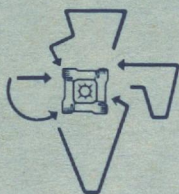


INDIA'S EDUCATION POLICY : CREATING POLITICAL SPACE FOR SOCIAL INTERVENTION

resisting the impact of globalisation and communalisation

A Lokshala documentation
of post-General Elections 2004 developments



Kutchh to Kohima ♦ Laddakh to Lakshadweep

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September-2004

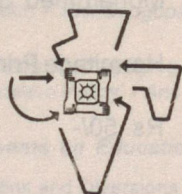
“The real miracle is neither to
walk on water nor in thin air but
to walk on earth”

— Thich Nhat Hanh
Vietnamese Buddhist Monk

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September 2004

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"When the people have faith in the Government, when it represents the popular will, the judges and the executive officials possibly serve the country. But when that Government does not represent the will of the people, when it supports dishonesty and terrorism, the judges and the executive officials by retaining office become instruments of dishonesty and terrorism."

- Mahatma Gandhi

in his response to Govt. of India Act (1919)

viewed by him in the context of Jalianwala Massacre (April, 1919) and British rejection of the 'Khilafat' cause. [Collected Works 18:68-69]

[Prof. Aijaz Ahmad's analytical observations on the 'anti-rationalist critique of modernity' as advanced by the communal forces and 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 rejectsthe 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."

"The battle over ideology and consciousness – the battle over all their forms, be they political, or aesthetic, or religious, or philosophic – is thus the central battle, because it is here, in these domains, not simply at the point of production, that human beings actually 'fight it out'. We of course know that, but they also know it, if they are to re-make India in their own image, they must first win the hearts and minds of our children. It is in this battle that we must engage, because without democratic teachers there shall be no democratic India."

- Aijaz Ahmad (2002),
On Communalism and Globalisation: Offensives of the Far Right,
Three Essays, New Delhi, pp. 90-91.

INTRODUCTION

Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (BJVJ), an all-India people's science network, was probably the first public organization to articulate a concern regarding the adverse impact on India's education policy of the 'World Conference on Education For All', organized by the World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO and UNICEF at Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990. In a Lokshala paper on universalisation of elementary education (March 1995), BJVJ documented the dilutions, distortions and diversions that had affected the Indian policy as a consequence of an uncritical acceptance by Government of India of the 'World Declaration on Education For All' and its companion 'Framework For Action To Meet Basic Learning Needs' adopted by the Jomtien Conference. This impact could be revealed within five years of the Jomtien Conference by applying the tool of policy analysis to decipher the rapid changes that were then taking place in the elementary education scenario. Drawing attention to the blinkers that were more than evident in the National Literacy Mission's so-called literacy drives, UNICEF's mono-dimensional projects (e.g. Joyful Learning, *Shikshak Samakhya*) and the then one-year old World Bank-sponsored DPEP, BJVJ cautioned the policy makers in the following words:

"Let us not mistake it. Fulfillment of the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) is not just a function of providing more building funds or additional teachers (even if half of them are women, as assured by the Operation Blackboard), organizing more frequent teacher training programmes, replacing textbooks or even the handing over of the primary school to the village Panchayat, as is envisaged in the new Panchayati Raj Act. It requires nothing less than *an alternative vision of the educational process (if not also its purpose) and its relationship with the real world of children*. Many of the recent official discourses on organizing externally funded DPEP (District Primary Education Programme), substituting literacy for education, giving centre-stage to population control measures in girls' education or applying other over-simplified prescriptions (e.g. Minimum Levels of Learning or MLL) have only helped divert attention from pivotal issues.[emphasis added]"

- Excerpted from

'Lokshala Project for Universalisation of Elementary Education' (March 1995)

This blinkered view of elementary education persuaded BJVJ in March 1995 to recognize the early Nineties as the post-Jomtien phase of Indian education. The decade that followed has only further substantiated BJVJ's almost prophetic diagnosis of the educational malaise (reproduced on pp. 86-87 of this booklet). This analysis led BJVJ to construct an alternative vision of policy relating to elementary education (reproduced on pp. 88-94 of this booklet), most of which continues to make sense even today.

This commitment to resist the World Bank framework of education, sneaking into India piggy-back on the then newly accepted external aid for primary education, was reflected in BJVJ's Nauni Declaration issued after the first Lokshala workshop held at Nauni (Himachal Pradesh) in May 1995 in the following words:

"We believe that resources for universalizing elementary education can and should be harnessed from within the national economy as an essential means for redistribution of social justice in favour of the weaker and marginalized sections of society."

The impact of the World Bank-IMF imposed Structural Adjustment Programme on elementary education could be seen in early post-Jomtien years. Years before low quality parallel streams such as alternative schools, Education Guarantee Scheme or multi-grade teaching were institutionalized in the education policy and para-teachers were conceived as poor substitutes for regular teachers, the Nauni Declaration had the following foresight:

"We shall work towards ensuring that the concept of holistic education for unfolding the full potential of the child is not allowed to be diluted, substituted or displaced by mere literacy skills, as has been the emerging trend in recent years. Nor should non-formal education be allowed to divert our attention from regular formal school education or to become its poor substitute."

