programme through KISHORE BHARATI in Hoshangabad District, Madhya Pradesh (1971-1992). In collaboration with the Friends Rural Centre Rasulia, initiated the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP) in 1972 in 16 government upper primary schools which was expanded in 1978 to all the 270 odd schools of the District. Helped found EKLAVYA in 1982 which later extended HSTP to almost 1,000 schools of 15 Districts of Madhya Pradesh wherein more than one lakh children learned science through an inquiry-oriented, experiment-based and environment-related pedagogy.

Joined the people's science movement and the movement for civil liberties and democratic right in the early eighties; active in the struggle of the Bhopal gas victims for obtaining scientific medical treatment and rehabilitation from the Government as well as justice from Union Carbide; appointed by the Supreme Court on its Committee to recommend measures for Bhopal gas victims' medical treatment and rehabilitation (1986-88); National Convenor of Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha, an all-India people's science network (1993-2002); conceived and led the Lokshala Programme for demonstrating an alternative vision of Universalisation of Elementary Education through social intervention in the government school system (1995 to date).

Member of the National Commission on Teachers (1983-84) and the National Policy on Education Review Committee or the Ramamurti Committee (1990); Jamnalal Bajaj Award (1980) and Shantiniketan's Rathindra Puraskar (1984) for application of science and technology to rural areas; Vikram Sarabhai Memorial Lecture (1981), UGC National Lecturer (1988), Valedictory Address at the 28th Annual Conference of the Indian Association of Pre-School Education (1995), Annual Lecture at Assam Higher Secondary Education Board (2000) and Zakir Husain Memorial Lecture (2004).

Contd./...

Professor of Education in the University of Delhi since 1994; also served as Head, Department of Education and Dean, Faculty of Education in the University (1998-2001); conducting studies on education policy as Senior Fellow of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (September 2001 to date).

Author of two books in Hindi: '*Sangharsh aur Nirman*' (Rajkamal, New Delhi) on the movement led by Shaheed Shankar Guha Niyogi, the radical leader of mine workers in Chhattisgarh, and '*Shiksha mein Badlav ka Sawal*' (Granth Shilpi, New Delhi) on education policy and the need for social intervention in education; author of dozens of articles/essays on policy analysis and adverse impact of globalisation and communalisation on education.

Engaged in writing a book at present on tools for analysis of education policy and the impact of globalization on Indian education, with focus on elementary education.

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## GLOBALISATION: DEMYSTIFYING ITS KNOWLEDGE AGENDA FOR INDIA'S EDUCATION POLICY

Prof. Anil Sadgopal

It is customary on occasions like this to begin by expressing one's sense of being honoured for being invited to deliver the '2004 Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh Memorial Lecture'. I would rather view this as a great opportunity offered by the Council for Social Development for re-formulating my thinking on India's education policy in the context of the three challenges I prefer to identify from the inspiring and dynamic life of Durgabai. I have read a brief but scintillating account of Durgabai's life in the first Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh Memorial Lecture delivered by Dr. Suma Chitnis in July 1992. Dr. Chitnis' own insightful writings during the seventies and eighties on the question of inequality in education, particularly with regard to the education of the *dalits*, continue to guide me even to date. Dr. Chitnis was struck by an anguished comment made by Durgabai at the time of the establishment of this Council in 1964 which is worth quoting again four decades later:

“two decades of planning have shown that results have not been commensurate with the effort. . . . The why of this cries for an answer. Is it the over-emphasis on economic development? Is it the lack of correlation between ends and means? Is it that outmoded administrative techniques are inadequate to the new tasks? The true answer can be found only after prolonged search into several complex factors . . . .”

As a member of India's first Planning Commission, Durgabai exhibited not just an unusual sense of honesty in raising this pointed question but also articulated a concern that might be well worth pursuing as the new Planning Commission gets ready to hopefully take a fresh look at the



Tenth Plan in the light of UPA Government's Common Minimum Programme. Durgabai's yearning for the 'true answer' thus constitutes the first challenge that I accept with humility this evening.

The second challenge emerges from Durgabai's decision to participate in the freedom struggle against colonialism and imperialism at the tender age of eleven years. This challenge gets crystallized through her membership of the Constituent Assembly which laid the foundation of India's sovereignty, guaranteed Fundamental Rights through Part III of the Constitution and placed a radical political, economic and social agenda before the nation through the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV. Taking education as a case study, I hope to analyse this evening how the Fundamental Rights have been seriously compromised after initiation of the so-called economic reforms, the larger Constitutional agenda shelved from our policy discourse and India's sovereignty stands threatened by the impact globalization is making on the nature of knowledge in our education system.

The third challenge for me is rooted in the personal struggle of Durgabai in rejecting her own child marriage (which took place when she was barely eight years old), her public protest at the age of twelve years against the social status of *devadasis*, muslim women and widows and her life-long engagement with the issues of women's education and development. I would look at the issue of women's education through the perspective of our education policy and reflect upon how the policy itself has been diluted and distorted under the impact of globalization and its manifestation of structural adjustment programme.

### **The Context of Globalisation**

What is globalization? Figuring this out, we are reminded of the proverbial five 'blind' men feeling different parts of an elephant and then guessing what it looked like (Apologies for the implication that wisdom may not belong to 'blind' men!). The only difference is that those figuring out globalization are not 'blind' men but astute political leaders, businessmen and industrialists, bankers and financial experts, bureaucrats and technocrats, academicians, researchers and teachers, information technologists and biotechnologists, media people and social activists with

their eyes wide open.\* Yet they arrive at widely different and often contradictory conclusions about their 'elephant'. Let us begin with what NCERT decided to tell the social science students of Class X regarding globalization and its impact on Indian agriculture:

“Globalisation aims at *integrating* our national economy with that of the world. . . . It is based on the *philosophy* of free and open international trade. Globalisation has now *freed* different countries from entering into negotiated trade agreements with the other countries of the world. It ensures that good quality goods at competitive prices alone will survive in the market. . . . India used to give *artificial* protection to farmers for their limited products and discouraged competition. Now, they have been exposed to the new industrial environment. . . . We have *relatively inexpensive abundant human labour*. Every effort will have to be made *to raise their efficiency* and equip them with new and advanced tools, implements and machines to enable them to compete with their counterparts in the advanced countries of the world. With globalization, we now have *better access to the reasonably (sic) and abundant capital from different parts of the world*. Thus, to begin with, we may have to face hardships and difficulties sometimes, but it will pay us in the long run. *Patience and hard work alone* may help us to surmount difficult challenges, which we are now faced with.” [emphasis added]

– Contemporary India, Class X, NCERT, March 2003, p. 70

[Note: The phrases in italics are highly questionable and need to be debated with students, rather than being dished out as ultimate truths.]

However, the peasantry of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka did not seem to agree with NCERT's perception of globalization and gave a clear verdict against the two state governments in the recently held General Elections. The meek submission of the ruling party in Andhra Pradesh to communal

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\* This observation on 'astute' people 'with their eyes wide open' should, hopefully, make up for the obvious bias against the wisdom of the 'blind' men as implied in the oft-quoted saying.

politics at the national level during the past six years or the apparent resistance to such divisive politics in the case of the state government in Karnataka did not make any difference to the verdict. No amount of investment in information technology or biotechnology in the respective state capitals, with or without 'abundant capital from different parts of the world', could convince the 'relatively inexpensive abundant human labour' of these two states that they needed more 'patience and hard work' NCERT expected of them than what they had already exhibited for more than half a century since independence. That these wise but illiterate or semi-literate women and men were right in their basics was confirmed by the new Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh who was forthright in acknowledging that the economic reforms initiated during the early Nineties lacked 'human face' and the decade of economic growth in India following globalization had been characterised by jobless growth. Even the building up of foreign reserves beyond US \$ 100 billion and Sensex touching unprecedented heights failed to prevent hundreds of farmers from committing suicides. May be NCERT will learn from the ordinary people of India and decide to tell the whole truth to its students about the 'elephant'.

A British writer Paula Allman in her book, published 3 years ago, saw the truth differently. She wrote:

"It is estimated that there are 100 million children living in the streets, for whom home or shelter is, at best, a cardboard box or doorway, and that millions more are living in houses with no running water, electricity or sanitation. Two hundred million children are engaged in global labour force . . . . We know that many are dying needlessly of malnutrition, some as frequently as one every hour in countries that are forced to devote over half of their annual incomes to repaying IMF and World Bank loans. . . . Perhaps the most frequently reported aspect of contemporary reality is the increasing gap between the very rich and the very poor – the polarization of wealth and poverty. . . . There are now 350 people in the world whose assets total one billion or more (US) dollars and who are, therefore, worth more than 45% of the world's population. . . . the fifteen richest people in the world have

assets that exceed the total annual income of sub-saharan Africa. . . . . United States has both the highest per capita income of any OECD country and the highest rate of poverty.”

– Paula Allman, ‘Critical Education Against Global Capitalism’,  
2001, pp. 15-16

For the uncritical advocates of globalization, the information-cum-communication technology has turned the world into a “global village”. However, Paula Allman, quoting studies conducted in 1998/99, notes:

“It is estimated that 122 million people use the Internet. This experience and the assumption of its generality create the impression that people have become more integrated than they were previously. While this may be true for some people, it remains a fact that 50% of the world’s people have never even used a telephone. From a global perspective, we find not a more highly integrated world but one in which the life experiences of relatively small percentage of world’s population become further and further removed from the life experiences of the vast majority.”

– Paula Allman, ‘Critical Education Against Global Capitalism’,  
2001, p. 17

The most reliable evidence of what Paula Allman noted above comes from the total misjudgment of the ground realities by the then ruling dispensation at the centre just before the General Elections 2004. The leadership of the coalition built its campaign around its “feel good” slogan while the large majority did not feel good at all! The apparent gains made in the conventional economic parameters (growth rate, Sensex, foreign reserves) as a result of pursuing the neo-liberal policies and depending on market ideology were confused by the election strategists with the quality of life that people lacked but were struggling for.

To my mind, globalisation represents a crisis of capitalism and it is not exactly a recent phenomenon. In terms of its ruthless pursuit of global markets and control over natural resources and means of livelihood, globalisation has much in common with colonialism of the eighteenth and

nineteenth century. Even its methodology and strategies of influencing the State policies through systematic co-option of the Indian corporate houses, politicians, civil servants and the educated elite, concomitant with increasing lobbying pressure and economic traps on the ruling class, are reminders of the early colonial experience of gaining access through traders, upper caste elite and the royal courts. The IMF, the World Bank, WTO, Global Economic Forum, G-8 and a whole spectrum of multi-lateral and trans-national arrangements represent the new structures formed for tightening the stranglehold of the global capital on world economy and extending the market agenda into every sphere of human activity and concern, including education and culture. The NGOs, the so-called civil society organizations and the army of consultants and 'experts' of the globalised era, have almost become willing agents for camouflaging the ugly face of globalization and presenting it in a 'humanised' language. Globalisation can, therefore, be viewed as a more evolved, powerful and subtle form of colonialism.

Both the colonialism and globalisation have come to be viewed as a response of the then industrialising and now the affluent west to its own internal economic crisis and need for expansion of markets. In recent decades, globalisation has acquired the added dimension of the need for access to new markets for the weapon industry and information and communication technology and control over additional sources of oil, forest and water. This is now clearly evident in the increasing militarism (combined with shades of fascism) of the western powers led by the superpower USA and non-fulfillment of their international commitments to the developing countries on climate, agriculture, bio-diversity and sustainable development. The recent US-UK attack on Iraq and the imposition of an alien political dispensation, lacking an Iraqi mandate, has totally exposed the imperialist dimension of globalization and obliterated the thin membrane that seemed to separate the two. What is significant in this experience is the clever manipulation of the language of democracy, humanity and peace that was used in the Gramscian sense to "win the consent" of the oppressed communities not just in the middle east and within the US or UK but also internationally. The entire exercise fitted what, according to Chomsky amounted to 'manufacturing consent' in order to maintain the democratic exterior and seek moral justification for global capital's imperialist quest.

One wonders whether the entire purpose of education in globalised economy is being perceived in terms of 'winning or manufacturing consent' of the future generation.

