

THE CHALLENGE TO QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF GLOBALISATION

Preamble

The educational debate I am going to refer to as preamble to my Foundation Day address this forenoon is probably as old as the advent of formal education in human civilization. During the second half of the previous century, the protagonists of the two opposite views have articulated their respective positions repeatedly from various academic and public forums. The Marxist perspective has only helped sharpen the debate as well as focus attention on the fundamental issues. I was personally made aware of the sharply contradictory, if not irreconcilable, positions in the debate, as I was about to resign from my job in 1971 as a Fellow of the Molecular Biology Unit of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai. This was in the context of my projected move to Hoshangabad District, Madhya Pradesh, with the aim of the reflection of this debate in the political arena where the Marxists and the non-Marxists had for long strictly adhered to their ever-hardening and bitterly antagonistic stands.

The introductory brochure of KISHORE BHARATI (1971) talked about the need to experiment with the Gandhian ideas of Nai Taleem (Basic Education) i.e. integration of the 'world of knowledge' with the 'word of work', the latter referring to productive work relevant in child's environment. The basic premise of the proposition was that the Gandhian pattern of education will help catalyse social change, eventually leading to elimination of poverty, reduction in socio-economic disparities and finally creation of a more just society. Several people, especially the Marxists, questioned the premise itself. It was argued that, unless social changes i.e. transformation of social structure takes place, education can not be changed. After all, education, being controlled by the State, merely reflected the concerns of the ruling social forces and was inevitably designed to fulfil their vested interests. It was the State that determined the social and pedagogic character of education and not the other way around. It was difficult to refute the argument logically. Nor could any historical experience or evidence be cited in support of the basic premise on which KISHORE BHARATI was naively founded. The next two decades witnessed a whole range of educational interventions in Hoshangabad District, both within and outside the school system, which brought out the potential as well as the limitations of educational change. The experience of the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme initially in sixteen (1972) and later in all of the 220 odd (1978) Government middle (i.e. upper primary) schools of Hoshangabad District, the productive work-based non-formal educational experiment with school drop-outs in Nai Taleem framework (1973), the youth camps on developmental and health issues (1978), the educational initiative for the conscientisation of landless peasants and marginal farmers in the Paulo Freirian perspective (1980) or the reproductive health work aimed at women empowerment (1985), revealed the contours of how education interacts with various social forces. The experience showed that educational intervention partially and to be sure, only transiently, influences the sensitive balance prevailing in the society. However, in the process,

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education is also impacted upon and is either modified or constrained by its interaction with social forces.

Gradually, a new perception was emerging. Neither of the two politically hardened positions referred to above, were tenable. To hold the view that educational change can by itself bring about social change amounted to ignoring both the role of various social forces and the hegemony of the powerful vested interests. At the same time, the view that social change must necessarily precede educational change essentially amounted to a self-defeating, if not also a pessimistic stand, which only justified inaction and, by implication, even maintenance of the status quo. Nor was the latter view in fact Marxist, though majority of its protagonists claimed to belong to the Marxist world-view. Indeed, the protagonists of this view ignored the dialectics, which must be operating between education and social reality – education impacting on social reality and vice versa.

At this juncture, I am tempted to share this personal narrative with you. In 1985, a Chinese delegation of educationists led by someone equivalent to our Director, NCERT, visited India. During its tour of Madhya Pradesh, the delegation was sent on an official visit to see the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme. On its return to Bhopal, the delegation shared its impressions at a meeting with the officials of the Directorate of Education, Madhya Pradesh, where I was also present. The Chinese were obviously impressed by what they saw – village children sitting in groups on katcha classroom floor and conducting scientific experiments with local inexpensive kit, recording their observations as young scientists in tattered notebooks, getting engaged in an in-depth discussion for a collective process of inquiry and finally drawing inferences and gaining a conceptual understanding of a natural phenomenon. However, in spite of what they saw, the delegation members had a discomfiting doubt. They observed that rural Hoshangabad is still dominated by feudal land relations and it was surprising that such a massive scientific exercise could be undertaken in such backward socio-cultural conditions. In contrast, the Chinese society had undergone a major social revolution, breaking away from its feudal past, leading to significant transformation of social structures. Yet, several attempts to introduce scientific ways of learning science in classrooms had been resisted both by the teachers and the educational bureaucracy alike. The delegation members were baffled. In this particular sense, social change in China did not adequately prepare ground for educational change, whereas in Hoshangabad, educational change had taken place without any obvious social change. This is a complex issue. One needs to be cautious in not being tempted to draw any oversimplified inferences. However, it might suffice to add in this context that the role and the character of subjective intervention in a given social reality (in this case, Friends Rural Centre Rasulia and Kishore Bharati in rural Hoshangabad) in initiating educational change needs to be properly analysed and understood.