The Nauni Declaration also foresaw the World Bank's policy of reductionalism as applied to the goals of girl child's education.

It took the following stand almost two years before the release of the World Bank's report on primary education in India:

"We strongly oppose girls being viewed in education as ready receptors and transmitters of demographic messages or as mere proficient wage earners who lack participation in decision-making process. What is needed is an education that will enable women to transform their role in society."

Significantly, the Nauni Declaration noted further:

"We do not regard education as a means for converting the child into a 'national resource', an 'input' into the national economy or a 'useful product'. Instead, the schools need to be transformed into community-managed social institutions (rather than being viewed as State-controlled prescriptions) where *children first understand the world they live in, then participate in it and eventually intervene to redefine it.* [emphasis added]"

The commitment to construct an alternative to globalisation was so strong in BJVJ that within the next three years, the Lokshala vision was seeded by local activist groups in eight different field laboratories in different parts of India, though very little funding was available from any quarter to sustain this work. During the latter half of the nineties (when DPEP was at its peak) and also at the beginning of this century, BJVJ stood out as an isolated but bold voice against the selling out of India's conscience in the school education sector to the forces of global capital. It must be for this reason that the Government of India and the Indian corporate houses refused to provide financial support to the Lokshala Programme since it attempted to demonstrate the *role of social intervention for transformation* of the access, quality and even the purpose of school education.

Towards the end of the nineties, a new phenomenon emerged. Under the rule of the BJP-led Union Government, a deliberate policy of supporting the forces of religious fundamentalism and communalizing the entire Indian polity was adopted. The Ministry of HRD through NCERT intervened to communalise the school curriculum and cynically use education as a tool to reassert the Brahmanical, upper caste and patriarchal

hegemony and further divide the Indian society along religious and ethnic lines. This policy fitted well into our understanding that fragmentation of Indian society serves the purpose of globalisation by weakening the people's anguish against the rising levels of unemployment, disemployment and impoverishment and also diverting their attention from such basic issues of survival (what happened later in Gujarat in 2002 also fitted in this framework). All of this was noted in BJVJ as the emerging evidence of the linkage between the forces of globalisation and communal politics. Based upon this perception, BJVJ organized an all-India 'People's Science Convention on Education, Development and Globalisation' in Delhi in November 2000. An overview document (reproduced here on pp. 98-102) was issued by BJVJ within a year of this Convention (i.e. in January 2002) to underline the various political, economic and social developments which revealed the 'hidden agenda' of the forces of globalisation and communal politics.

This story will be incomplete without a reference to the Eighty-Sixth Constitutional Amendment Bill of 2001 and the draft legislation on Free and Compulsory Education that followed in 2003-04. As has been discussed in detail elsewhere (see 'Political Economy of Education in the Age of Globalisation', BJVJ, January 2003), the Constitutional Amendment was farcical in its claim of giving education the status of Fundamental Right. Its real purpose was to deny the gains made as a result of Supreme Court's Unnikrishnan Judgement (1993) and thereby fulfill the dictates of the Structural Adjustment Programme. Several units of BJVJ in different states joined the rising public protest. The Government, however, ignored the people's voice and the Bill was ruthlessly pushed through both the Houses of the Parliament. It was signed by the President in December 2002. The draft Free and Compulsory Education Bill was designed to legitimize the various policy dilutions and distortions that had been institutionalized during the Nineties. The Bill was seen, on the one hand, as a declaration of the agenda of increasing abdication by the State of its obligation towards education and, on the other, as an instrument of greater Governmental control over educational

initiative. Ironically, this Bill, drafted by the NDA government, was not even mentioned in the National Common Minimum Programme of UPA. It is a measure of people's victory, therefore, that the UPA Government has decided to constitute a CAGE committee to review this Bill.

Although the focus of BJVJ was on elementary education, the impact of globalization and communalization on the other sectors of education was also kept in view in order to build a holistic perspective. The Ambani-Birla Report, UGC's introduction of retrogressive courses (e.g. *Pourohitya* and *Jyotirvigyan*), the UGC Model Act for the Universities and the influence of the market forces on the nature of knowledge are some of the issues that formed part of the discourse in BJVJ meetings and documentation. It is because of this background that BJVJ's agenda submitted to UPA reflected a concern for various levels of education i.e. from pre-primary to professional and technical education. Inter-sectoral concerns such as child development, Common School System, child labour, gender equity, struggle of *dalits*, tribals, linguistic and cultural minorities and the disabled for their educational rights, inclusive and multi-cultural education, need for a rational language policy, relationship of secondary education with sources of livelihood, teacher education, funding of higher education, role of external funding and the impact of commodification of education were integral to our discourse.