The purpose of 'winning or manufacturing consent' is to be pursued even at the cost of objectivity, critical thinking and, of course, the truth. Reflections of this neo-liberal pedagogy, for instance, can be seen in NCERT's social science textbook for Classes IX. While talking of India's international relations, the textbook observes:

“However, the story of relationship between India and the United States after 11 September 2001, terrorist attacks . . . . has taken a new turn that promises to unite the two democracies into closer bonds on matters *civilisational*, economic, political, *strategic and military*. Osama Bin Laden and similar other persons have changed the whole world and has (sic) virtually prompted the United States to join hands with India in her fight against terrorism.”  
[emphasis added]

– Contemporary India, Class IX, NCERT, 2002, p. 63.

After 'manufacturing' evidence of the presence of Aryan civilization in Harappan settlements, as claimed by NCERT in its Class VI social science textbook, the next *Hindutva*<sup>1</sup> project is apparently going to find 'civilisational' links between India and the United States! Also, the next edition of the Class IX textbook is likely to proudly tell its students that the 'strategic and military' relationship has now resulted in joint India-US anti-insurgency operations in Mizoram, as was reported by the media early this year. May be, the textbook will also reproduce the photograph showing the Indian and US military personnel jointly pointing their guns at a dilapidated Mizo hut. This will be a 'necessary' addition to building up of an Indian consent for US military intervention in India!

In this context, it would help to recall what Paula Allman wrote about 'conditioning' of human mind that is systematically but cynically undertaken by the forces of globalization as their pedagogy:

“Daily we are bombarded by the schizoid media images of capitalism’s extremes. Within the space of a minute, we are confronted with first the ravaged faces and wasted bodies of some of the thousands suffering famine and starvation or the millions living in the world’s urban slums and ghettos . . . . and then suddenly. . . . our attention is switched to the gleaming, yet vacuous smile and sumptuously adorned figure of some insatiably extravagant, superwealthy, scandal- and neurosis-prone individual who is one of the select members of the global upper class. . . . . Is this part of our conditioning, a conditioning that allows us to tolerate and accept such immoral and illogical contrasts and absorb them unconsciously into our notions of normality and inevitability?”

[Paula Allman, ‘Critical Education Against Global Capitalism’,  
2001, p. 1]

For teachers, political workers and social activists like us who are preparing to resist the onslaught by the neo-liberal forces, this understanding is beginning to lay the basis for demystifying the knowledge agenda of globalization and, at the same time, redefining the very purpose of education.

### **Policy Framework and the Neo-Liberal Intervention**

In order to comprehend the dynamics through which the neo-liberal agenda became operational in Indian elementary education sector, it is necessary to refer to two sets of critical policy-related documents: one national and the other international. First, the *National Policy on Education-1986* (henceforth referred to as NPE-1986) and its companion document called *Programme of Action-1986* (henceforth referred to as POA-1986), approved by the Parliament in May 1986 and November 1986 respectively.<sup>2</sup> Both the NPE-1986 and POA-1986 were revised by the Parliament in 1992 and, as a result, are known as NPE-1986 (As modified in 1992) and POA-1992 respectively. Second, the *World Declaration on Education for All* and its companion document called *Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs* adopted by the ‘World Conference on Education for All (EFA): Meeting Basic Learning Needs’ held at Jomtien, Thailand in

March 1990 (these documents are referred to as the Jomtien Declaration and Jomtien Framework respectively).

The Jomtien Conference was jointly convened by the UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and The World Bank.<sup>3</sup> These international agencies have continued to hold follow-up conferences at both the regional and global levels during the Nineties.<sup>4</sup> The decadal follow-up of the Jomtien Conference was held at Dakar, Senegal in April 2000 wherein the progress made by various nations to achieve the EFA goals as set out by the Jomtien Declaration was reviewed. Just as the Jomtien Declaration guided educational planning throughout the Nineties, the Dakar Framework of Action (World Education Forum, 2000) has now become the new policy-level international guide post for the first 15 years of the 21st century.<sup>5</sup>

We may recall here that the New Economic Policy, giving primacy to the market forces in national development and 'integrating' India into the global economic order, was enunciated in July 1991. The political and economic framework for subjugation by the global forces in the education sector emerged when the Indian Government was 'persuaded' by the IMF and the World Bank to accept the twin concepts of **Structural Adjustment** and **Social Safety Net** in planning and budgeting for social sectors. There was no choice, the Government told the people, justifying its apparent 'helplessness' since these were the pre-conditions set by the two Brettonwood institutions for extending further loans. Plainly speaking, these twin concepts implied that the Government will, as part of the Structural Adjustment Programme, incrementally reduce public spending on social sectors such as health, education and social welfare. Recognising that such a reduction can lead to severe socio-political tensions, the IMF and World Bank 'offered' to create a Social Safety Net by extending loans for the social sector on certain terms and conditions.

One would tend to take a position that, in the face of the powerful forces of globalisation, there is no option for the educational system but to accept the larger framework dictated by the global economic order as *fait accompli*. It is with this mindset that the policy makers in India have unquestioningly accepted the hegemonic role of trans-national corporate forces, the global market system and the powerful international organisations such as the Brettonwood institutions in directing not just the structure and accessibility but also the very



aims and the quality of education (and also health). The Jomtien Conference laid the basic architecture for intervention by the international funding agencies in national educational structures and processes.

### **Post-Jomtien Phase: Policy Dilution and Distortion**

The Jomtien Conference proved to be a turning point in the history of education in India. The Government of India gave a hasty concurrence to the Jomtien Declaration (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, 1990), without even consulting the Parliament on its major Constitutional and policy implications. This marked the beginning of the phase of gradual but systemic erosion of Parliament's role in policy formulation in education as well as of the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Human Resource Development in formulating the agenda of Indian education and setting its priorities. As provided for in the Jomtien Declaration (Article 10) and Jomtien Framework (Section 3.3), external aid from a host of international funding agencies, operating under the World Bank umbrella, was systematically allowed in the primary education sector *as a matter of policy* for the first time in post-independence India.<sup>6</sup> This policy departure coincided with the beginning of the New Economic Policy in July 1991 in India. With this, it became necessary for the Government to accept the IMF-World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme as well as Jomtien Declaration's policy framework for Education For All (EFA). The launching of the first World Bank-sponsored comprehensive District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in 1993-94 was part of this requirement and its attendant Social Safety Net provided under IMF-World Bank design (GOI, 1993, p. 88). The serious implication of this new situation was recognized by the Government. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) at its 46th meeting in March 1991 formulated a set of guidelines for externally aided projects which were re-iterated at the 47th meeting in May 1992. These guidelines sought to ensure that "external assistance does not lead to a dependency syndrome" and remains "an additionality to the (national) resources for education" while being in "total conformity with the national policies, strategies and programmes" (GOI, 1993, p. 89). As my analysis would shortly reveal, each one of these CABE guidelines stand fully breached in both letter and spirit. Yet, the Parliament seems entirely unconcerned on this attrition of India's sovereignty.

A series of policy-related documents were issued during the following years, each violating the basic principle of equality enshrined in the Constitution and adversely impacting upon the policy in a significant manner. The list will include Education For All (GOI, 1993), DPEP (GOI, 1995, 1998), Education Guarantee Scheme (Government of Madhya Pradesh, 1998, pp. 9-12), Para Teacher scheme (Ed. CIL, 2000; GOI, 2001a), Ambani-Birla Report (GOI, 2000), National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCERT, 2000) and Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative & Innovative Education (GOI, 2001a). A detailed analysis of the multi-dimensional policy dilution and distortion that took place as a result of this neo-liberal intervention can not be accommodated in this lecture. Only certain aspects of this phenomenon will be highlighted this evening (for detailed analysis in a historical perspective, see Sadgopal, 2002b, 2003b,c and 2004).

An outstanding example of policy dilution was DPEP itself which shifted the National Policy's focus from *eight years of integrated elementary education* to only *five years (or even less) of primary education*, by unquestioningly accepting Jomtien Declaration's ambiguous notion of 'basic learning needs' and the amorphous category of 'basic education'. In this haste to attract external assistance, the historical development of the concept of eight years of elementary education, as implied in the Constitution and specified in the 1986 policy, was ignored.<sup>7</sup> Elementary education could be brought back on the agenda, and that too, only nominally, through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (GOI, 2002) after a gap of seven years. Four aspects of this policy shift may be underlined. *First*, with the initiation of the World Bank-sponsored DPEP, the entire discourse on the socio-economic relevance and pedagogic necessity of elementary education stood arbitrarily substituted by an a-historical and non-pedagogic discourse around low quality parallel streams of primary or even lower level education.<sup>8</sup> *Two*, the Jomtien Declaration's redefinition of education in terms of 'basic learning needs' laid the ground for allowing education to be viewed in terms of mere literacy skills. The serious implications of this shift of emphasis from education to literacy for the majority of the under-privileged children from the standpoint of educational planning, finance allocation and the future of Indian society demand a holistic discussion that would be too complex to be attempted in this lecture. The *third* aspect relates to

the manner in which the policy makers meekly allowed the Jomtien's undefined notion of 'basic education' to replace what India understood by the term 'Basic Education' and what was a part of the heritage of our freedom struggle. The Gandhian pedagogy of Basic Education of integrating the 'world of work' with the 'world of knowledge', evolved as *Nai Taleem* or *Buniyadi Shiksha* under the leadership of Dr. Zakir Husain, was not even posed as an issue in this context.<sup>9</sup> It was soon obliterated from the Indian educational discourse. *Four*, the policy focus changed from the issues of relevance, quality and equality of education to merely its access. It may be noted that there is no policy document which deliberates upon either the appropriateness or the feasibility of delinking the issue of access from the pedagogic and structural dimensions of education. After a decade of externally aided projects in more than half of India's districts, we are still far from achieving universal access, as perceived and defined by DPEP. Neither the unreliable Gross Enrolment Ratios nor the Drop Out Rates have shown any significant change. Worse still, in spite of DPEP's focus on reducing social and gender gaps, the Gender Parity Index, as defined by UNESCO (2002b), has remained at a plateau since the mid-Nineties and the Drop Out Rates for the SC and ST communities is so embarrassing that the Government of India has stopped reporting it altogether.

In this context, it would be worthwhile to take note of what the POA-1986 observed:

“The (Jomtien) Conference advocated a holistic concept of basic education in lieu of a sectoral approach segregating sections like primary schooling, Non-formal Education, Adult and Continuing Education in separate compartments. In order to harness increased donor interest in the basic education, as a result of the Conference, it was decided to formulate comprehensive basic education projects in educationally backward States.”

– Programme of Action, 1992, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Section 7.3.8

Another dimension of policy dilution concerns the infrastructural commitments made in the 1986 policy. For instance, the commitment to ensure *three teachers per primary school* under Operation Blackboard,

with the “number increasing, as early as possible, to to one teacher per class”, was reduced to one/two teachers per primary school, as evident in DPEP’s emphasis on promoting *Multi-grade Teaching*. The Operation Blackboard was also committed to providing each primary school with “three reasonably large rooms that are usable in all weather” and a range of educational aids. This commitment was totally eroded in the Education Guarantee Scheme as it provided for neither any building nor any educational aid. As a result of these policy changes, the minimum norms for school infrastructure and strength of teachers in a primary school, as specified in NPE-1986 (As modified in 1992), stand diluted for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and EFA-National Plan of Action (GOI, 2002, 2003a; Tilak, 2003; Sadgopal 2003b,c).

The most critical dilution, however, was conceptual (and even moral and ethical), rather than quantitative. The 1986 policy was the first official acknowledgement that the regular formal school shall not be provided to all children. Instead, almost half (about 10 crores) of India’s children in the 6-14 age group who were deprived of school education at the time of policy formulation, will be provided low-budget, low-quality and short-duration non-formal education. The historical, pedagogic and financial rationale (or rather the lack of it) of this policy shift, promoting both exclusion as well as inequality in education, has been discussed in detail elsewhere (Sadgopal, 2003c, 2004). What is significant here is to note that this policy decision to introduce separate and parallel streams of education for different sections of society provided that essential socio-political fault line through which the forces of globalization could easily introduce their neo-liberal agenda. The parallel streams institutionalized during the Nineties included Alternative Schools, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) centres and Multi-Grade Teaching – the so-called ‘innovations’ designed under the canvass of World Bank-sponsored District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). Also, the regular teacher was replaced by a para-teacher who is an *under-qualified, untrained and under-paid* local youth appointed on short-term contract (Ed. CIL, 2000; GOI, 2001a). The latest addition in this series is the proposal of correspondence courses for the 6-14 age group children which will replace even the *para-teacher* with a *postman* (NCERT, 2000; GOI, 2001b; Sadgopal, 2003b)! The Government was not bothered at all that this policy stance was

tantamount to institutionalizing discrimination against the poor, majority of whom would be *dalits*, tribals and religious or cultural minorities, two-thirds of each segment being girls. Most of the disabled children will also fall in this category earmarked for discrimination.