One can cite any examples for illustrating the dialectical relationship that exists between education and social reality. For instance, consider the impact of the feminist movement and the slowly but steadily rising assertion of women in society in many parts of the world. This phenomenon persuaded the Indian policy makers in 1989 to include a special Section called 'Education for Women's Equality' in the National Policy on Education, though the policy perception on women's education suffered from several lacunae and internal contradictions. In spite of this weakness in perception, the relatively enhanced stress on women's education in the 1986 policy gradually built up pressure on both the society as well as the Government to at least design programmes which purportedly attempted to make education accessible to the girl child, transform the ethos of higher education institutions in favour of women and subject curriculum and textbooks to scrutiny from the standpoint of gender equity. Similarly, the rising dalit assertion, especially in Maharashtra, persuaded the textbook writers to review their

presentation of the role of dalits in Indian history, re-construct Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's contribution to the making of contemporary India and to include selections from the dalit literature in language texts. This change in textbooks is bound to have an impact on the distorted perception the children carry about the dalits and their contribution to society.

Globalisation and the Old Debate

Now, what does this preamble have to do with the central theme of my Foundation Day Lecture? Normally speaking, 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 situation as *fait accompli*. It is with this mindset that the policy makers and the educational bureaucracy 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 (World Bank and IMF) in directing the structure as well as the quality of education (and also health). A significant initiative towards this end was taken at the first World Conference on Education for All (popularly known as the Jomtien Conference) held at Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990. Sponsored by the World Bank, the Jomtien Conference laid the groundwork for intervention by the international funding agencies in national educational structures and processes. By the time of the Jomtien Conference, the education policy (or policies) formulated by the successive Indian Governments since independence had failed in ensuring Universal Elementary Education as well as in transforming secondary and higher education to serve the goals of social development of the Indian people. This collapse of the education policy and the continuing evidence of lack of political will on the part of the ruling Indian elite to rectify the situation, ironically provided the rationale for giving space for global intervention in Indian education. 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, without even consulting the Parliament on its major Constitutional and political implications. The Jomtien Conference marked the beginning of the phase of increasing abdication by the Indian State of its Constitutional obligation towards education of nation's children in favour of the forces of the global market. It also marked the beginning of the erosion of the role of the Parliament in policy formulation as well as of the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Human Resource Development in formulating the agenda of Indian education and its priorities. Taking an early cue from the Jomtien Declaration and foreseeing the political, historical and educational significance of this turning point, this author proposed to view the post-independence history of education in India in two separate phases for the purpose of analysis viz. **Post-Jomtien and Pre-Jomtien phases.**

The New Economic Policy giving primacy to the market forces in national development and integrating India into the global economic order was enunciated by the Government of India in July 1991. The stage for this declaration must have been in preparation for quite sometime, probably since the mid-eighties, for it took the newly elected Government of Prime Minister Shri Narasimha Rao less than a week to take this policy initiative. Along with this, however, another declaration made by the same Government in July 1991 itself did not attract much notice. This was with regard to a decision of not giving effect to the major education policy changes recommended by the Acharya Ramamurti Committee (National Committee to Review the National Policy on Education-1986) for rectifying the elitist orientation of the 1986 policy and ensuring universal access to education of equitable quality. Obviously, such policy changes would not have resonated with the New Economic Policy. The Parliament was, therefore, told that yet another Committee (i.e. the CABE Committee or what is now also known as the Janardan Reddy Committee) to purportedly look into the feasibility of the Acharya Ramamurti Committee recommendations was being constituted. Thus the Government managed to avoid taking steps in

fulfillment of the Constitutional directives and to keep doors open for international intervention in Indian education, especially school education. The political and economic framework for subjugation by the global forces in the educational sector emerged soon after the announcement of the New Economic Policy 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 Brettonwood institutions (i.e. World Bank and IMF) for extending further loans. Plainly speaking, these two concepts implied that the Government will successively reduce public spending on social sectors such as health, education and social welfare i.e. Structural Adjustment. 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.