The Lokshala vision of social intervention in education policy formulation guided BJVJ soon after the results of the Lok Sabha elections were announced in May 2004. Within three days of the victory of Congress-led UPA, BJVJ proposed an agenda for the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) in education to Dr. Manmohan Singh, then Chairperson of the CMP Panel and the leadership of the CPI (M) and CPI. An improved version of this proposed agenda was sent to Shri Arjun Singh on the day he took charge of the Ministry of HRD. A preliminary discussion with the new Union Minister took place on 30th May and a full-fledged discussion followed on 28th June. By this time, more than 100 academics, writers, artists and social activists from different parts of the country had endorsed the agenda

(reproduced on pp. 3-26 of this booklet). Most of these issues were raised and debated during the meeting of the reconstituted CAGE on August 10-11 (the reconstitution and restoration of CAGE was itself a priority proposal of the BJVV agenda). A large number of nominated members of CAGE also actively contributed to the deliberations on these issues and introduced new dimensions. The announcement by the Union Minister of the formation of seven CAGE committees on a range of issues covering certain critical parts of the BJVV agenda is evidence of what can be achieved through sustained social intervention. While the CAGE committees provide the battleground for policy rectifications, the struggle has to necessarily continue for the remaining issues.

It is for this reason that we felt encouraged to bring out this booklet and share the educational agenda as proposed by BJVV with the wider sections of the public. We are also reproducing the various Government and non-Government documents that touch upon the issues that are critical to policy formulation at this historical juncture. A set of selected BJVV documents are also being reproduced here in order to provide the perspective built up since 1995 which provided the groundwork for drafting the agenda for the Common Minimum Programme in education.

This search for a political space for social intervention in policy formulation needs to be pursued vigorously by various academic, social, cultural and political organizations. However, only a grassroots-based people's movement can sustain and enrich this search for transforming the education system to fulfill the wider aspirations of the people.

AN AGENDA FOR THE NATIONAL COMMON MINIMUM PROGRAMME IN EDUCATION

[The first draft of this agenda for the education component of CMP was sent to Dr. Manmohan Singh, then Chairperson of UPA's CMP Panel, on 16th May 2004. Since then, the original draft has been successively revised. A revised draft was sent to the Prime Minister and Chairperson of UPA on 22nd May and to the Minister of HRD on 23rd May. This was briefly discussed with the Minister on 30th May. The fourth revised draft (dated 7th June 2004) was sent to all those mentioned above on 9th June and appointments sought for a meeting with a delegation to discuss the document. The Minister of HRD, in particular, has been requested to get this document examined in his Ministry so that we can have a result-oriented discussion. All the above drafts were sent to CPI (M) and CPI leadership too. The fifth revised draft was given to the Minister on 23rd June in person. A seven-member delegation met the Minister on 28th June for 20 minutes and discussed with him and the Addl. Secretary the sixth revised draft presented below. – 30th June 2004]

We – the members of the academic community, writers, artists, social activists and members of various teachers', students', workers' and women's organizations – note that the recent mandate given to the UPA government is unmistakably two-fold as it rejects (a) the communal and divisive politics pursued so blatantly as an ideology during the past six years, and (b) the so-called economic reforms that were pushed ruthlessly 'without a human face'. We are concerned that our education policies, programmes and academic institutions seriously suffered from systematic dilution, distortion and deterioration as a result of the aforesaid twin agenda of the previous government. Since the declaration of the election results, therefore, we have striven hard to construct a democratic, secular and egalitarian agenda for the educational component of the Common Minimum Programme (CMP). The proposed agenda takes note of the rapidly changing global economic order, increasing intervention by international agencies in determining national policies and the rise of religious fundamentalism in many parts of the world, including India.

The challenges faced by the national educational system are interpreted in this global as well as the unique geo-political context in which India is situated. The agenda recognizes the historic and bold direction that people expect the UPA government to take. We have undertaken this exercise in the ardent hope that the UPA government, in view of the nature of the mandate it has received, will be committed to examining our proposal that is rooted in a systematic policy analysis undertaken by us over the years.

[Note: The proposed agenda does not address the issue of social education, as envisaged by the first Minister of Education of independent India namely, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, for educating the adult citizens in order to prepare them for their proactive role for advancing the cause of democracy, secularism and nation-building. Nor does it address the urgent need to mobilize the people for social intervention in the education system. These tasks, admittedly of great priority, belong in the domain of social movements and/or political parties, rather than the Government. The agenda proposed below needs to be viewed with this delimitation, as it is aimed at influencing and reforming only the State policy relating to education.]

In this exercise, we have been guided by policy documents that have found broad national consensus. Some of the main policy considerations that informed us are summarized here.