This policy was ruthlessly pushed forward in spite of wide public criticism, violation of the principle of equality enshrined in the Constitution notwithstanding. The Government's refrain of '*something is better than nothing*' was worse than the policy. This seemed to justify, instead of questioning, the collapse of education policies during the past 57 years. The policy makers have used the concept of multiple track education as a rationale for not focusing political attention on transformation of the mainstream school system in favour of the poor, especially the girls and the disabled children. Although the policy is clearly committed to establishing a Common School System by promoting neighbourhood schools, as recommended by the Kothari Commission (1964-66), the parallel streams have now become the dominant policy imperative. This effectively marginalized the concept of Common School System as well as the Constitutional principle of equality. It would be no exaggeration to observe that the post-Jomtien policy stance amounts to, for all practical purposes, a *deliberate policy of letting the mainstream school system deteriorate* so that it may be gradually replaced by the market-driven private unaided school system. This has led to quality education rapidly becoming the preserve of the privileged, making education a commodity in the market. With this, the agenda of ensuring *education of equitable quality* has become a non-issue in the national policy discourse, though it continues to be the aspiration of the marginalized masses.

I would now raise the issue of the education of the girl child in the context of the neo-liberal policies. Significantly, India's 1986 policy had made a much clearer commitment on 'education for women's equality' than Jomtien-Dakar Framework. It states that 'education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women' in order to 'neutralise the accumulated distortions of the past.' It promises that 'there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women' and that education system will 'play a positive, interventionist role' in their empowerment . . . . and 'this will be an act of faith and social engineering.' The credit for this clarity must entirely go to India's own women's movement.

In this holistic approach to women's education, the issue of girl child's education was not isolated from the question of the low social status of women. The participation of the girl child in school education was envisaged as an inevitable consequence of the change in the status of women. However, the only programme that was designed to reflect this policy insight was *Mahila Samakhya*. Its objective was to enhance the self-esteem and self-confidence of women; build their positive image by recognising their contribution to society, polity and the economy; develop their ability to think critically; enable them to make informed choices in areas like education, employment and health, especially reproductive health; and ensure equal participation in developmental processes. But it remained marginal throughout the Nineties. For every 100 rupees allocated for elementary education in the Union Budget, hardly 25 paise were given to it. In due course of time, even this miniscule programme, operating barely in a few dozen Blocks, seems to have lost its basic direction, the notable and praiseworthy exceptions that continue to be informed by the original vision notwithstanding.

The Jomtien-Dakar Framework does not even refer to patriarchy as an issue and essentially reduces girls' education to merely enrolling them on school registers and giving them literacy skills. This is exactly what happened when the World Bank-sponsored District Primary Education Programme adopted *Mahila Samakhya*. The focus on collective reflection and socio-cultural action by organized women groups was abandoned. It became a mere girl child enrolment programme. Critical issues such as girls' participation in schools, gender sensitization of learning material and teacher education and holistic educational aims were ignored. Unfortunately, the notion of gender parity (ratio of enrolment of girls and boys) in UNESCO's EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003-04 also reinforces this confusion. It is a different matter that the findings of UNESCO's report reveal that India will fail to achieve even this diluted objective by 2015. Also, the World Bank diluted the goal of women's education to just raising their literacy levels and productivity (rather than educating or empowering them) and turning them into mere transmitters of fertility control, health or nutritional messages. The Dakar Framework has now added the ambiguous notion of Life Skills that seems to be yet another mechanism for social manipulation and market control of the adolescent

mindset, particularly the girls. India unfortunately gave up its progressive policy on women's education in favour of the international framework that was guided more by the considerations of market than by women's socio-cultural and political rights.

### **Market Ideology and Paradigm Shift**

Globalisation has both used and adjusted with the colonial paradigm of appropriating and distorting people's knowledge. As this knowledge has been the basis of human development and welfare since the dawn of human civilization, the purpose of the market forces is clearly to direct people's mindsets and creative activities to achieve its cynical objectives. Let us recall here the Macauleyan emphasis in early nineteenth century on controlling and re-orienting higher education in colonial India at the very outset and imposition of English as the medium of *instruction* (not education!). The colonial powers knew well (as do the forces of the global capital) that it is the higher education sector that generates knowledge for development and change. It is with this understanding that the Ambani-Birla Report, submitted to the Prime Minister's Council on Trade & Industry in April 2000, recommended that the entire higher education sector must be allowed to be privatized (GOI, 2000), while gradually withdrawing public support from secondary education. In contrast, the report envisaged continuation of public support to elementary education, citing research evidence regarding higher rates of return on investment in elementary education. The report further recommended that all those disciplines at higher education level (this includes all sciences and social sciences and even disciplines of humanities such as linguistics) that have a market value must *not* be supported by the State funds. The report proposed that such marketable forms of knowledge can instead be supported by the market forces. Only disciplines such as oriental languages, archeology, paleontology, religion and philosophy that do not have a market value today, may continue to receive State funding. This implies that the nature of knowledge in sciences and social sciences will henceforth be determined by the market forces which in turn are controlled by the global capital.

Since the knowledge that informs education and its pedagogy from pre-primary level upwards is also generated in the higher education sector,

Ambani-Birla Report implies that education at all levels henceforth will be determined by the market forces. In this sense, the Ambani-Birla Report extends the agenda put forth by the Jomtien Declaration, though it seemed to be advocating the cause of elementary education by recommending enhanced State support for this sector. Significantly, Tomasevski (2001) noted the following regarding the Jomtien Declaration:

“The language of the final document adopted by the Jomtien Conference merged human needs and market forces, moved education from governmental to social responsibility, made no reference to the international legal requirement that primary education be free-of-charge, introduced the term ‘basic education’ which confused conceptual and statistical categories. The language elaborated at Jomtien was different from the language of international human rights law.”

– K. Tomasevski (2001)

Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education  
to United Nations Commission on Human Rights

[Note: The Dakar Framework of Action adopted by the Dakar Conference of the World Education Forum in April 2000 maintained the basic paradigm of the Jomtien Declaration.]

Education is no more viewed as a tool of social development but as an investment for developing human resource and global market (ref. Ambani-Birla Report’s Foreword, GOI, 2000). This apparently innocuous statement of the purpose of education amounts to a paradigm shift. The dominant features of education with serious epistemic implications which emerge out of this paradigm shift may be identified as follows (Sadgopal, 2002b):

- i) trivialisation of the goals of education;
- ii) fragmentation of knowledge;
- iii) alienation of knowledge from its social ethos and material base;
- iv) determination of the character of knowledge by the global market forces;



- v) institutionalisation of economic, technological and socio-cultural hegemony of the international instruments in the formulation of curriculum;
- vi) introduction of parallel and hierarchical educational streams for different social segments;
- vii) marginalisation of poor children and youth as well as the backward regions through competitive screening and a discriminatory system of institutional assessment and accreditation; and
- viii) attrition of the State-supported and democratic structures for educational planning, finance allocation and management.

Admittedly, however, many of the features enumerated above were also evident either in rudimentary or relatively more pronounced forms in the pre-globalisation phase as well. This is exactly what one would expect in view of the colonial control before independence and hegemony of the ruling classes on the Indian State, with no significant democratic social intervention, in educational planning and implementation since independence. What globalisation has done after 1991 is the heightening and sharpening of these pre-existing tendencies.

### **Negation of Critical Pedagogy**

The concept of critical pedagogy or critical education during recent times took shape from the writings of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1972). Freire's notion of praxis is itself grounded in Marx's theory of consciousness or the theory of the formation of ideas. According to Marx, praxis is a theory of dialectical unity – the internal relation between thought and action. As Allman explained (2001), "Our consciousness develops from our active engagement with other people, nature and the objects or processes we produce. . . . In other words, we do not stop thinking when we act, and thinking itself is a form of action." In this understanding, no dichotomization of ideas or thought from the real i.e. the objective world can be envisaged. It is exactly at this point that globalization has started influencing praxis by advocating that knowledge can be dichotomized from reality i.e. viewed as being distinct from the real world. Such separation would lead to uncritical praxis and would simply reproduce the existing social relations. In contrast,

critical pedagogy is rooted in critiquing the objective reality and aimed at transforming it. As an illustration of this dichotomization, let us look at the manner in which NCERT's curricular framework (2000) over-emphasises the notion of spiritual values in education. The notion of such values, at least as presented in the curricular framework, is entirely unrelated to the conditions of life or the objective reality around it. In this framework, spiritual values in fact are aimed at enabling you to *escape* from your objective reality in stead of *engaging* with it. Although I don't have time to illustrate this point further by taking up more examples from NCERT's curriculum framework, let me at least shortlist them. The NCERT document's apparent emphasis on the value of equality and social justice while promoting the principle of separate educational streams for different social classes, is founded on the false premise that values can be promoted even when objective conditions deny them. Similarly, NCERT's formulation of Frontline Curriculum and its pedagogically unsound proposal of introducing correspondence courses for the 6-14 age group children emerge from its dichotomous approach i.e. disengaging thought from objective reality or its materialist base. The difference between the two theoretical frameworks – critical pedagogy and uncritical education - is of the way you see the very purpose of education. In the former, the purpose is to *engage with and transform* the reality in which you exist whereas in the latter the purpose would be to *simply conserve and reproduce* it. Clearly, globalization would support and promote uncritical education while de-emphasising critical pedagogy.

*Globalisation does not need thinking people, especially those who apply thinking to their objective reality. Such thinking people can pose threat to the neo-liberal agenda. They ask too many uncomfortable questions. They also tend to explore new and divergent paths. Worse are those people who have been educated to do critical thinking!*

**Globalisation promotes what it calls knowledge and emotions on fingertips, rather than in head and heart. Thinking (and feeling too!) would be done by the internet through fingertips on computer keyboards, while the head and heart can be kept away. This is symbolic of the new orwellian 'knowledge society' where the society receives 'knowledge' passively, rather than generating or transforming it.**

In this context, we may recall that, as a corollary of critical pedagogy, it follows that no dichotomization between cognitive and affective domain could be envisaged, implying an essential internal unity between cognition and emotions. In consonance with this understanding, the Gandhian pedagogy also implies that education would be meaningful only when knowledge and productive work would be dialectically inter-related. Although Gandhi did not place his educational thesis in Marxist framework but the theoretical similarities between critical pedagogy and the Gandhian approach can't be ignored. A further implication of this pedagogy would be the dialectical unity between cognition and social reality, thereby calling for engagement of the learning process with social action. This is the praxis also advocated by Paulo Freire. All such ideas face attrition in the context of the a-historical and anti-materialist nature of the educational discourse being promoted by the neo-liberal economy.

The forces of globalisation are determined to suppress all forms and structures of education of the masses that lead to critical thinking and generation of new knowledge linked with humane values and cultural sensitivities, primarily because these would promote equality and social justice, thereby supporting social transformation. Education for critical thinking can be promoted under globalization only if it is dichotomized from social reality and universal human values. This, too, will be the privilege of the selected few who could be utilized as human resource for advancing the vested interests of global capital. Why else do you think the Government of Madhya Pradesh ordered the closure of the 30-year old Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP) in July 2002? Why indeed did the Government prevent more than one lakh children from learning science through experiment-based, inquiry-oriented and environment-related pedagogy in 1,000 schools of 14 districts? No other schools in India - not even the expensive and exclusive metropolitan public schools - were practicing this pedagogy. It must also be noted that Madhya Pradesh had until then the largest component of World Bank's District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in India. Obviously, World Bank's notion of knowledge for the developing countries was inconsistent with the ways in which HSTP (and also Eklavya's Social Science Programme) viewed knowledge. The Government had no choice but to close the programme, lest the World Bank comes in conflict with HSTP when, and if at all, it moves to the upper primary levels where the HSTP's pedagogy was being practiced.