No more shall the Ministry of Human Resource Development and Planning Commission play any critical role in determining the direction, content or resource allocations in education. Increasingly, the Government will be to abdicate its Constitutional obligations in the area of education and let the market forces have an unbridled play (also known as 'free' play in the language of the globalised world). The Social needs of various segments of society shall no more be the determining factors in educational decision-making. It can be easily established that, since the inception of the New Economic Policy in the early nineties, the National Policy on Education (1986, 1992) has progressively lost its pre-dominant status in directing education in response to national or social needs. The World Bank and the market forces have already been given so much of 'free' play that even the Parliament can be ignored while shifting the policy focus and educational priorities, as it happened in shifting the policy focus from eight years of *elementary education to only five years of primary education or from ensuring three teachers per primary school* under Operational Blackboard to Multi-grade Teaching (e.g. In World Bank's DPEP). Increasingly, educational decisions are being orchestrated either by the World Bank Headquarters in Washington DC or the corporate capitals of the Northern Hemisphere.

The East India Company along with its Macaulet is back, this time with a much more powerful and universal presence, than its early nineteenth century Calcutta-headquartered presence in the Indian sub-continent. To be sure, the 21st century 'East India Company', realising the risk of still prevailing 'old-fashioned' patriotism reacting against its naked physical presence, has acquired highly subtle ways of intervention in the sub-continental affairs, using the ruling elite, academics and the teachers.

In this backdrop, let us re-examine the issue referred to in my preamble in the following terms.

Does globalisation imply that the very direction and the quality of education will henceforth be determined by the corporate forces and the market system?

If one answers the above question in the affirmative, educationists as well as the policy makers will then have no pro-active role in education. They will instead be left only with the role of docilely accepting and executing the dictates of globalisation. Our role would then be limited to fulfilling the aims of the global capital order viz. expanding the horizons of the market economy. The global economic order viz. expanding perceives a critical role for education in fulfillment of its aim. Accordingly, all aspects of education would have to be moulded to prepare a market-friendly, consumerist-cum-pro-hi-tech (esp. Information Technology) and competitive mindset amongst children. Each child will then have to be viewed as a significant resource as well as a tool of the global capital, rather than a human being with a fundamental right to education for

holistic development of one's inherent potential. It is a matter of the very philosophy and aim of education being challenged under globalisation.

Alternatively, we may prefer to assert that education does have a transformative role, as discussed in the Preamble, especially if it is designed to have a dialectical relationship with the forces of globalisation. For this, it will be necessary to reiterate that the primary role of education is to help build 'an enlightened and humane society', as elaborated in the Acharya Ramamurti Committee Report. The entire curriculum and pedagogy would have to be re-designed such that the children and youth learn to analyse, question and eventually challenge the apparent universal acceptance of the hegemony of the forces of globalisation in moulding society. Instead of being made to subjugate itself to the need (as well as, greed) of the corporate forces to control the global resources, both natural and human, education will have to be consciously developed into a tool of liberation of the mindset. The transformative role of education will remain incomplete if it is limited to merely challenging the hegemony of globalisation forces. It must also include the agenda of re-construction of society (which in turn includes re-construction of knowledge) in order to build up an alternative framework for greater equity, justice and peace in the post-globalisation world order.

The basic issue at stake in the old debate must be now becoming evident.

Identifying the Post-Jomtien Trends

The Jomtien Conference was followed by the Education For All Conference in New Delhi (1993) of nine high-population countries of the world under the sponsorship of the World Bank. The nine countries included Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan. This conference set the framework for designing the internationally funded programmes in developing countries. Soon afterwards, the World-Bank sponsored District Primary Education Programme of DPEP (1995) was institutionalised in India, which spread to many phases within the next five years. For each new phase, the Union Government readily signed fresh MOU's, while the state governments, irrespective of the ideology of the ruling party no effort was made to subject DPEP to any public scrutiny, whether within or outside the Parliament and State legislatures. The MOU's have been treated as secret documents, as if they dealt with the military secrets, rather than with education of our children. Yet, it has been possible to decipher the basic trends that characterise the post-Jomtien phase of Indian education in the latter half of the previous decade. The following important trends may be listed:

- i) Dilution and trivialisation of the aims of education;
- ii) Fragmentation or compartmentalisation of education;
- iii) Alienation of knowledge from social ethos;
- iv) Restriction of access through commercialisation, privatisation and competitive screening;
- v) Parallelisation or hierarchical layering of school systems; and
- vi) Homogenisation of socio-cultural diversities through increasing centralisation