Policy Framework

The opening statement of the Report of the Education Commission (1964-66) is worth recalling as it continues to make sense even today:

"The destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms. This we believe, is no mere rhetoric. . . . On the quality and number of persons coming out of our schools and colleges will depend our success in the great enterprise of national reconstruction the principal objective of which is to raise the standard of living of our people. . . . The task is neither unique nor quite new. But its magnitude, gravity and urgency have increased immensely" [Sections 1.01 and 1.02]

The Commission's report defines the social purpose of education in the following words:

"Even more important is the role of education in achieving *social and national integration*. Indian society is hierarchical, stratified and deficient in vertical mobility. The social distance between the different classes, particularly between the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, is large and is tending to widen. (emphasis ours)" [Section 1.07]

Recognising the political challenge facing education, the Commission observed:

"The political challenge has many aspects, but three stand out. The first is the need to strengthen *democracy* it will not be permanently viable unless its foundations are deepened by the creation of an educated electorate, and a dedicated and competent leadership The second is related to the defence of the *country's freedom* (which) is a national concern, to which every citizen contributes his best in order to achieve self-sufficiency in food and other essentials, to strengthen the country's economy, and to create a secular, united and strong democratic State. The third is the *growing awakening among the masses* who, suppressed for centuries, have now awakened to a sense of their rights and are demanding education, equality, higher standards of living and better civic amenities. The '*explosion of expectations*' has also to be met through a planned programme of national development.(emphasis ours)" [Section 1.08]

While elaborating upon the essential link between education and national development, the Commission raises a basic issue with regard to the social character of education:

"The naïve belief that all education is necessarily good, both for the individual and for society, and that it will necessarily lead to progress, can be as harmful as it is misplaced. Quantitatively, education can be organized to promote social justice or to retard it. History shows numerous instances where small social groups and elites have *used education as a prerogative of their rule and as a tool for maintaining their hegemony and perpetuating the values* upon which it has rested. On the other hand, there are cases in which a social and cultural revolution has been brought about in a system where *equality of educational opportunity is provided* and education is deliberately used to develop more and more potential talent and to harness it to the solution of national problems. The same is even more true of the quality of education. It is only the *right type of education, provided on an adequate scale*, that can lead to national development; when these conditions are not satisfied, the opposite effect may result. (emphasis ours)" [Section 1.16]

Such considerations persuaded the Commission to assert as follows:

"In fact, what is needed is a revolution in education which in turn will set in motion the much desired social, economic and cultural revolution. In our opinion, therefore, *no reform is more important or more urgent than to transform education, to endeavour to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people* and thereby make it a powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of our national goals. (emphasis ours)" [Sections 1.17 and 1.20]

In the wake of the Commission's report, the first National Policy on Education, 1968 was formulated which resolved:

"The Government of India is convinced that a radical reconstruction of education on the broad lines recommended by the Education Commission is essential for economic and cultural development of the country The education system must produce young men and women of character and ability *committed to national service and development*. Only then education will be able to play its vital role in promoting national progress, creating a *sense of common citizenship and culture*, and strengthening national integration. This is necessary if the country is to attain its rightful place in the comity of nations in conformity with its great cultural heritage and its unique potentialities. (emphasis ours)"

Making a fresh assessment of the situation almost a quarter of a century later but still continuing to share the same concerns as was done by the aforesaid policy documents, the National Policy on Education 1986 (as modified in 1992) observed:

"Every country develops its system of education to express and promote its unique socio-cultural identity and also to meet the challenges of the times. The country has reached a stage in its economic and technical development when a major effort must be made to derive the maximum benefit from the assets already created and to *ensure that the fruits of change reach all sections*. Education is the highway to that goal. (emphasis ours)" [Sections 1.1 and 1.2]

The national policy envisaged the social role of education in the following words:

"Education has an *acculturating* role. It refines sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to national cohesion, a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit – thus furthering the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy enshrined in the Constitution. (emphasis ours)" [Section 2.2]

The national system of education was viewed by the policy as follows:

"The concept of a National System of Education implies that, up to a given level, all students, irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex, have access to *education of comparable quality*. Effective measures will be taken in the direction of the *Common School System* recommended in the 1968 policy. (it) will be based on a *national curricular framework* which contains a *common core along with other components that are flexible*. (these) will be designed to promote values such as India's common cultural heritage, egalitarianism, democracy and secularism, equality of the sexes, protection of the environment, removal of social barriers, observance of the small family norm and inculcation of scientific temper. (emphasis ours)" [Sections 3.2 and 3.4]

The goal of moving towards equality was reiterated by the policy as follows:

"To promote equality, it will be necessary to provide for *equal opportunity to all not only in access, but also in the conditions for success*. Besides, awareness of the *inherent equality of all* will be created through the core curriculum. The purpose is to *remove prejudices and complexes* transmitted through the social environment and the accident of birth. In higher education in general, and technical education in particular, steps will be taken to *facilitate inter-regional mobility by providing equal access* to every Indian of requisite merit, regardless of his origins. (emphasis ours)" [Sections 3.6 and 3.8]

Basic Premises

In light of the aforesaid policy statements with regard to the goal, role and priorities of education, we identify the following underlying premises that have guided us in formulating our proposed agenda:

- One of the primary purposes of education is to promote universal human values and respect for India's composite culture and rich diversity.
- The education system must be designed to strengthen the commitment in every citizen to the goals as enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution, especially sovereignty, secularism and democracy and to secure socio-economic and political justice, liberty of thought and faith, equality of status and opportunity, dignity of the individual and integrity of the nation.