Let us also examine another critical aspect of globalisation related to educational psychology. This has roots in the ideology of behaviourism which was promoted in the United States and Europe in 1930's when the west was undergoing one of its worst economic crisis. This ideology viewed human beings as entities which could be regulated, controlled and directed. It also found expression in the Jomtien Declaration which insisted that all targets of basic education must be 'observable and measurable'. It is reflected in NCERT's curriculum framework (2000) too which lays down long-discarded and irrational parameters such as Intelligence Quotient (IQ), Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Spiritual Quotient (SQ) for measuring, regulating and screening human behaviour. We will return to this hidden fascist agenda, including a racist dimension, in these quotients proposed by NCERT when we deal later with the communal assault on knowledge.

Indeed, the basic tenets of the computer-based programmed learning, pre-determined and remote-controlled satellite communication and media packages, fragmentation of knowledge into competencies and tasks (e.g. in NCERT's Minimum Levels of Learning, 1991) and trivialisation of human development issues (e.g. in NCERT's learning materials on fertility control, AIDS consciousness, anti-pollution drives, anti-terrorist campaign etc.) flow out of this very ideology of behaviourism that dominates globalisation's knowledge agenda. Any attempt by the people to resist this ideology will necessarily require them to learn to re-construct knowledge that is informed by the behaviourist framework of educational psychology. For this, to begin with, both the child and her learning process will have to be placed in diverse socio-cultural and developmental contexts.

The impact of global market forces, trans-national capital, satellite communication and digital technologies have become the determining coordinates of knowledge inherent in all curricula, from pre-school to Universities. This impact is concomitant with the process of privatisation and commercialisation operating at all levels of education, thereby converting education into a marketable commodity. This has led to relegation of the State-supported education to the poor sections of society, institutionalisation of parallel and hierarchical streams of education for different social segments and the phenomenon of increasing abdication by the State of its Constitutional obligation towards *education of equitable*

*quality* of all children (see Sadgopal 2002b, 2003b,c & 2004 for detailed analysis). It is no mere coincidence that all of these trends are also supported by the Jomtien Declaration and Dakar Framework as accepted by the Government of India.

### **Abdication by the State**

Evidence of State's tendency to abdicate its Constitutional obligation towards provision of education of equitable quality for all children was already visible in the National Policy on Education-1986 as well as in its modified version of 1992 in accepting the low-quality low-budget non-formal education as a parallel stream for the poor, especially the child labour and girl children (GOI, 1986 & 1992, Section 5.12; Sadgopal, 2000, 2002b, 2003c & 2004). However, the market agenda and the Structural Adjustment Programme inherent in the Jomtien Declaration had a significant impact on the State's policies, resulting in further attrition of its commitment during the Nineties to fulfill its Constitutional obligation in the following concrete ways:

- Education made synonymous with literacy;
- Dilution of *elementary* education of 8 years to *primary* education of 5 or less years;
- Diverting attention from the central issue of transforming the *mainstream* school system with respect to issues such as the lack of social relevance of education, inequity inbuilt in school structure, inflexibility and non-contextuality of the school curriculum, erroneous pedagogic principles on which the teaching-learning process and evaluation parameters are founded, ill-planned curriculum of teacher education etc.;
- Imposing Minimum Levels of Learning (MLLs) as a tool for organizing learning material and evaluation despite the fact that the concept of MLLs is rooted in only a limited and incomplete view of education and is aimed at conditioning the child's mind with social biases and market ideology (see Dhankar, 2002 for a detailed commentary);
- Ignoring the policy commitment to the Common School System (Sadgopal, 2002b, p. 123; 2003c );

- Institutionalisation of low-quality low-budget parallel streams of education for the deprived sections of society viz. Alternative Schools, Education Guarantee Scheme, Multi-Grade Teaching etc.;
- Reducing the issue of women empowerment and gender discrimination to the so-called gender parity measured in terms of enrollment ratios (GOI, 2001b; UNESCO, 2002b, pp. 68-79 & 2003);
- Marginalising the issue of social and cultural discrimination of *dalits*, tribals and the minorities both within and outside the school and its impact on their capacity to participate in and complete elementary education; again reducing the entire issue to their enrollment ratios (GOI, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2001b, 2003a);
- Isolating education from its socio-economic context by ignoring issues such as child labour, wage structure, common property resources (e.g. fodder, fuel and water), patriarchy, caste structure, cultural alienation and discrimination, communalization of polity, feudal control of Panchayati Raj institutions etc. (GOI, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2001b, 2003a; Jomtien Declaration, 1990; World Education Forum, 2000; UNESCO, 2002b, 2003);
- Reducing the aim of girl child's education to the narrow view wherein women are envisaged as merely 'useful products', ready receptors or transmitters of demographic and nutritional messages or proficient wage earners or producers, thereby violating girls child's right to education as a human (see World Bank, 1997, pp. 1 & 39);
- Violating the Operation Blackboard's norms prescribed by the National Policy with respect to the number of teachers and classrooms per primary school and then legitimizing multi-grade teaching for the poor (GOI, 2002, 2003a);
- Overlooking the cumulative gap in resource allocation to education building up for the past three decades due to non-investment of the recommended level of 6% of GDP in education; and
- Refusing to re-prioritise the national economy for the purpose of allocating adequate resources for education of the poor and thereby

re-distributing social justice; using this reluctance as a rationale for seeking external aid for primary education, promoting privatization and commercialization of education at all levels and substituting national concerns with the conditionalities of international aid giving agencies.

The aforesaid trends clearly violate several of the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution, apart from diluting and distorting imperatives of the 1986 policy. Yet, there has been almost no debate in the Parliament on this critical matter. This is precisely what should concern each one of us as this 'conspiracy of silence' threatens the democratic fabric of Indian society.

### **Interfering with the Constitution**

The previous Government pushed 'The Constitution (Eighty-Sixth Amendment) Bill, 2001' in Lok Sabha, purportedly to give education the status of Fundamental Right for the children in the 6-14 age group (GOI, 2001c). Approved by the Rajya Sabha in May 2002, it was signed by the President in December 2002. This was despite widespread public protests, memoranda to the Government and critical speeches by several MPs in both Houses of the Parliament, including the then Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha (now Chairperson, UPA). The amendment has the following four major lacunae:

- i) It excludes almost 17 crore children up to six years of age from the provision of Fundamental Right to *free* early childhood care and pre-school education. This is in contravention of NPE-1986 (As modified in 1992) which considers this support during childhood as being crucial for child development and preparation for elementary education (Sections 5.1 to 5.4). The implication is clear: early childhood care and pre-school education will not be guaranteed to at least 40% of the children in this age group, two-thirds of them being girls, whose parents barely manage to earn minimum wages. This will also prevent girls in the 6-14 age group, belonging to the same sections of society, from receiving elementary education as they will be engaged in sibling care. The lack of guarantee of *free* early childhood care and pre-school education will not only result in underdevelopment of the

deprived children during childhood but will also adversely affect their learning capacity during school education.

- ii) Even the provision of Fundamental Right to education for the 6-14 age group children is made conditional by introducing the phrase ‘as *the State may, by law, determine*’ in the new Article 21A. The implications of this phrase will be discussed below.
- iii) The Constitutional obligation towards ‘free and compulsory education’ stands shifted from the State to the parents or guardians by making it a Fundamental Duty of the latter under Article 51A (k) to ‘*provide opportunities for education*’ to their children in the 6-14 age group. This purpose is now sought to be achieved by promoting and legitimizing ‘community participation’ in raising resources for elementary education in order to substitute for public funding by the State [GOI, 2004, Section 16 (5) (iii)], yet another measure towards abdication by the State.
- iv) The Financial Memorandum attached to the Bill provided for only Rs. 9,800 crores per annum (i.e. 0.44% of GDP in 2002-03) over a ten year period for implementing the provisions under the Bill. This commitment was far from being adequate, as it was 30% less than what was estimated by the Tapas Majumdar Committee in 1999 to provide elementary education to all the out-of-school children through *regular formal schools*. This lower estimate was made possible by depending on low-quality parallel tracks of education and lowering several other critically important infrastructural and pedagogic norms for deprived sections of society (Tilak, 2003 and Sadgopal, 2003b,c, 2004).

The systematic move towards incremental abdication by the State of its Constitutional obligations formed the core of the statement given by the Minister of Human Resource Development while presenting the Bill to Lok Sabha on 28th November 2001. While acknowledging the criticality of early childhood care and pre-school education for the children up to six years of age, the Minister was not willing to place this burden on the Government. Yet he contradicted himself by assuring the Lok Sabha that this stage of child development shall receive Government’s full attention.



As if to resolve this contradiction, the Minister invited ‘all voluntary organisations and corporate houses’ to help the Government in this sector. This plea of the Minister was tailor-made to fit into the neo-liberal agenda of reducing the role of the State and increasing the role of the market and the private sector, leading eventually to commercialisation. This reading of the Constitutional amendment is also strengthened by the language of the amended Article 45 which carefully avoids giving a guarantee for *free* early childhood care and pre-primary education!

Detailed critiques of the Bill contended that the lacunae were deliberate, rather than being a result of an oversight (see Sadgopal 2001a,b and 2002a; Swaminathan, 2001). The amendment was being made, these writings sought to establish, not to make elementary education a Fundamental Right, but to snatch away the educational rights already made available by Supreme Court’s Unnikrishnan Judgement (1993)<sup>10</sup> and to fulfill the dictates of IMF-World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Programme that demanded reduction in public expenditure on social sector. In particular, the above critiques focused upon the implications of the phrase ‘*as the State may, by law, determine*’. No such conditionality existed in the original Article 45.<sup>11</sup> It is contended that the phrase was introduced in order to legitimize the low-budget low-quality multiple or parallel tracks of the so-called educational facilities for poor children as well as other forms of policy dilutions and distortions discussed above. This phrase also lays the basic framework for increasing abdication by the State of its Constitutional obligation towards ensuring elementary education of *equitable* quality for all children. Indeed, the draft ‘Free and Compulsory Education Bill, 2004’, finalized by the previous government for being taken to the Parliament, became possible only because of the space created by this conditional phrase in the amended Constitution. This is precisely what I had predicted on the day the 86th Amendment Bill was presented to the Parliament more than two years ago (Sadgopal, 2001a,b) but hardly any one took me seriously.

To the agitated MPs from various political parties who criticized the Bill in both Houses of the Parliament, an assurance was repeatedly given by the Minister that the lacunae in the Bill will be taken care of by enacting a new law. How would a law take care of the lacunae introduced in the

Constitution? If the Government intended to rectify the lacunae later through a law, why was it bent upon introducing these in the Constitution in the first place? The leadership of various political parties neither raised nor pursued such uncomfortable questions in the Parliament. The assurance of a law to be enacted later seemed to have led to a curious (or *convenient?*) consensus in the Parliament on the Constitutional amendment, in spite of its unambiguous bias against crores of children (girl children in particular) belonging to various deprived sections of society (Sadgopal, 2001b, 2002a) and violations of several provisions in the Constitution relating to Parts III and IV. The UPA government has the mandate to take all necessary legislative action to undo the impact of interference in the Constitution by the neo-liberal forces and *restore India's sovereignty*. The nation is holding its breath as the UPA government, particularly its Left coalition partners, dither over their future move on the 86<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

### **The Free and Compulsory Education Bill, 2004**

Let me also briefly examine the draft 'Free and Compulsory Education Bill, 2004' (GOI, 2004, Draft III). This is the law that was promised by the previous Government in Parliament, presumably to take care of the lacunae in the 86<sup>th</sup> Amendment Bill. Ironically, a careful scrutiny reveals that, instead of 'taking care of the lacunae' in the 86<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the aforementioned draft Bill increases the lacunae in several ways. It would suffice to refer to Schedules I & II of the Bill which together provide for *three types* of centres for 'imparting education', specifying their respective minimum norms. The draft Bill thus is an unabashed attempt to legitimise parallel streams of education of differential quality viz. regular schools, EGS Centres and Alternative Schools, already institutionalized in the *operating* policy and programmes (e.g. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), for the deprived sections of society. This will also legitimise the undesirable sociological principle of 'a separate educational stream for each social strata.'

The draft Bill is both ambiguous and weak on inclusion of the physically and mentally disabled children in the regular approved schools. Its provisions will encourage as well as facilitate violation of the policy commitment for inclusive education which is integral to the fulfillment of Constitutional

obligation for equality in education and for building up the Common School System (Jha, 2003). As noted by Jha (2003), the Bill might even promote privatization and commercialization of the education of the disabled.