The most evident indicator of increasing dilution and/or trivialisation in the post-Jomtien phase is the almost complete absence of any reference to aims in the educational discourse today. Major changes in programme designs or curriculum are introduced without as much as even a reference to how these would affect our pursuit of basic aims of education. For instance, in spite of the unambiguous commitment implied in Article 45 of the constitution to at least *eight years of elementary education*, it took no time for the DPEP to shift the focus to merely *five years of primary education*. In the process, the significance of an integrated view of the eight-year curriculum carefully built up since the Wardha Conference (1937) was also lost, without even a

single eyebrow raised in the entire Ministry. Similarly, *literacy* has become synonymous with education during the past decade in public as well as the academic mind, though it is but merely one of the several indicators of the level or quality of educational achievement in a particular community or a population sub-set. It was this misleading perception that may have persuaded the Union Government in 1993 to declare that children in the *9-14 age group* were permitted to enroll themselves in the adult literacy classes of the National Literacy Mission. Likewise, the World Bank trivialised the aim of educating the girl child by attempting to make it synonymous with fertility control, transaction of the population message and increase in women's productive efficiency. Even this trivialisation was accepted by the Indian policy makers without murmur.

One may recall how the National Policy on Education 1986 made a commitment to provide at least *two* teachers per primary school in its much hyped Operation Blackboard scheme. This commitment was raised to *three* teachers per Primary School in the revised National Policy on Education 1992. However, the DPEP could dare to ignore all such commitments made by the Parliament under the Operation Blackboard scheme, the DPEP would get away with by training only *one* teacher to handle five classes simultaneously. The DPEP strategy also managed to provide a justification for the unwillingness of the state to shift adequate resources to education of the poor children. The serious negative implications of all such diluting and inequitable measures in terms of the quality of education of the poor children seemed to bother no one at the helms of policy making. An adult literacy class, a non-formal centre, the so-called 'alternative' school, a multi-grade class and now the Education Guarantee Scheme centre, all have been accepted as adequate substitutes for school education, as long as it concerns the education of the poor. Needless to say, no policy maker will ever be prepared send her or his child to any of these parallel and hierarchical so-called educational facilities!

The process of trivialisation in the post-Jomtien phase did not end with the measures which amounted to merely dilution of educational aims. The trivialisation agenda went much further. Let us consider the nation-wide centralised programme of introducing pre-determined competency-based Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) framework in the schools. This is aimed at equipping the primary school children with the so-called 'mastery level' achievements which will presumably enable them to function as 'socially useful and contributing adults'. This restricted (i.e. less than holistic) and compartmentalised view of education has been perceived by the policy makers and international funding agencies in the nineties as being critical for the well-oiled operation of the globalised economy. The MLL framework is also suggestive of an 'orwellian' basis for dividing the adolescent and youth, i.e. the 'product' of the educational system, in terms of their specific competencies, so that the emerging workforce can be 'rationally utilised' by the market-oriented economy. It is in this context that each child will be assessed as a resource and be assigned a price tag accordingly!

The second half of the previous decade has been witness to a rising tide in trivialisation of education, both at the level of school education and higher education. To be sure, this must be seen as a worldwide phenomenon but, in a developing country like India, it has the added dimension of being remotely shaped by alien powerful forces that regulate global economy. The World Bank and other international funding agencies are already well-entrenched here with increasing emphasis on programmes such as Education For All (EFA) and DPEP which are pushing the trivialisation process, structurally as well as pedagogically. The globalisation agenda of trivialising education may be seen as re-

shaping of the colonial agenda. Such an inference is justified since the current focus is on extending the utilitarian framework of colonial education into a dominant trend of the future.

In this scenario, as was stated by the Lokshala document in 1995, one can envisage ‘**a girl child engaged in child labour as having been Constitutionally educated if she can be enrolled in a non-formal stream for three years and then in National Literacy Mission’s adult literacy programme for the next two years, without even having stepped into the village school!**’ The policy of promoting the non-formal stream as an equivalent stream to school education for almost half of India’s children is part of the globalisation agenda of gradual withdrawal of the State from its Constitutional obligation of providing education of equitable quality to all children. It is also an evidence of State’s willingness to co-exist with child labour (read destruction of childhood) in the twenty first century while, at the same time, boasting of nuclear-cum-rocket capability and presumed global leadership in information technology!