- Education is an instrument of social development and not a commodity or service that can be traded in market; education has a critical role in generating knowledge for social development and welfare of the masses, rather than for profit, subjugation or concentration of power.
- Elementary Education is not to be juxtaposed against higher, technical or professional education; the criticality of each sector for national development and people's welfare needs to be recognised.
- It is the Constitutional obligation of the State to ensure adequate financial support for the development of education in such manner as to guarantee the Fundamental Rights (Part III) and in consonance with the Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV) of the Constitution.

AGENDA FOR EDUCATION

A. Undoing the Damage done by the NDA Government

1. Constitute a high-powered committee to review NCERT's National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000) and the syllabi and textbooks prepared during 2001-2004 with a view to *exposing* the inherent **communal, divisive and obscurantist ideology**. The same Committee may also look into the learning materials recently prepared by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). The Terms of Reference of the committee should also include recommendation of an action plan for preparing new material in consonance with the secular, egalitarian and pluralistic framework of the Constitution. The committee must submit its report within a **timeframe of 3-months**. In the meantime, the following measures may be taken, with least hardship to the students:

- All **NCERT textbooks prescribed by CBSE until the academic year 2001-2002** should be restored with immediate effect in the current academic year until a new decision is taken. This is particularly essential for all social science books which have a history component, and all history books.

- **Stop the reprinting and distribution** of the textbooks brought out by NCERT during 2002-04.
- **Advise CBSE to de-prescribe the NCERT books** brought out during 2002-04 and to immediately **withdraw the circular** issued in October 2001 on the direction of NCERT deleting certain portions and statements from four history textbooks.

It is emphasized that, given the concurrent status of education, the changes made by the NCERT in the curriculum framework and the contingent changes in the syllabi and textbooks during the years 2000-2004 are **not valid at the national level** insofar they were **not approved by CABE**, as required by both the democratic practice evolved since independence and India's federal polity. This is why it would be perfectly in order to withdraw forthwith the so-called National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000) and the consequent syllabi and textbooks prepared during 2001-2004. A new curricular framework must be formulated by a committee of eminent educationists and other social scientists in a totally democratic and transparent manner and finally presented to CABE for approval. All corrective steps henceforth must, however, ensure that the **autonomy and professional status of NCERT/CBSE** is re-established.

2. Restore, restructure and reconstitute the **Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE)** in order to ensure that all policy-related educational decision-making in future takes place in the federal spirit of the Constitution. Move to make CABE a **statutory body** with an appropriate composition.

3. Constitute a committee to recommend ways of restoring and strengthening the **professional, autonomous and secular character** of the various national **academic bodies** such as NCERT, NIEPA, UGC, NCTE, ICSSR, ICHR, ICPR, AICTE, CBSE, NCPUL, NIOS, Indian Instt. of Advanced Studies, Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, National Book Trust etc. Review all appointments, promotions and transfers made during the past

five years in violation of rules and norms and take corrective steps. In addition, corruption, nepotism or political/bureaucratic intervention in some of the afore-mentioned statutory bodies has increased to such an extent that they have essentially lost the capability to regulate, accredit or monitor the academic quality of the institutions in their respective sectors. The credibility of these statutory bodies must be restored on a priority basis.

4. Constitute a review committee to undertake a thorough review of Ministry's policy of providing financial support to NGOs with a view to identifying and eliminating funding of all those organizations that promote **communal, divisive and obscurantist ideas and violate the Constitution** in any other manner. Also, take all necessary steps to ensure that educational institutions are not allowed to be **misused for dissemination of communal hatred and prejudices**.

5. Constitute a committee to review the **86th Amendment to the Constitution** with a view to **eliminating the following four major flaws** (a) excluding almost 17 crore children up to six years of age from the provision of Fundamental Right to *free* early childhood care and pre-school children; (b) restricting the Fundamental Right of even the 6-14 year age group by introducing the phrase '*as the State may, by law, determine*' in Article 21A; (c) shifting the Constitutional obligation towards free and compulsory education from the State to the parents/guardians by making it their Fundamental Duty under Article 51A (k) to '*provide opportunities for education*' to their children in the 6-14 age group; and (d) reducing, as per the Financial Memorandum to the amendment Bill, the State's financial commitment for concretizing the Fundamental Right by almost 30% of what was estimated by the Tapas Majumdar Committee (1999) for provision of elementary education through *regular formal schools*. The aforesaid flaws, now part of the amended Constitution, have since provided the basis for **misconceiving** the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and, more recently, the Draft Free and Compulsory Education Bill.

Take measures to place a **fresh Bill in the Parliament** to modify the amendment in order to accord education the genuine status of Fundamental Right, without compromising with either the market forces or the Structural Adjustment Programme imposed on Indian economy by IMF-World Bank.