The limited time does not permit me to refer to several other lacunae and contradictions in the draft Bill. Some of these will be discussed later in different contexts. A detailed and holistic analysis was presented by me at two consultations organized by MV Foundation and CACL in Hyderabad (January 2004) and Bhubaneswar (April 2004) respectively. In a sense, the draft Bill will carry forward the process of abdication by the State of its Constitutional obligation for which a legitimate space was created by the 86th Amendment by attaching the conditionality i.e. '*as the State may, by law, determine*' to the guarantee of right to free and compulsory education for children in the 6-14 age group.

The draft Bill, if passed by the Parliament, will fully protect and also 'guarantee' the exclusion and discrimination designed by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in its following statement:

"All children in school, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) centre, alternate school, 'back-to-school camp' by 2003." (GOI, 2003a, p. 27)

With this guarantee for protection, the State is continuing to persist in its refusal to reprioritise national economy and pursuing its campaign for seeking increased external aid, thereby further subjugating nation's education system and policies to the control of the global market.

### **Assault on the Character of Knowledge**

As was the case with the Macauleyan approach to education, globalisation also aims at using education as a tool for building up various skills and capacities that are useful to the global economy (recall competency-based approach of MLL). We have already examined the post-Jomtien framework in which educational aims are being trivialized and curricular knowledge is either being reduced to mere literacy skills (for reading product labels and prices) or fragmented into bits of information or competencies (for reading factory instructions, punching keys at the computer keyboard or accepting the dictates of the market *uncritically*). This amounts to rejection of a holistic approach to building up an enlightened and humane society. In

this paradigm, as already discussed, knowledge in science, social science and humanities would need to be divested of its philosophical, historical, ethical, socio-cultural and aesthetic roots. The implication is clear. Any discipline, sub-discipline or even a set of ideas, which are not saleable, will gradually wither away, unless supported pro-actively by public funds as part of a conscious social policy. Inter-linkage between *knowledge* (which is viewed in the globalised world as being synonymous with mere *information*) and its epistemic roots may not carry any price tag in the market economy. It has, however, critical significance for social reconstruction and transformation, as is the case with critical pedagogy. **In this sense, there is a fundamental conflict of epistemological nature between globalisation and social development.**

Alienation of knowledge from social ethos is a logical outcome of globalisation. Increasing preference for internet as source of '*knowledge*' (read *information*) and its screening or filtration by corporate forces on the basis of marketability will lead to uprooting of a substantial proportion of knowledge from its social ethos. Those communities, sections of society or nations denied equitable access to digital technology or English, the dominant language of Information Technology, will neither share the digitalized knowledge nor be able to contribute their knowledge for human progress. The geo-cultural diversity will come to be largely ignored and eventually have little role to play in defining or qualifying knowledge. This trend will over a period of time establish the hegemony of only globally acceptable (i.e. marketable) parameters of what is worth knowing in the age of globalisation. Strangely enough, this hegemony provides a meeting ground between the 'free' market agenda of globalisation and the well-established centralising tendency as evident in NCERT's curriculum framework (2000), at least in the short-run.

Commercialisation of higher and technical education has been promoted in the post-Jomtien phase under the false argument that *resources need to be shifted from this sector to the primary education sector*, as strongly advocated by the Ambani-Birla Report (GOI, 2000). It needs to be emphasised that *knowledge is produced and communicated in institutions of higher learning*. This holds true even for knowledge that is essential for improving the curriculum, pedagogy and the quality of teacher education

programmes for school education. If public expenditure in higher education will be reduced, it will lead to the following anomalies:

- a) Only those disciplines or sub-disciplines will be allowed to survive that have a marketable value; the rest of the disciplines, irrespective of their socio-cultural or epistemological significance, will gradually wither away;
- b) The lower middle class and the deprived sections of society are likely to be denied access to this knowledge as well as participation in generating and re-constructing it; this will lead to further reinforcement of elitist control over knowledge and its social application;
- c) The entire higher education system will become oriented to only utilitarian goals, while any knowledge that might lead towards social development or transformation will be marginalised.

The following somewhat humorous but scary futuristic description of higher education may be cited from an epilogue I wrote four years ago at the peak of former U.S. President Clinton's visit to India (Sadgopal, 2000):

“Year 2010. The ultramodern campus of the newly established ‘Bill Clinton International University’ near Delhi. Two women students meet. One calls out to the other, ‘Come, let us go somewhere and relax’ The other student says, ‘I have a packed day today. In the first period, there is Unilever practical in the Coca-Cola Physics Lab; in the second period, there is the Proctor & Gambles session on Western Dance Appreciation in the Pepsi Theatre; this will be followed by the Suzuki Lecture on Information Technology in the Microsoft Auditorium. And then the recess. Come, let us meet in the Kentucky Chicken Canteen in the Union Carbide Square.”

– Excerpted and translated from Hindi  
from the Epilogue to author's book entitled,  
*‘Shiksha Mein Badlav ka Sawaal’*, 2000, p. 257.

The above scenario may not be so fanciful as it might appear to some of you. The newly opened G.G.S. Indraprastha University in Delhi started

five B.Ed. colleges in one lot in 1999. A seat in these colleges cost Rs. 45,000/- each. To counter any allegation of elitist orientation, half of the seats were termed 'Free Seats', costing 'merely' Rs. 12,000/- each! Compare this with the fee of approximately Rs. 2,500/- per seat in the UGC-subsidised Central Institute of Education (CIE) of the University of Delhi, where a lower middle class or even a poor student (including tribal students from Rajasthan villages) can hope to obtain a B.Ed. degree with dignity and as a matter of right. But pressure is on for institutions such as CIE as well to change or else just be wiped out, as the UGC support to higher education is threatened to be drastically reduced, if not withdrawn all together. We already have UGC's 'Model Act for Universities' before us attempting to achieve precisely this objective by seeking to introduce provisions simultaneously for undermining autonomy and democratic structures of decision-making through centralized and bureaucratic controls and substituting academic goals with commercial targets and corporate culture. Such measures will clearly be in violation of the value-framework of the Indian Constitution which emphasised equality and social justice. This violation is only indicative of the greater dangers ahead. For instance, the Constitutional Review, initiated by the previous government but put on the backburner for strategic reasons, was hardly expected to resist the pressure of global market forces when the entire Indian polity has already begun to make major adjustments, if not just succumb to these forces. Evidence of this trend (i.e. changing relationship between the State and the market) was also provided by the Supreme Court in its verdict given in October 2002 in what is popularly known as the minorities case (TMA Pai Foundation vs. State of Karnataka) which, by essentially reversing the Supreme Court's Unnikrishnan Judgement (1993), helped "to sustain the ethos in which private interests can boldly advance and the State withdraws" (Kumar, 2003).

### **De-constructing Policy Statements**

We have earlier referred to the marginalisation of geo-cultural diversities in the post-Jomtien framework while maintaining the rhetoric of being committed to promotion of plurality. The market economy demands that multi-cultural, multi-linguistic or multi-ethnic societies are homogenised so that the marketing of a product is facilitated. The greater the

homogenisation (also read, standardisation), the greater will be the size of the market for a specific product. An editorial in a UNESCO Newsletter (October-December 2002) advocated 'commoditisation of learning material' for reducing the cost of production. Although, for the corporate world, this immediate economic motivation is an adequate ground for pushing homogenisation, the long-term political gains in terms of dominance of the market forces over global natural and human resources also need to be kept in mind.

Indeed, globalisation has the **hidden agenda** of minimising cultural diversity even across national boundaries. A document released jointly by UNESCO's International Bureau of Education and CBSE (2000; p. 10) notes that globalisation is leading to '*erosion of the power of nation-states*', concomitant with the '*transfer of sovereignty*' from governments to larger geo-political regional entities (e.g. ASEAN, CIS, European Union etc.). The same document further recognises that the development of multinational corporations has contributed to '*dramatic increase in trans-border exchanges*' (p. 10). With the increasing dominance of Information and Communication Technology in the promotion of 'knowledge industry', one can easily see how the process of globalisation is leading towards irreversible homogenisation of plural cultures, ethnicities and languages with the objective of increasing the size of the market and enhancing political dominance of corporate powers (McDonalds and Kentucky Chickens are not mere symbols but represent the substantive content of this homogenization agenda!). The inclusion of these concepts in an educational document (UNESCO and CBSE, 2000) shows that the international educational bureaucracy has readily accepted the ideological dominance of globalisation and, that too, with an undercurrent of admiration!

Let us now examine how the Indian State is preparing itself to support the impetus given by globalisation to homogenisation of plurality. There is concrete evidence in the recent policy documents of the strong centralising tendencies, including in NCERT's curriculum framework (2000). These are reflected in concrete measures relating to curriculum formation, textbook writing, preparation of 'modular instructional packages' and 'encapsulated orientation materials', organisation of teacher education programmes and standardisation of evaluative criteria and testing services

(NCERT, 2000, Sections 4.6, 4.7, 5.1.1, 5.1.4 and 5.2.7).<sup>12</sup> The setting up of national level mechanisms for testing 'products' of higher education and assessment and accreditation of institutions (e.g. NAAC) are part of the market agenda for standardization and commoditization of education. Ironically, these tendencies contradict the claims in the same policy documents regarding the need for promoting both plurality and plural pedagogies. It is precisely to reveal the hidden objectives of the neo-liberal agenda that we have to learn to deconstruct the policy statements and not be carried away by the rising decibel of the globalised rhetoric.

In a society like ours which is characterized by disparities at all levels – social, cultural, linguistic, gender and regional – any agenda for standardization, both within and across nations, implies augmentation in the level of unequal development and further denial of justice. What is needed instead is a policy aimed at equal development, particularly in the educational sector, with respect to socio-economic and geo-cultural factors.

The Brettonwood institutions and the associated international forces promoting globalisation have burnt their mid-night oil before proposing that the phenomenon of '*erosion of the power of the nation-states*' and '*transfer of sovereignty*' from nations to trans-national corporations will form the cutting edge of globalisation. However, the phenomenon has to be couched in a language that would be politically acceptable. The policy makers have, therefore, discovered that '*interdependence and interrelationships between peoples and cultures*' is the major consequence of globalisation (UNESCO and CBSE, 2000, p. 5). The International Commission on Education's Report (i.e. Delors Commission's Report, 1996) to UNESCO states that '*learning to live together*' must be one of the pillars of globalised education (p. 22). We must inquire into the real reason behind this sudden respect for 'learning to live together', while the same forces also recognise that globalisation is widening the gap between '*those who globalise and those who are globalised*' (UNESCO and CBSE, 2000, p. 12). What is so new in this concept that, all of a sudden i.e. in the late nineties, an International Commission on Education, followed by a host of international agencies, has discovered in it the guidelines of critical significance for re-moulding the curriculum of all nations, especially the developing ones? The age-old Indian concept of *Vasudhaiv Kutumbakum* ('it is the entire world that is a family') never seemed to excite the imagination of either the international or the Indian educational bureaucracy more than it



does today. It would not be surprising if the *Hindutva* forces will soon be using the Delors Commission's Report to justify their long-standing agenda for hegemonic control over curriculum in India!

In the paradigm of globalisation, the Universities are being perceived as 'knowledge producers' and the students as 'knowledge consumers', with the hitherto hallowed institutions like science museums playing the intermediary role of 'information brokers' (UNESCO and CBSE, 2000, p. 11). This perception provides the underlying principle of globalised education for turning knowledge into mere commodity in the global market system. It is already envisaged, as also is the case with the recently proposed UGC's Model Act, that the task of producing and disseminating knowledge in the Universities through Information and Communication Technology, the so-called 'knowledge industry', will be increasingly commercialised and handed over to the trans-national corporations in the near future. In light of these known outcomes of globalisation, the '**producer-broker-consumer**' paradigm of knowledge will begin to define the agenda of globalised education.

The Delors Commission's emphasis on 'learning to live together' and the 'producer-broker-consumer' paradigm of globalised education have provided the rationale to the International Bureau of Education, an UNESCO institute, to conclude that global attention must bear upon the curricular concerns of the member-states and that there is enough room for adaptation of educational content of various countries to the demands of globalisation. For this, '*international platform of information on educational content*' will be built up through '*a number of regional and sub-regional co-operation projects*' for facilitating intervention in national education systems by global corporate forces (UNESCO and CBSE, 2000, pp. 5-6). Of course, all this will be euphemized as '*adaptation of content to the demands of the globalization and the need for learning to live together*' (UNESCO and CBSE, 2000, p. 6). This is exactly what the Jomtien Declaration and its 'Framework for Action' also ordained. And this challenge of globalisation is knocking right now at the doors of Indian education !