There is yet another aspect of dilution of education which almost brutalises childhood. Of the three recognised domains of education – *cognitive* (concerned with knowing or perceiving), *affective* (concerned with emotions and values) and *conative* (concerned with psycho-motor skills) – the school’s concern is restricted almost entirely to the cognitive domain. While, in the cognitive domain, the mind is engaged with processing of knowledge, the affective domain is concerned with sensitisation of children and inculcation of values and the conative domain focusses on development of various psycho-motor skills. Education is holistic only when the three domains act in unison and in appropriate combination, in accordance with the characteristics of each child’s personality and inherent potential in the context of her socio-cultural milieu. The school curriculum, however, has essentially no space for affective and conative domains which are marginalised into co-curricular or extra curricular activities. What is worse is that, of the entire cognitive domain, only a narrow slice viz. Memorised information, dominates the curricular objectives. Other cognitive attributes such as comprehension, thinking, logic, analysis, concept formation, creativity or intuition are essentially ignored. Thus knowledge has become synonymous with mere bits of information, often unrelated with each other. It hardly matters whether the bits of information heaped on the school child can be put together to make some sense or not or whether these lead to any meaningful concept formation. No school can really dare to opt out of this fragmented and restrictive conception of education because its curriculum is pre-determined by the evaluation criteria characterising the Board examinations. This tragic state applies equally to government, private or the so-called ‘public’ schools since the examination system pre-determines essentially everything which happens inside the classroom, even at the pre-school stage.

The tendency to compartmentalise education into water-tight compartments, instead of perceiving it holistically, is part of the colonial legacy. One begins by fragmenting knowledge into natural sciences, social sciences and the humanities and then each of these into a range of disciplines and sub-disciplines. You continue this process until you are left with only micro-specialities that lose all meaning. The Gandhian philosophy of

integrating the 'world of knowledge' with the 'world of work' may be envisaged as a challenge to the prevailing trend of dividing education into academic and vocational streams and alienating knowledge from the social ethos. The resistance to a holistic view of education was so strong at the time of independence that the new Indian Government rejected the Gandhian notion of wholesome education for all children. The Kothari Commission (1964 – 66) also failed to recommend the holistic view as the basis for curriculum re-construction at all levels. The compartmentalisation of knowledge remained essentially unchallenged. The attempt to bring the 'world of work' and social experience into the school curriculum was resisted even within the Kothari Commission. Out of this reluctance merged the proposal to add 'work experience' as a separate subject in the schools as an embarrassing sop to the Gandhian idea. The proposal of 'work experience' effectively delinked knowledge and learning from productive work and social experience at the pedagogic level. There could have been probably no better way of destroying the Gandhian concept. In 1978, the Ishwarbhai Patel Committee Report put the final nail in the coffin of the Gandhian concept by proposing the mouthful of 'Socially Useful and Productive Work' (SUPW). To be sure, the students assessment in SUPW would be entered in the last column of the marks sheet and not be considered when assessing the students for entry into higher education courses!

The afore-mentioned colonial agenda of fragmentation of knowledge in the education system provided a fertile ground to the similar agenda of globalisation which views education essentially from the utilitarian standpoint for promoting the global economic order. 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). This implies an enlightened and humane unambiguous denial of the holistic approach to building up an enlightened and humane society. In this paradigm, knowledge in science, social science and humanities would need to be divested of its philosophical, historical, ethical, socio-cultural and aesthetic roots. Given the predominance of market forces in the globalised world, it can be predicted that only those courses, research programmes or training activities would receive financial support which have a saleable value in the global market. Any discipline, sub-discipline or even a set of ideas which are not saleable, will gradually die, unless supported pro-actively by public funds as part of a conscious social policy. Inter-linkage between *knowledge* (which is viewed as being synonymous with *information* in the globalised world) and its roots may not carry any price tag in the market economy. It has, however, critical significance for social re-construction and transformation. 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. The 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 de-linking of a large proportion of knowledge from its social ethos. The geo-cultural diversity will come to be largely ignored and 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 of NCERT, at least in the short-term. This understanding must be at the basis of the declaration by NCERT in its National Curriculum Framework for School Education released in January 2000 to the effect that,

- a) detailed curricular guidelines and model syllabi for all stages of education would be developed by NCERT;
- b) exemplar instructional packages on several new and relatively unknown areas of knowledge should also be developed as a part of the front-line curricular materials; and
- c) a **National Testing Service** will be established by NCERT with the twin objectives of conducting surveys of educational attainment and assisting professional institutions in conducting entrance examinations and also assisting employing agencies in recruiting their employees (the Acharya Ramamurti Committee had earlier rejected the proposal to set up a National Testing Service on the ground that *it will discriminate against the people living in the backward regions and hinder their social development*).