6. Withdraw the **Draft Free and Compulsory Education Bill** (dated 8th January 2004) which was designed by the previous Government to (a) legitimize low quality educational streams for under-privileged sections of society; (b) provide legitimate space at various administrative and academic levels for extra-constitutional authorities (including communal bodies such as the Sangh Parivar organizations) to introduce their ideological agenda in school education while keeping them outside the purview of the Constitutional framework; (c) negate the principles of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments; (d) promote privatization and 'corporatisation' of school education; (e) franchise parts or whole of Districts to corporate or religious bodies for running the elementary education system; (f) shift the Constitutional obligation of the State to support elementary education to the parents and the local communities; (g) promote 'special schools' for the disabled children at the *cost of inclusive education*; and (h) introduce a range of other distortions in the elementary education system. **Take concrete measures to draft a fresh Bill in a manner that is transparent, participative and open to public scrutiny.**

7. Restore and guarantee the **autonomy of all institutions of higher and professional education including Universities, IITs and IIMs**. Make necessary provisions including the restoration of public subsidies such that no eligible student from the underprivileged sections or middle strata of society is denied access or opportunity to complete a course due to her/his economic, socio-cultural or linguistic background.

The recent alarming trends of dilution of the democratic structures and processes in various colleges and universities must be reversed and elected representation of students, non-teaching staff and teachers in the highest of decision-

making bodies such as the Executive Councils/Syndicates and others must be ensured in all institutions.

8. Withdraw the proposed **UGC's Model Act for Universities (MAU)**, formulated unconstitutionally without consultation with the state governments despite education being a concurrent subject under the Constitution. The Model Act is aimed at enforcing uniformity without regard to the historical character and evolution of the institutions of higher education. In principle, the MAU a) completely undermines university autonomy with the proposed Visitors empowered to ensure implementation of Council of Ministers' "recommendations" in central/ state universities and to direct Vice Chancellors in their day to day functioning; b) imposes bureaucratic controls over academic institutions (UGC to set and monitor standards and quality of education); and c) substitutes academic goals and self-critical autonomy with commercial targets and corporate-like structures of hierarchy.

9. Advise UGC to constitute a committee to identify and/ or review all **courses in higher education**, such as the recently introduced courses in *Jyotirvigyan* and *Pourohitya*, that **violate Article 51A (h) of the Constitution** by promoting unscientific thinking, ritualism and retrogressive socio-cultural practices. Take concrete measures to eliminate such courses from higher education forthwith.

The same committee may also be asked to recommend **introduction of new courses and/or ways of strengthening the existing courses** in higher education such that **universal human values** and the basic **principles as enshrined in the Constitution** are promoted.

10. Wind up with immediate effect several **committees and task forces** constituted by the previous Government to promote and legitimize its communal ideology and pro-market agenda in education.

B. New Initiatives, New Directions

1. Make a commitment to provide adequate funds for fulfilling the **cumulative gap** built up since the Education Commission's recommendations in 1964-66 within a ten-year timeframe. In the case of elementary education, it was to fulfill this cumulative gap that the Tapas Majumdar Committee (1999) recommended an **additional investment** of 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). This investment will be required for bringing all **out-of-school children to the formal school system**, rather than the low-quality parallel streams. The **CMP is so far silent** on this issue. It must commit this level of additional investment in order to achieve the elusive goal of **Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE)** within a specified timeframe.

2. **In addition to fulfilling** the aforesaid cumulative gap, the public spending in education should be raised step-wise to reach the level of **6% of GDP** within the next five years, at least **half of which should be on elementary education**, as has been the long-standing policy commitment (in 1998-99, 48.7% of the total expenditure was on elementary sector alone). The CMP's pledge to spend at least half of the total expenditure on **'primary and secondary sectors'** is based on some misconception (hopefully inadvertent) as this implies a **reduction in priority** given to both elementary and secondary sectors (in 1998-99, 78.7% of the total expenditure was on elementary and secondary sectors taken together).

In view of the role of higher education in generating and transacting knowledge that is critical for economic growth, sustainable development and social welfare, it is essential that **public investment in higher education, too, is progressively increased**; private investment in this sector needs to be carefully checked in order to ensure that people's rising aspirations and the Constitutional imperative of social justice are not ignored.

3. Constitute a committee to **review Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** with a view to eliminating its anti-poor, anti-child and anti-education features such as the low-quality parallel educational streams (e.g. EGS, alternative schools, back-to-school camps), multi-grade teaching and para-teachers instituted by it for the deprived sections of society. Instead, the basic objective of SSA should be to evolve an **effectively functioning Common School System** for all children, irrespective of their class, caste, creed, location, cultural or linguistic backgrounds.

4. Commit to a ten-year timeframe for developing a **Common School System up to the high school stage** through the concept of neighbourhood schools. The aim of the Common School System (inclusive of privately managed, aided or unaided, schools) should be to ensure **education of equitable quality** to all children in a pluralistic framework. The **Common School System is a policy imperative** under the National Policy on Education-1986 (as modified in 1992) and requires a commitment in the CMP. The silence of CMP on the prevailing policy of low-quality parallel streams must also be broken.