### **The Communal Assault**

My analysis of the impact of globalization will remain incomplete if I do not refer to the recent assault by the forces of communalism and religious

fundamentalism on knowledge inherent in school curriculum. In 1993, seven years before the recent fresh but highly organised wave of communal assault on school curriculum, I wrote a detailed analysis of a new textbook prescribed by the first BJP Government of Madhya Pradesh in the previous year as a compulsory text for the Foundation Course for the Bachelor Degree programme in all the seven state universities (*Hans*, September 1993; republished in Sadgopal, 2000, pp. 124-135). In this account, I identified six features of the changes evident in the new text (also in the school textbooks of a comparable period in U.P.) that defined the basic framework of communalization of knowledge in subjects such as history, geography and civics. As one examines the nature of the recent changes in the curricular framework (NCERT, 2000), Guidelines and Syllabi (NCERT, 2001) and NCERT textbooks (2002-03), one is struck by the similarity of frameworks that defined the communalization of texts in 1993 and 2000-2003. I am tempted, therefore, to share the earlier six-point framework with you, as presented below along with certain explanatory remarks:

- i) To perceive and present all those ethnic or cultural groups that had migrated to the Indian sub-continent from other parts of the world as 'aliens', even if the said migration is known to have taken place more than 2,000 years ago; this is precisely why it became necessary for the Sangh Parivar to make an issue out of the origin of Aryans, the presumed 'founders' of Hinduism, and to make the controversial claim that their roots can be traced to as far back as the Harappan age; this is also precisely why the Sangh Parivar envisages the history of Indian freedom struggle to be more than 2000 year old, presumably for 'liberating' the motherland from the migrated 'aliens'.
- ii) To view Hindu culture as something 'pure' or absolute and to perceive the influence of any other culture essentially as 'adulteration'; this view implies that culture is a non-changing and inert phenomenon; the protagonists of this view deny that culture has any dynamic relationship with the socio-economic conditions since their claim of the 'pure' nature of what they call Hindu culture will become untenable if such a dynamic relationship is granted.

- iii) The above premise is also the basis of the communalized perception of values in education and religion being their only source; as per this view, values do not arise out of human experience and its dialectical relationship with the objective reality, but out of the 'spiritual' vacuum; like culture, this premise allows one to look at values also as being absolute; the de-linking of values from objective reality seems to be central to *Hindutva*'s strategy for maintaining the hegemony of upper castes and upper classes over the rest and also to provide an 'escape route' to the ruling elite from issues of disparity, oppression and injustice.
- iv) The traditional Brahmanical, patriarchal and hegemonic culture of India is presumed to be synonymous with the contemporary Indian culture. This incomplete and distorted perception allows *Hindutva* to deny the rich plural cultural heritage of India. In order to sustain this a-historical view, it has become necessary for *Hindutva* to also deny the concept of composite culture and to insist upon its mono-cultural hegemony in contemporary Indian society.
- v) In the above cultural framework, there is no space for acknowledging the contribution made by any non-Brahmanical, non-patriarchal or non-hegemonic (i.e. all encompassing, egalitarian and democratic) tradition to Indian history or the making of our present culture. As a corollary of this irrational view, the Sangh Parivar would prefer to ignore the historical contributions made by the tribals, particularly by those of the north-eastern region, to the building up of contemporary India. It also becomes necessary for the *Hindutva* forces to marginalize the role of the *dalits* and tribals as well as of the other non-Hindu sections of society in the freedom struggle; the freedom struggle is perceived more as a struggle for the defense of Hindu 'cultural nationalism' or creation of '*Hindu Rashtra*' than for liberating India from colonial oppression and resisting imperialism.
- vi) There is no space for class analysis in *Hindutva* thinking since such an analysis will reveal major socio-economic and cultural contradictions within Indian society through various stages of history, thereby demanding their scientific resolution on the principle of dialectical materialism. It is, therefore, necessary for *Hindutva* to view Indian

history in isolation of the productive forces in society and to deny class struggle as a historical phenomenon of social development.

– Adapted from Sadgopal (2000, 125-126); originally published in *'Hans'*, September, 1993.

The above six-point framework enables us to both predict and de-construct the nature of communal assault on the curriculum. In view of lack of time, I will avoid the temptation to demonstrate this by taking concrete examples from the recent NCERT curricular material. However, as an illustration, let me refer to certain issues relating to gender and patriarchy. You would recall that, in October 2001, on directions from NCERT, the CBSE ordered deletion of certain portions of history texts and directed the affiliated schools neither to teach nor even to discuss these in the classrooms! One of these referred to Emperor Ashoka (273-232 BC) who *'derided superfluous rituals performed by women'* which *'naturally affected the income of the brahmanas.'* The text had recorded that the Brahmins *'developed some kind of antipathy to him (Ashoka) . . . . . really wanted a policy that would favour them and uphold the existing interests and privileges.'* Clearly, the Government did not want students to learn how the powerful Brahmins in ancient India exploited women by promoting superstition in the name of culture or how they resisted the progressive State policy of Emperor Ashoka in favour of women. The policy makers must have been apprehensive of the students becoming aware of the socio-cultural roots of patriarchy, as this might encourage them to question its practice in contemporary India too.

The Work Education programme in the NCERT syllabus (NCERT, 2001) for the secondary stage recommends two sex-stereotyped courses - one for the rural girls and the other for the urban girls (Secondary Stage, p.95). Worse is NCERT's conception of the pre-vocational activities for the upper primary stage as it includes sex stereo-typed activities such as 'maintaining cleanliness at home', 'keeping sources of water in the school and the community safe and clean' and, amazingly, 'helping parents in looking after younger children and old family members' (Upper Primary Stage, pp. 86-87). With deep-seated gender bias in curriculum framework and lack of any programme for women empowerment in the *operating* education policy, it is easy to guess as to who would be assigned such sex-

stereotyped pre-vocational activities in the schools. The syllabi for other subjects also lack a gender perspective. The gender bias can further be seen in the latest NCERT textbooks which refer to the contribution of women to Indian history and making of contemporary India only marginally.

Let me also briefly detain you on the *Hindutva* denial of rationality and critical reasoning in education. The allocation of financial resources by UGC in 2001-02 for starting courses in *Jyotirvigyan* (i.e. Astrology, not Astronomy) and *Pourohitya* (Brahmanical *karmakand*) is not to be wished away as just a bizarre expression of this irrational worldview. Rather, this is precisely its preferred manifestation. What is more significant is the de-emphasis in the NCERT curriculum and texts on critical thought and scientific temper concomitant with the rising expectation of uncritical acceptance of a revivalist worldview. Both Puniyani (SAHMAT, 2001, pp. 49-61) and Ahmad (2002, pp. 82-91) have attempted a rational distinction between reform and revivalism and documented historical and sociological evidence to show how critical reason became a powerful tool for the oppressed classes to challenge the hegemony of upper castes and upper classes. Ahmad (2002, p. 88) observes that a common trait among the revivalist movements has been '*an anti-materialist conception of revolution, an anti-liberal conception of nationalism and an anti-rationalist critique of modernity*'.

At this juncture, it may not be out of place to raise the question: What is the linkage between globalisation and communalisation? Religious fundamentalism appears in different forms in different religious or cultural contexts, but the common thread in all kinds of fundamentalist ideologies has been a blind revivalist tendency. This tendency is then used to underline and strengthen a false consciousness of a narrow and exclusivist communal identity. In complex and plural societies like ours, Hindu fundamentalism (read, *Hindutva* of the contemporary Indian polity) can co-exist and flourish alongside with fundamentalist tendencies of other religions. In contrast, some of our neighbouring countries would exhibit monolithic fundamentalism. Irrespective of the specific religious or cultural context, communal politics and globalisation seem to form an undeclared alliance in spite of their contradictory frameworks and roots. Ahmad (2002) contends that, while fundamentalism emerges out of an archaic, feudal and anti-scientific ideology, globalisation *claims* to represent the 'liberal and scientific

framework', which underlines the latter's ideology of 'modernity'. Significantly, Ahmad (2002, p. 90) seeks to resolve this apparent contradiction by offering the following analysis of the 'anti-rationalist critique of modernity' as advanced by the revivalist movements:

“It is significant that this critique of Modernity was also very partial. It does not include, for example, a repudiation of the market, which has been so central an institution of capitalist forms of rationality and modernity. Nor does it repudiate the sciences and technologies upon which modern industrial production is based, and which are so much the source of capitalist wealth. Rather its rejects . . . .the values of non-racial and non-denominational equality, the fraternity of the culturally diverse, the supremacy of reason over Faith, the belief in freedom and progress, the belief that the exercise of critical reason, beyond all tradition or convention or institution, is the fundamental civic virtue without which other civic virtues cannot be sustained.”

With this analytical insight into the framework of co-existence of globalization and communalization, the latter with its roots in religious fundamentalism, it also becomes possible to unravel the nature of their collusion. The two ideologies support each other insofar communalisation can be used for stabilising and enlarging the market. This is reminder of the support extended by the British *Raj* to fundamentalist forces (Islamic as well as Hindu) in order to strengthen its colonial stranglehold. Similarly, while fundamentalism raises its ugly face, the forces of globalisation would prefer to look the other way, as long as the former is kept within bounds to politically stabilise the market in the long run. Further, as globalisation fails to generate adequate employment, it is expected that there will be a rapid rise in socio-economic tensions, eventually leading to even political unrest. This is exactly what communalization of politics achieves by diverting attention of the masses from socio-economic issues to the perceived 'dangers' to their religious identity. This should explain why NCERT's new curricular material attempts to simultaneously promote both globalisation and communalization through education.

Before I move on, I must also draw your attention to the fascist tendencies emerging in education. It will suffice for me to reproduce the following analysis I wrote within three days of the release of NCERT's curriculum framework in November 2000.

## **OVER-BAKED, QUARTER-BAKED AND UNBAKED QUOTIENTS**

*a curriculum framework for inequity,  
social fragmentation and cultural hegemony*

On November 14, 2000 (Children's Day), the Minister of Human Resource Development presented the revised version of the National Curriculum Framework for School Education to the nation. Authored by an NCERT group, the document raises more new and perplexing questions than it answers. It is true that the document is not termed a policy and is cautiously called a *mere* curriculum framework in order to obviate the need to seek the sanction of the Parliament which will be necessarily preceded by an uncomfortable and embarrassing national debate (remember the storm in October 1998 when the same Minister tried to sneak in a new communalised educational agenda at the State Education Minister's Conference and was persuaded to backtrack!). This time, the attempt to achieve the same objective is not just well camouflaged but can be credited for being both tactful and suave. Yet, the new policy perspective reflecting the socio-cultural and political thinking of the dominant party in the Central Government is too evident to be hidden. The rhetoric and the smokescreen needs to be deciphered. For this, we need to construct a framework which will be defined by at least the following three major Constitutional concerns :

- Universally accessible education of equitable quality for all children in order to build up a cohesive society and ensure Fundamental Rights;
- An ever-widening democratic space for the articulation and development of each community in the multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Indian society; and

contd...

- A forward looking educational system that will enable the unfolding of the holistic potential of each child (and not just those of the elite).

The NCERT document refers to the much-debated concept of Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) which was introduced by NCERT in 1990 on the basis of a report hastily prepared by a handful of officially chosen ‘experts’ (out of whom 2-3 have since disowned its main recommendations). The MLL has been mechanically imposed on the primary schools of the entire country despite its highly questionable philosophical and pedagogic basis. This imposition also ignored the rich diversity of the country, which we all continue to claim, must be the basis of planning curriculum and preparing textbooks.

The MLL experiment has never been scientifically evaluated. As if this was not enough, the new document now talks of measuring children in terms of their Intelligent Quotient (IQ), Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Spiritual Quotient (SQ). IQ is an over-baked concept which was introduced at the beginning of the 20th century in the west to presumably calibrate the intelligence levels of the children. The concept was part of the attempt by the western psychologists to provide a tool for categorizing children. This was then used to claim that the low IQ levels are genetically pre-determined and the poor children have low IQ levels not because of the socio-cultural conditions but because of their genetics.

Later, the IQ was also used to racially denigrate the blacks and all other non-white ethnic groups and further to claim that any public expenditure on their education would be a waste since nothing can be done to change their IQ levels. Such a distorted thinking has already been rejected by a majority of the academic community but continues to be used for racial and fascist politics.

contd...