In making these declarations, the NCERT has publicly admitted that the hegemony of the forces of globalisation is such that all other considerations will have to be set aside. For instance, NCERT had earlier stated in the same document that ‘the plural nature of Indian society needs to be reflected in the pedagogical approaches’ and ‘there is a strong need for looking into the cultural context in which the child is placed.’ The ultimate impact of globalisation on NCERT’s decisions has turned NCERT’s apparent appreciation of Indian plurality into a mere rhetoric!

As already emphasised in the earlier paragraphs, the increasing tendency of the State to abdicate its Constitutional obligation towards education of the poor, constitutes an important feature of globalisation. The rapid pace of privatisation in the school education sector, particularly during the nineties, is a direct consequence of the collapse of the official policy in the past five decades to maintain the quality of education in Government schools. This collapse is reflected in the following policy dimensions:

- I. Highly bureaucratic and centralised management of the Government schools continued as part of the colonial legacy despite policy statements in favour of decentralisation; the post-Jomtien intervention by World Bank’s DPEP, has led to a quiet but unmistakable strengthening of the colonial legacy by gradual shift of control over decision-making from State capitals to Delhi and from Delhi to Washington DC!
- II. Lack of community participation or control in school management; the rhetoric of community participation in DPEP is more in form (Village Education Committees and Block Resource Centres) than in content since the directives continue to pour in plenty from higher echelons as before; in any case, even on paper, what is proposed to be devolved is not any power with regard to curriculum or pedagogy, but mere *participation* (in contrast to *control* or *accountability*) with regard to only management and, that too, in a superficial sense (it does not include any policy matters or financial decision-making).
- III. Unwillingness to shift necessary financial resources from other sectors to education by either re-prioritising the national economy, changing the direction of development or even modifying education policy; the post-Jomtien phenomena of Structural Adjustment and Social Safety Net have in fact implied that *there need be no change in national priorities, direction or policy measures since additional funds will flow comfortably* (i.e. comforting to the ruling elite) into school sector from external sources!
- IV. Irrelevant curriculum and unattractive teaching-learning process; this crucial aspect of education, inherited from the colonial past and continued faithfully since independence,

is likely to become worse since the curriculum and pedagogy are going to be moulded by the needs of the global market, rather than the social priorities of the people.

- V. Discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, language, culture and gender as part of school's hidden but operative curriculum; the interaction between discrimination in education and market forces is a complex issue and requires a detailed treatment separately; to be sure, the present situation will change in a significant manner with predictable changes in the character of hegemonic forces (e.g. marketed homogenisation of cultural diversities, increasing hegemony of English as source of knowledge legitimised through Information Technology and the woman being turned into a marketable commodity, thereby further strengthening the patriarchal stranglehold).
- VI. Lack of political commitment to establishing Common School System and Neighbourhood Schools in order to move towards equitable quality of education for all children; with rising market pressure for privatisation and commercialisation, the social objectives of the Common School System and Neighbourhood School will be further marginalised and are likely to become politically even more irrelevant than during the decades following its recommendation by the Kothari Commission (1964-66) or its resolution by the Parliament thrice in the National Policy on Education (1968, 1986 and 1992).

The last issue regarding the lack of Common School System can be identified as the single most critical factor responsible for the deteriorating quality of Government schools and the consequent rapid pace of privatisation in the school sector. The problem has been made worse by the official policy of establishing parallel educational networks. For the better-off sections of society, this policy has led to the establishment of the Central and Navodaya School systems as well as several types of Model Schools within the Government school network (e.g. Sarvodaya and Pratibha Vidyalayas of Delhi Administration). For the very poor, especially child workers, the parallellism is reflected in the form of Non-formal centres, Alternative Schools, inclusion of 9-14 age group in NLM's adult literacy classes and Education Guarantee Scheme centres. Either way, this policy diverts attention from the central political task of improving the quality of Government schools in general on a priority basis. It is this failure that not only encouraged privatisation but also provided the necessary rationale for intervention by the World Bank and other international funding agencies.

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 school sector. 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 the school sector. 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 weaker sections of society are likely to be deprived of this knowledge as well as participation in generating and re-constructing it; this will lead to further strengthening 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 futuristic description of higher education, cited from a recent book (May 2000), is apt:

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.'