The single most critical factor for the feasibility and success of the Common School System is an unambiguous commitment to the implementation of the **three-language formula** (as modified by the Education Commission, 1964-66 and accepted in the 1986 national education policy). The pedagogically sound principle of **mother tongue as the medium of learning** at least at the *early* primary stage must be pursued without deviation (as also required for the 'linguistic minority groups' under Article 350A of the Constitution)*, while ensuring facilities for **switching to the state language** (wherever mother tongue is different from the state language) as the medium of learning at later stages as also for **learning English** as a language at an appropriate stage. This should be established as the foundation for building up the Common School System up to at least the high school stage in all schools, irrespective of the type of management or source of funds.

[*Note: In this respect, it may be noted that Urdu, a language specified in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, belongs neither to any particular State nor to any religious or linguistic community. It is, therefore, imperative that facilities of adequate quality are guaranteed whenever there is a demand or perceived need for either learning through the Urdu medium or learning it as a language, as also recommended by several official committees in the past. Similar considerations may also apply in the case of Sindhi, Nepali or other such languages. The pedagogic significance of this issue needs to be appreciated from the standpoint of equitable access to knowledge and capacity for articulation of one's thought. The State is obliged to establish this role of language in its educational planning in order to ensure socio-political empowerment of all sections of society.]

5. **Replace** the present policy of mere regulation of child labour with an **unambiguous policy for abolition of child labour** and amend all relevant laws accordingly. Also, design effective programmes to ensure that all children **participate in regular full-time formal schools** and not in half-hearted low-quality non-formal evening centres or EGS/alternative schools that accommodate and legitimize child labour.

All programmes for ensuring **school education for child labour** should be **shifted from the Ministry of Labour to the Department of Elementary Education** in MHRD.

6. In consonance with the recent directions by the Supreme Court and CMP's commitment to social justice, urgent executive action must be taken to ensure that all high fee-charging private schools throughout India provide admission, free education and adequate financial support to underprivileged students up to at least 25% of the student body at the earliest.

7. All SCs, STs and OBCs, with special emphasis on girls in each of these sections, must be guaranteed education of **equitable quality at least up to the 10+2 stage** in order to **make them eligible** for benefiting from the existing reservation schemes (the *minimum* eligibility for the existing reservation provisions is 10+2, the only exceptions being admissions in ITIs and some other minor courses for which a high school certificate is the eligibility requirement). The CMP's laudable commitment to affirmative action, therefore, can not be fulfilled unless it is combined with a guarantee of education of equitable quality at least up to the 10+2 stage.

8. The national policy must be modified in order to ensure that the children of the **cultural and linguistic minorities and the disabled children** feel welcome in the mainstream school system. For this purpose, the curriculum, teaching-learning process, school ethos, evaluation process, infrastructural support and financial norms must be changed to make education **genuinely inclusive** in accordance with UNESCO's Salamanca Statement (1994).

9. Include **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)** for all children up to six years of age and strengthen its component relating to pre-primary education. In this respect, CMP's promise to universalize ICDS is a welcome, though admittedly only a partial measure, as the ICDS is itself an incomplete and flawed scheme in more than one way, including its lack of pre-primary component.

10. Resolve to eliminate **social, cultural, linguistic and gender discrimination** from all aspects of the school system, including the curriculum. The CMP makes no such commitment.

11. Special programmes need to be designed and pursued vigorously in order to **bring muslim children, particularly the muslim girls, in the mainstream school system** by fulfilling the present deficiency in the number of schools in the muslim-majority habitations and regions, ensuring a culturally sensitive school environment and creating conditions for successful completion of schooling. This calls for re-designing of **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan** itself.

12. Review, restore and strengthen the **women empowerment component** of the *Mahila Samakhya* programme, as originally conceived in the Programme of Action, 1986 (as modified in 1992), so that women can assert themselves collectively to move towards **gender equality**, with consequent improvement in the **participation of the girl child** in education and creation of conditions **conducive for the completion** of their schooling. The issue of women's education must not be reduced to mere enrolment ratios and drop-out

rates to mechanically fulfill the requirement of the statistical parameters set by UNESCO/World Bank under the Dakar Framework of Action for Education for All (2000).

The *Mahila Samakhya* programme must be universalized in all Development Blocks.

13. Restore the **status and the working conditions of the teachers** by reversing the recent dominant trends of parallelization and dilution in States/UTs and by instituting a commonly acceptable framework of their recruitment, pay scales, development, promotions and welfare throughout the country. Eliminate the para-teacher scheme that discriminates against both the teachers and children. Make the teacher accountable for her/his tasks in **partnership with the parents and the community** under the provisions of the 73rd and 74th amendments.

Democratisation of decision-making in all categories of schools must be ensured by making provisions for representation of teachers and parents in the concerned governing bodies. This process needs to be extended to the entire school system as well such that teachers' representatives are involved in decision-making relating to curriculum, textbooks, evaluation, examinations and their in-service training in order to instill a sense of ownership and accountability in the teaching community with regard to its professional engagement.