As far as Emotional Quotient (EQ) is concerned, there have been only descriptive records of what can be termed as desirable emotional attributes. Even here, the cultural framework of EQ is hardly understood which would make such a concept totally inappropriate for a multi-cultural country like India. Given such a fluid basis of understanding, there is no question of having any scientific ground for talking of measuring the emotional attributes of children. Indeed, this concept can not be called as being even quarter-baked.

The Spiritual Quotient (SQ) has not even a fragment of descriptive research basis. There is no understanding, not even in a specified cultural milieu, of an acceptable definition of spiritual attributes.

Why then the NCERT scholars have proposed the use of such over-baked, quarter-baked and unbaked concepts for evaluation of children? The only plausible answer will come from the understanding of a political agenda combining both globalisation and religious fundamentalism. It is only in this paradigm that educational psychologists will be required to lend their services to calibrate, categorise, label and eventually marginalise the vast masses of the poor children so that a stable globalised market can be built up in India for the benefit of 15 per cent of the nation's population. Fortunately, for the promoters of the joint agenda of globalisation and religious fundamentalism, 15 per cent of India's population will provide a market as big in size as the entire Europe! Clearly, the NCERT document is the declaration of a new education policy for strengthening globalisation on the one hand and religious fundamentalism on the other.

*Excerpted from the author's article published in 'TheHindustan Times', November 18, 2000.*

We may also recognize that emergence of this design for communalization of knowledge in curriculum and promoting fascist thinking is not an isolated act of academic institutions such as NCERT, ICHR, ICPR or ICSSR alone. This design will be incomplete if it is not fully supported and co-ordinated with other branches of the State. Let me cite two pieces of recent evidence. You would recall my earlier reference to the draft Free and Compulsory Education Bill. Within six days of the announcement on 4th December last year of BJP's electoral victory in three states viz. Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, the Government introduced the Draft II of the Bill. The new draft had the following two additional features:

- a) A 'Competent Academic Authority' which will mean 'an authority empowered by law or by the Central or an appropriate (i.e. State) government, or recognized by such government, for prescribing curriculum for the elementary stage.' [Draft II, Section 2 (1) (f)]
- b) A set of provisions for constituting elementary education authorities from the state-level down to the level of District, Block and even a village hamlet (termed Habitation) that will be parallel to the Constitutional authorities of the state government as well as the Panchayati Raj Institutions or municipal bodies under the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments (Draft II, Sections 16-20). This parallel structure will be fully empowered for the purpose of financing, promoting and planning, giving recognition, regulating, guiding, monitoring and providing academic or technical support to elementary education. The state-level parallel authority will be empowered for even 'formulation of policy, laying down of priorities . . . . . and mobilization and allocation of resources' and, of course, also for 'promotion of use of information technology and distance education' [Draft II, Section 20 (3) (iii) & (vi)].

I need not comment on the 'hidden agenda'. Had the *Hindutva* forces returned to power at the Centre in May 2004, this Bill would have equipped them with the essential legal tools to marginalize the Constitutional authorities and set up a parallel structure under their direct control to manipulate elementary education (if the Bill is passed in its present form, they can still do it in the states controlled by them). In order to ensure that this provision is not used by secular political formations in various states,

a clever mechanism was built in for the manner of notifying the Bill. The Section 1 (3) of Draft III provides for the following:

“It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may by notification in the Official Gazette appoint and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of the Act, *and for different parts of the country.*” [emphasis added]

– ‘The Free and Compulsory Education Bill, 2004’, Section 1 (3)  
(Draft III dated 8<sup>th</sup> January 2004)

Note: The phrase in italics was not there in Draft I. It was added in Draft II following BJP’s electoral gains in three states.

In comparison to the earlier two drafts, the latest Draft III of the Bill has two significant additional provisions:

- a) A provision that will make it obligatory for the state governments or the Competent Academic Authorities to follow the National Curriculum Framework and ‘essential levels of learning’ notified by NCERT (Draft III, Section 30). As of today, due to the concurrent status of education, the state governments are under no such obligation and are free to follow their own curriculum framework and prepare text materials. This new provision aims at not just imposing a communalized curriculum (or, for that matter, any other centralized prescription) but also causing attrition, from the back door, of the federal character of the Indian Constitution.
- b) The aforesaid notion of ‘essential levels of learning’ is an entirely arbitrary notion, without any history in policy or curricular discourse. It replaces the notion of competencies as defined in the ‘minimum levels of learning’ in the existing policy which itself was problematic and led to fragmentation of knowledge, as already discussed. This arbitrary introduction has the alarming implication that the Bill intends to further dilute and distort knowledge in the parallel streams it proposes to legitimize for the under-privileged children.
- c) A provision that would authorize the state/UT Government to what amounts to franchising the State’s obligation towards free and

compulsory education to any NGO (including a corporate house and/or a religious body) to take responsibility for any area [Section 25 (2)]. When this provision is read in conjunction with the provision for 'Competent Academic Authority', it implies that the aforesaid corporate house or religious body can even be authorised to prescribe "syllabus, essential levels of learning, mode of examination and such other academic matters for the elementary stage".

This 'de-constructed reading' of the Bill reveals the mind of the previous Government on its intention to push the joint agenda of 'globalization-communalisation'. What is causing concern is not just the absence of any reference to this Draft Bill in the Common Minimum Programme of the UPA Government but also some of the media reports and at least one BBC interview with the new Minister of HRD (25<sup>th</sup> June 2004) indicating that the Government may not have any serious objections and may even place it before the Parliament without any modification whatsoever. In the most unfortunate and unexpected event of this possibility becoming a reality, it would only imply that the present government is also committed, at least by default, to furthering the combined agenda of the communal (or at least centralized)-cum-market forces into Indian education!

### **Revivalism and Knowledge**

We must also be aware of the emerging danger posed by the forces of revivalism which are cynically trying to misconstrue the concept of people's knowledge (also called 'indigenous knowledge'). In the north-eastern region of the country, the forces of *Hindutva* have recently joined hands with the local cultural revivalist forces to promote a forum purportedly for protecting 'indigenous' cultures from 'alien' impact (for both of them, 'alien' in fact means only Christianity in the context of the north-east). What is the difference between people's knowledge and revivalist knowledge? Revivalist knowledge represents an **uncritical, a-historical and retrogressive acceptance** of all forms of traditional knowledge systems. In basically being **anti-materialist** in origin, it denies dialectical unity between thought and action, alienates knowledge from its objective reality and dichotomises cognitive and affective domains. It would promote hegemony (religious, cultural, patriarchal, casteist, economic or political) and tend to be divisive. In contrast, people's knowledge

would imply knowledge systems that have evolved through people's struggle for their survival and co-existence with nature in order to gain a measure of control over their own *lives* (not control over *nature*). In this sense, people's knowledge would be one that has been **historically subjected to critical scrutiny in both the scientific and humanistic frameworks** alike and, therefore, would continuously tend to grow and transform to meet the ever-emerging challenges to human survival. Philosophically speaking, people's knowledge systems would have a historical and materialist origin and grow out of a dialectical relationship with the objective reality. At the same time, this kind of epistemology also needs to be distinguished from the western, imperialist and market-oriented paradigm of 'scientific knowledge' wherein the chief driving force is to *control* nature, rather than *co-exist* with it, and maximise profits instead of human welfare. Any knowledge system that lacks this critical and dialectical epistemological relationship with objective reality would tend to become revivalist and anti-people in character.

### **Resources, National Economy and External Aid**

The externally assisted DPEP started in 1993-94 and, by the year 2000, it had spread to 275 odd districts in 18 States – almost half of the country. Government of India's Education For All document (1993), while reproducing the CABE guidelines for externally aided projects, partly also cited earlier, stated:

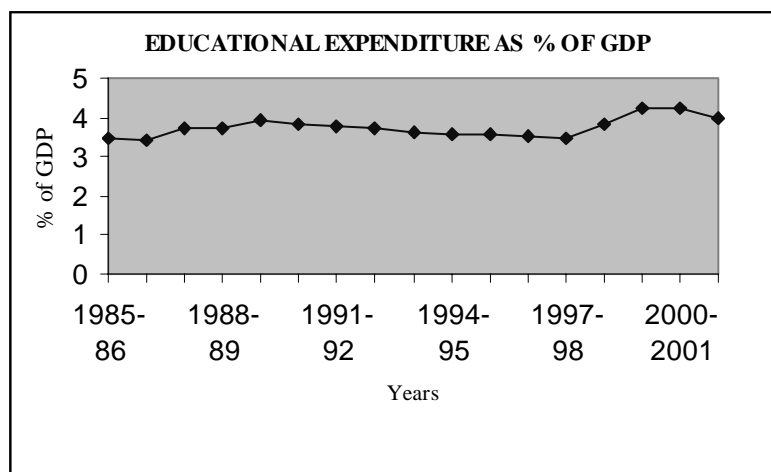
“It would be fair to say that while external funding would be an interim contribution to meet the resource gap, there is *no alternative other than augmenting domestic resources* to achieve the objective of EFA. Economic liberalization and the consequent financial restructuring can be *expected to facilitate greater resource flow* to elementary education.” [emphasis added]

– ‘Education For All: The Indian Scene’,  
Govt. of India, 1993, p. 90

External aid has had an adverse impact on the political will to reprioritise national economy for mobilizing public resources for universalisation of elementary education. Soon after the 1986 policy, we saw an upswing in national effort to mobilize public resources for education. By 1989-90,

almost 4% of GDP was being spent on education, with little less than half on elementary education. Ironically, with the onset of external aid in primary education in the Nineties, the investment in education (including in elementary education) started declining steadily and was as low as 3.49% of GDP in 1997-98, the same level as in 1985-86, just before 1986 policy. Clearly, the political will to mobilize resources for elementary education weakened following the entry of external aid. It is only during the last 2-3 years that there has been some improvement, followed by declining trend again in 2001-2002, though the level of external aid was twice in this year than that of 1997-98.

### GRAPH



Source: Selected Educational Statistics 2001-02  
 [Rectified on the basis of 'Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education' (various years)  
 Ministry of HRD] (Author: Anil Sadgopal)

In January 2004, the previous Government signed yet another agreement with the World Bank for a loan of Rs. 4710 crore for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for 2004-2007 i.e. Rs. 1,570 crore per year. At the current level of GDP, this loan amounts to merely 0.06% of GDP i.e. merely 6 paise out of every Rs. 100 India will earn in 2004-2005 (the level of total external assistance in this sector since 1993-94 has invariably been much lower than this level)! For this pittance, we entered into conditionalities

that will never be made public, as has been the case with externally aided projects since 1993-94.

The official stance is in clear violation of the CABE guidelines against 'dependency syndrome' and policy dilutions in relation to external aid (GOI, 1993, p. 89). This dependence on external aid in fact implies that *there need not be any change in the priorities of national economy* since additional funds will keep flowing in, as long as the Government of India is willing to adjust its educational policy to the conditionalities of the international funding agencies. These are matters of great concern for those of us who have been consistently questioning the role of external aid in elementary education. This issue has unfortunately not found any recognition in the CMP of the UPA government and is yet become a part of the political discourse at the national level.

We need to advance our understanding beyond the Ambani-Birla formulations which gave the false impression that it called for privatization only in higher education and partly in secondary education – the Report seemed to be saying that elementary education must be entirely a State responsibility. The post-Jomtien policy measures adopted by the Indian policy makers, however, have evidently enabled the State to rapidly withdraw even from the elementary education sector. This is reflected in the ever-reducing financial commitment for this sector, as discussed earlier in the context of the 86th Amendment and elsewhere (Endnote No. 13 has four significant comments on the position taken by UPA in its CMP on this issue).<sup>13</sup> There is mounting evidence that the State is not ready to reprioritise the national economy in favour of education of the deprived sections of society and has become dependent on external aid for this purpose, as it seems to be refusing to provide for even the diluted policy measures and for the much reduced financial requirement.<sup>14</sup>

## **Epilogue**

At the beginning of my lecture I identified three challenges from the life of Durgabai which I promised to take up. The second and third challenges I have spoken about at length by attempting to reveal how the impact of globalization on the character of knowledge influences our education policy, particularly with respect to the attrition of India's sovereignty, violation of

Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy and finally through dilution and distortion of the national policy with regard to women's education, apart from many other critical aspects as well.