The above scenario may not be so remote 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 last year. A seat in these colleges will cost Rs. 45,000/- each. To counter any allegation of elitist orientation, half of the seats are termed 'Free Seats', costing 'merely' Rs. 12,000/- each! Compare this with the fee of 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 can hope to obtain a B.Ed. degree with dignity and as 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. Such measures will clearly be in violation of the spirit of the Indian Constitution which emphasised equity and social justice. This violation is only indicative of the greater dangers ahead. For instance, the Constitutional Review, already underway, can hardly be expected to resist the pressure of global market forces when the entire Indian polity had already begun to make major adjustments and even to succumb to these forces.

Contrary to the imperatives of the imperatives of the National Policy on Education (1986, 1992), Government schools in crowded urban areas are being closed down on one pretext or another. The official strategy (or, *is it policy?*) is to let the quality of these Government schools deteriorate over a period of a few years. The parents, including the poor parents, get the message and start shifting their children to nearby private schools or school-shops. When a majority of the children have 'dis-enrolled' and the school may have reached an unbelievable situation of having, may be, five children and three teachers, the Government uses this as a rationale for closing down the schools. The official rationale prefers not to take into account the fact that half of the children in the city might be out-of-school and the private school shops (the so-called 'convent-style' schools) have mushroomed all around the Government school wherefrom the children were forced to shift due to Government's refusal to checkmate the decline in the quality of education. At this stage, a government report would point out that the situation needs to be rectified by *rationalisation* which invariably meant closure of schools. No policy maker would find that *rationalisation* might also imply reversal of the official strategy of letting the quality of education deteriorate in Government schools. The prime urban property of these erstwhile Government schools is then handed over to private Trusts or unashamedly even to commercial complexes. This phenomenon was first reported from Ahmedabad in 1998, followed by the closure of thirty schools in Indore in 1999 and transfer of several of these to commercial interests. Such reports fast becoming a common feature from different parts of the country. This phenomenon underlines the rapidly developing alliance between the State and the forces of globalisation.

De-constructing Policy Statements

We have already referred to the phenomenon of ignoring geo-cultural diversities while maintaining the rhetoric of commitment to Indian plurality. The market economy demands that multi-cultural, multi-linguistic or multi-ethnic societies like India 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 adequate ground for pushing homogenisation, the long-term political gains in terms of hegemony of corporate powers 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 by the International Bureau of Education this year declares that globalisation will lead 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 and European Union). The same document further recognises that the development of multi-national corporations has contributed to '*dramatic increase in trans-border exchanges*'. 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 market and political hegemony of corporate powers. The inclusion of these concepts in an educational document shows that the international educational bureaucracy has readily accepted the ideological hegemony of globalisation and, that too, with an undercurrent of admiration!

Let us see how the Indian State is preparing itself to support the impetus given by globalisation to homogenisation of plurality. A reference was made in the previous Section to the strong centralising tendencies and the new proposals to this effect, as declared in the latest policy statement of the new Government in NCERT's National Curriculum Framework for School Education (January 2000). These tendencies are reflected in concrete measures relating to curriculum formation, textbook writing, preparation of learning packages, organisation of teacher education programmes and standardisation of evaluative criteria and testing services. Ironically, these tendencies contradict the rhetoric in the same document regarding the need for plural pedagogies. It is for precisely for this reason that we have to learn to deconstruct the policy statements and not be carried away by the rising decibel of rhetoric. Apart from centralisation of educational process, the NCERT document cited above proposes to build up a value education framework with a clear *Hindutva* orientation for the entire country. The NCERT document is unambiguous in its preference for *Hindutva* orientation, patriarchal control and Brahmanical hegemony over Indian plurality with respect to value framework, cultural history and sources of knowledge. It ignores the historical contributions made by the *dalits*, tribals, cultural minorities and a variety of other sub-altern groups in building up the sub-continental freedom struggle against British imperialism and the consequent composite culture of contemporary India. All of the frequent references in the document to cohesive society, national identity, national consciousness, Indian cultural heritage, India's contribution to world culture or indigenous knowledge have failed to hide the *Hindutva*, patriarchal and Brahmanical bias of the document.

While the NCERT document is replete with references to the educational philosophy and writings of Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, it finds nothing contradictory in regarding the human being as a 'positive asset and a precious resource'. This view echoes the conversion of the name of the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 1985 by the Rajiv Gandhi Government in resonance with then emerging global economic order. Nor does the NCERT document hesitate to make the society dominated by Information and Communication Technology as being synonymous with 'learning society' or 'knowledge society'.

At this juncture, it may not be out of place to raise the question: What is the linkage between globalisation and fundamentalism? Fundamentalism would appear in different forms in different religious or cultural contexts, but the common thread in all kinds of fundamentalist ideologies has been an uncompromising and 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 present 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, fundamentalism and globalisation seem to form an undeclared alliance in spite of their contradictory frameworks and roots. While fundamentalism emerges out of an archaic, feudal and anti-scientific ideology, globalisation apparently represents the liberal and scientific framework which underlines the latter's ideology of 'modernity'. Yet the two ideologies support each other insofar fundamentalism can be used for stabilising and enlarging the market. This is a reminder of the support extended by the British Raj to fundamentalist forces (Islamic as well as Hindu) in order to strengthen its colonial stranglehold. The alliance between the colonial and fundamentalist forces eventually led to fragmentation of the sub-continent into three nation-states. Similarly, while fundamentalism raises its ugly face in the present times, 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. This should explain how the NCERT document manages to use education to promote both the globalisation and fundamentalism simultaneously.

The Brettonwood institutions and the other 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 countries to multi-national corporation 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. The International Commission on Education's Report (i.e. Delors Commission's Report) to UNESCO states that '*learning to live together*' must be one of the pillars of globalised education. We must ask as to what is 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*'. 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 its guidelines of critical significance for remoulding the curriculum of all nations, especially the developing ones? The age-old Indian concept of *Vasudhaiv Kutumbkum* never seemed to excite the imagination of either the international or the Indian educational bureaucracy.

In the paradigm of globalisation, the Universities are being perceived as 'knowledge producers' and the pupils as 'knowledge consumers', thereby making knowledge a mere commodity in the globalised market and, more importantly, in globalised education. It is already envisaged that the task of producing and disseminating knowledge in the Universities through Information Technology, the so-called 'knowledge industry', will be commercialised and handed over to the trans-national corporations in the near future. In light of these known outcomes of globalisation, the 'producer-consumer' paradigm of knowledge as referred to above will begin to define the hidden agenda of globalised education.

The Delors Commission's emphasis on 'learning to live together' and the producer-consumer paradigm of globalised education have provided the rationale to the International Bureau of

Education, and 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 platforms will be justifiably built up for facilitating *intervention in national education systems by regional and global corporate forces*. And this challenge of globalisation is knocking right now at the doors of Indian education!

Transformative Education

Given this market-oriented relationship between the teacher and the students, there is hardly any space left in globalised education for *liberative* (or, for that matter, even the liberal) pedagogy. The liberative pedagogy, critical for social transformation, would provide ample space for the students to be actively engaged in re-construction of knowledge and then, to begin with, in questioning the world around them and eventually in attempting to transform it. The transformative paradigm would resist all attempts to fragment or restrict the holistic vision of education dedicated to the creation of an enlightened and humane society. The resistance to fragmentation of the holistic vision of education would have to be reflected in various dimensions including the education system and its structural aspects, epistemological issues and pedagogic (in its widest meaning) concerns.

The whole point is to explore how, given the constraints imposed by the market forces, education can still be transformed to resist the ill-effects of globalisation, rather than accepting it as the unchallenged destiny of crores of our children. Let us, therefore, re-formulate the central issues of the debate in the framework of a dialectical relationship between educational transformation and social change by posing the following questions :

- a) *Depending upon what is feasible in the present national as well as the global situation, what role can education play in preparing the society to deal with the social, cultural and economic impacts of globalisation?*
- b) *What conscious steps would we have to take in transforming the quality and direction of education for this purpose?*
- c) *What implications does this view of the transformative role of education has for the following:*
 - aims of education;
 - structure of the school (or higher education) system;
 - community's relationship with the school/University;
 - pedagogic relationships between the teacher and the students;
 - role of children in re-construction of knowledge; and
 - parameters of evaluation?

Each one of the above issues would require a detailed scrutiny of the notion of knowledge inherent in the present curriculum and an inquiry into the transformation it would have to undergo in order to acquire the liberative character. This inquiry can not be accommodated here and would have to await an independent treatment.

Globalisation : An Epistemological Challenge

These questions need to be explored in-depth in the context of globalisation. When we do this, it will become evident that basically it is the notion of knowledge itself that determines the social, structural and pedagogic character of education as well as its relationships with the society. It is this epistemological question which today's educationists and policy makers have hesitated to seriously explore as yet. We need to recognise that the central thematic challenge of globalisation to the quality and direction of education is indeed epistemological. It is only by learning to deal with this epistemological challenge that we will also know how to transform the education system in its various critical dimensions in order to resist the powerful forces of globalisation. This will be our best bet for re-juvenating the freedom struggle to move towards an enlightened, just and humane society within India as well as globally.

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