It is the first challenge that calls for a special comment. This is with reference to Durgabai's yearning for an answer as to why India's planning has "not been commensurate with the effort." The answer that I have laboured hard to offer is somewhat off the beaten track. I have tried to establish that it is the policy itself that often has been flawed. The flawed policy is partly a result of false premises that guide us in defining the problem and identifying the causes thereof. Partly it is also due to either inadequate or, may I add, somewhat subjective perspective in which we seek the resolution of issues. Such a perspective is not rooted in the objective reality. I would prefer to term this as lack of an appropriate framework or ideology, though I realise that such a formulation might make some of you uncomfortable provided my analytical frame has not already made you one!

It is, therefore, incorrect to try to find fault invariably with implementation. This misleading pursuit is primarily responsible for eluding the answer that Durgabai was seeking four decades ago. How do you expect the education system to be any better if flawed policies are being implemented? I would rather contend that the State is normally quite efficient (inefficiency is rather deliberate!). The education system is the disaster that it is due to reasonably *efficient implementation of flawed policies*. A corollary, but a critical, lesson is about the significance of evolving and sharpening the tools of policy analysis and applying them for deciphering the mindset of the State as well as the global market forces. Also, this critical task must not be diluted by getting lost in the *analysis of implementation* of the policy. Rather, it is a critical political task to keep the attention focused on *analysis of the character of the policy* itself.

I have further sought to establish that the exclusion and discrimination inherent in the present *operating* education policy, though considerably exacerbated by the impact of globalization, has its roots in the national policies formulated well before the global market forces gained a dominant position in India. In this we have a significant lesson: As we must deepen our analysis to comprehend the nature and full dimension of the adverse



impact of globalization on Indian education, we can not exonerate our own policy makers from accepting primary responsibility for the collapse of Indian education policy since independence. Indeed, the weaknesses and internal contradictions in our policy provided the necessary political space to the forces of globalization (and also communalization) to intervene in Indian education.

Indian education has hardly acknowledged that issues such as disparity, socio-economic stratification and caste hierarchies, patriarchy and gender inequity, conflicts of cultural and ethnic identity, unemployment and disemployment, regional imbalances, development policy biased against the masses, inappropriate distribution of the economic cake, hegemonic control over natural resources, attrition of values inherited from the freedom struggle and cynical attack on democratic institutions have had a decisive impact on the structure and processes of education. The rise of communalism and the consequent attempts to impose mono-cultural hegemony during the past couple of decades has seriously begun to threaten the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual character of Indian nationhood. Policy formulation and any realistic planning of education, therefore, call for reviewing the role of education in social change and re-designing the entire education system to deal with these issues. We must also begin to take note of the rapidly emerging linkages, howsoever tenuous these might seem to be at present, between neo-liberal and communal forces. There is no space whatsoever either in the Jomtien Declaration or in the framework of the externally aided programmes for building up a meaningful policy discourse on such critical issues.

It is a matter of serious concern that the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the UPA Government also continues to suffer from several of the lacunae and contradictions that have afflicted policy formulation since independence. More significantly, it shows no evidence of consciousness of the epistemic challenge posed by the neo-liberal forces on the character of our education policies and the system as a whole. A detailed constructive critique of the education component of CMP has already drawn the attention of the UPA leadership, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of HRD, as well as of the leadership of its Left coalition partners to these concerns and sought reconstruction of the education policy in consonance

with the principles enshrined in the Constitution (Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha, 2004).

Finally, we must learn to recognize the attack of the market forces on education as an assault on the character of knowledge itself and also as a design to control its access, production and distribution amongst nations and social classes. These forces have decided that it is only by regulating, controlling and distorting knowledge that they can dictate their neo-liberal agenda on various nations and large sections of the global society. In this sense, the assault of globalization on education needs to be viewed as an **epistemic challenge** (Sadgopal, 2002b). Only then we will know how to resist and counter it through critical pedagogy, as elaborated upon by Allman (2001). A counter-globalisation and counter-revivalist agenda of educational transformation will aim to empower people to analyse, question and de-construct the globalised paradigm of knowledge and development and to build an alternative pro-people vision. This can be achieved only through informed and conscious social intervention through a grassroots-based people's movements built on the firm foundation of critical pedagogy.

## Notes

- 1 *Hindutva* is not to be confused with *Hinduism*. It denotes politicization of Hinduism for espousing hatred against other religions and fragmenting society along communal and casteist lines. Thus *Hindutva* weakens the struggle of the masses by diverting their focus from the onslaught of the global capital on their socio-economic and political rights.
- 2 NPE-1986 was preceded by NPE-1968, the first national policy on education, which was in the form of a Cabinet Resolution adopted by the Parliament.
- 3 The Jomtien Conference was attended by the representatives of 155 national governments (including Indian government), 20 inter-governmental bodies and 150 NGOs.
- 4 For instance, a follow-up Education For All Conference of nine high population-level countries was held in New Delhi in 1993. These nine high population-level countries included Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan – collectively referred to as the E-9 countries. This group met recently in Cairo in December 2003.
- 5 As part of the Dakar Framework of Action, UNESCO now regularly monitors the progress made by each nation in the context of the Dakar Goals and issues 'EFA Global Monitoring Report' annually. The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/4 focused on the education of the girl child and was issued just before the EFA Conference held at New Delhi on November 10-12, 2003. The reports released in 2002 and 2003/4 show that *India is amongst those countries which are unlikely to fulfill any of the six Dakar Goals* (only three out of six goals were assessed), including

*the goal of gender parity, even by the target year of 2015.* The then Union Minister of Human Resource Development Dr. Murl Manohar Joshi took strong exception to this negative assessment in the UNESCO report and claimed that it is based upon outdated data (*Hindustan Times, The Indian Express & The Pioneer*, 8th November 2003). However, the Minister's claim was unfounded as shown by this author (Sadgopal, 2003b).

- 6 Externally aided projects in primary education in Andhra Pradesh (APPEP) and Bihar (BEP) preceded the Jomtien Declaration but these were envisaged as special pilot projects, rather than being a matter of policy. The possibility can not be denied that the international funding agencies might have used the Andhra Pradesh and Bihar pilot projects in the pre-Jomtien phase to test the political waters in India i.e. the political will of the ruling elite to stand by its Constitutional obligations and policy. The Indian political leadership obviously failed the test as the externally aided projects of the post-Jomtien phase led to major violations of the Constitution and dilutions of the policy.
- 7 The concept of 'Basic Education' in the Jomtien and Dakar Frameworks is limited to primary education of *five* years only. Elementary education of *eight* years, implied by the Indian Constitution under the original Article 45 as well as the amended Article 21A as the minimum guarantee by the State, is non-existent in these Frameworks. Interestingly, the Jomtien Framework concedes that 'these targets represent a "floor" (but not a "ceiling")' and parenthetically provides for '(primary education) or whatever higher level of education is considered as basic' by a particular country [Sections 5 and 8 (2) respectively]. It is indeed ironic that the Indian policy makers, instead of using these spaces in the Framework for persisting with India's Constitutional and policy imperatives, allowed the international funding agencies to dilute *elementary* education to *primary* education as the dominant framework for educational planning and financing in the post-Jomtien India.
- 8 In the newly declared Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in Bihar, the Education Guarantee Scheme officially 'guarantees' merely *three years of primary education* (SIEMAT, Bihar, 2000).
- 9 Jomtien's notion of 'Basic Education' must not be confused with the revolutionary pedagogic concept of Basic Education (or *Buniyadi Shiksha*), as evolved by Mahatma Gandhi at the Wardha Education Conference in 1937 as part of the freedom struggle which was further elaborated by a committee under the chairpersonship of Dr. Zakir Husain as *Nai Taleem*. The almost servile 'parroting' of the Jomtien's narrow notion of 'Basic Education' by the Indian policy makers in the post-Jomtien official discourse amounts to denial of one of the most inspiring features of the heritage of the freedom struggle, apart from further marginalizing the possibility of integrating the 'world of work' with the 'world of knowledge' as conceived by Mahatma Gandhi.
- 10 A harmonious construction of Part IV with Part III of the Constitution was the basis of the historic Unnikrishnan Judgement, giving education of children 'until they complete the age of fourteen years' the status of Fundamental Right (Supreme Court, 1993). In this judgement, Article 45 of Part IV was read in conjunction with Article 21 of Part III.
- 11 The original Article 45 now stands substituted by a modified but diluted Article as a result of the 86th Amendment to the Constitution. Compared to the original Article 45, the dilution is a consequence of (a) de-linking Early Childhood Care and Pre-school Education (ECCE) from elementary education, thereby not viewing education of all children 'until they complete the age of fourteen years' as a continuum; (b) withdrawing the Constitutional guarantee for provision of *free* ECCE; and (c) not including a specific time frame for fulfillment of the commitment.
- 12 NCERT's National Curriculum Framework, textbooks and other guiding material will soon become almost mandatory on states/UTs (it is only optional at present), if the draft 'Free and Compulsory Education Bill, 2004' is approved by the Parliament (GOI, 2004, Draft III, Section 30).

- 13 In this context, it may be noted that UPA Government's Common Minimum Programme (CMP) "pledges to raise public spending in education to *at least 6% of GDP with at least half this amount being spent on primary and secondary sectors.*" This pledge calls for *four* comments. *First*, this level of 6% of GDP was to be initially achieved by 1986 but the modified 1986 policy stated that the outlay will "*uniformly exceed 6 % of the national income*" during "the Eighth Five Year Plan and onwards." Since then, practically every major political party has promised to do this in its election manifestos in each General Election. The UPA is, therefore, obliged to produce a clear roadmap for *re-prioritisation of national economy* in order to make its pledge credible. *Two*, the UPA needs to be lauded for *at least not diluting* this commitment as the BJP cleverly attempted to do this in its recent manifesto by promising to raise "the *total spending* on education to 6% of GDP by 2010, with *enlarged public-private partnership.*" This substitution of policy-level commitment to public spending by private resources was also a part of the NDA manifesto, clearly in deference to the neo-liberal agenda. *Three*, the CMP has not acknowledged the urgent need to fulfill the *cumulative gap* that has been building up for the past three decades due to *under-investment* in education. For elementary education, this was estimated by the Tapas Majumdar Committee (1999) as being equal to Rs. 13,700 crores per year for the next ten years which amounts to about 0.6% of the current level of GDP (i.e. merely 60 paise out of every Rs. 100 of GDP). The UPA is expected to provide for this additionality, apart from reaching the level of 6% of GDP. A similar estimate of the cumulative gap in secondary and higher education sectors is yet to be made. *Four*, India is already spending almost half of its total educational outlay on elementary education. The UPA's pledge to spend at least half the total expenditure "*on primary and secondary sectors*" has *negative implications*. This is because, in 1998-99, 78.7% of the total expenditure was on elementary and secondary sectors taken together. The UPA formulation implies that the priority to be given to both of these sectors will be *reduced to merely 50%* of the total expenditure! Hopefully, this is a result of the usual, but still alarming, *misconception about the category of "primary" education* as referred to in the CMP.
- 14 According to 'Education For All - National Plan of Action' (GOI, 2003a), the total Tenth Plan requirement for UEE is Rs. 52,280 crores (Centre and State shares combined). This amounted to an average of 0.47% of GDP in 2002-03, including the external aid component. Of the Centre's share (Rs. 39,760 crores), the Planning Commission promised Rs. 21,271 crores i.e. only 53.5% of Tenth Plan requirement. This left a gap of at least Rs. 18,489 crores. The gap in State's share is not yet reported. As per press reports, the Planning Commission further reduced its allocation to Rs. 17,000 crores (i.e. mere 0.15% of GDP), thereby increasing the gap. The story did not end here. The former Prime Minister Vajpayee made desperate appeals to the international funding agencies at the UNESCO-sponsored 'Third High Level Group Meeting of EFA' held in Delhi in November 2003 for increasing external aid for elementary education (*The Indian Express* and *Hindustan Times*, 11th November 2003); the former Minister of Human Resource Development Dr. Joshi carried forward this appeal at the 'E-9 Ministerial-level Review Meeting on EFA' held in Cairo in December 2003 (*Rashtriya Sahara*, 21st December 2003). The Government of India apparently managed to get an assurance of additional external aid of Rs. 15,000 crores for the Tenth Plan. However, as per press reports, the Ministry of Finance at once 'asked the HRD Ministry to adjust Rs. 15,000 crores in the original allocation of Rs. 17,000 crores' (*Hindustan Times*, 17th December 2003)!

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