Constitute a **CABE committee** to review the curriculum of all the existing pre-service and in-service (including refresher courses) teacher education programmes at elementary, secondary and higher education levels from the standpoint of the contemporary challenges facing Indian education system, particularly the challenge of universalizing elementary education. The Terms of Reference of the committee should include the task of formulating a curriculum framework for various modes of teacher education with the aim of **replacing the prevailing outmoded colonial notion of teacher-as-(faithful and submissive) executor** with that of teacher-as-inquirer, teacher-as-educational activist and teacher-as-transformative intellectual.

Teacher education must be envisaged as an integral part of the higher education system for all academic, administrative, planning and budget purposes, just like any other professional course; **UGC norms should be applied** for recruitment, pay scales and promotion of teacher educators.

Adequate provision must be made to view teacher education as a life-long teacher development-cum-enrichment programme such that she/he would be empowered to re-construct, evolve and/or interpret curriculum, textbooks and pedagogy in the context of the socio-cultural milieu of the students and their aspirations, while also strengthening the basic principles as enshrined in the Constitution.

Urgent attention needs to be paid to restructuring NCTE in order to pull it out of its present trap of being a 'helpless onlooker' of deteriorating standards of teacher education for the past few years and to re-establish its statutory role as regulator of the quality of teacher education.

14. Phase out all externally funded programmes in elementary education within three years and resolve to eliminate irrelevant educational schemes and reprioritize the national economy to support elementary education. In this respect, the proposed cess on Central taxes to finance universalisation of elementary education, as stated in the CMP, can be a helpful measure only if the funds so raised are (a) *strictly earmarked* for the purpose; and (b) also viewed as being an *additionality* to the ongoing effort to re-prioritise the national economy in favour of elementary education, rather than *substituting* for it. The **minimum objective** of the proposed cess should be to eliminate external funding of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan within three years and to fulfill the cumulative gap as referred to in Section B.1 above within the next ten years.

15. Make higher and professional education accessible to all eligible students from the deprived sections of society and ensure all necessary economic, social, cultural and pedagogic support to enable them to complete their courses successfully.

The global quality of several publicly-financed institutions of higher and professional education (including research degrees) viz. IITs, Regional Engineering Colleges, Indian Institute of Science (Bangalore), TIFR (Mumbai), TISS (Mumbai), AIIMS (New Delhi) and some of the central and state universities provide incontrovertible evidence that **state funding not only ensures greater social justice but also prepares the young people to face the challenge of frontline technologies and knowledge systems.** This national experience thus leaves hardly any scope for privatization in this crucial sector and, at the same time, calls for **strict laws to ban commercialization** of all kinds in higher education.

16. Take measures to discourage and/or regulate the **entry of the global market forces into the Indian education system** that tend to make education a commodity and, therefore, a source of distortion of knowledge and disparity in our society. In this respect, review the **entry of foreign universities and institutions** which are entering in a big way into India. They are fleecing the students and in many cases the degrees/diplomas given by such universities are not recognised even in the countries of their origin.

17. Review all aspects of **India's relationship with GATS** on a priority basis and do not make initial offers under GATS. The GATS is an instrument by which **education is treated as a 'service' like commodity** which can be sold and purchased in the international market. The **GATS binds the governments** and penal action is taken if changes are made in the terms and conditions on a later date to suit the national requirements. Under GATS, the state-funded universities and colleges would suffer severely and **higher education would become out of reach** for the common people, including even the middle and lower middle classes. If the Indian government can take a tough stand in WTO in the agriculture sector to protect national interests, why can't it be done in the education sector too? This issue must be debated in the Parliament before any precipitous offers are made or MoUs are signed at any of the international fora.

18. The phenomenon of viewing **education as a commodity** and its **impact on the very notion and purpose of knowledge** needs to be investigated by a high-powered CABE committee. We are concerned about the rapidly **emerging hierarchy both among and within the Universities** viz., those which sponsor market-oriented branches of knowledge (e.g. information technology and biotechnology) to become cash surplus and those which continue to emphasise basic sciences, humanities and social sciences to become cash deficit. Unless this trend of distortion and dilution of knowledge is checked, India's survival as a nation is endangered.

19. Take suitable steps to **increase the enrolment of girl students** in higher and professional education, which is almost static around 35-36% for the last several years.

20. Inquire into the functioning of the **accrediting bodies like AICTE and NCTE** which have given recognition to numerous so-called self-financing institutions mushrooming rapidly. More than three thousand such institutions have come up in the last six years in the area of professional education. Most of such institutions **lack basic infrastructural facilities** like laboratories and libraries and loot the students. Urgent action is called for to halt this deterioration of standards in professional education.

21. Withdraw the **Private Universities Bill** introduced in the Rajya Sabha in 1995. Constitute a **high-powered CABE committee** to look into the whole question of the **place of private universities in national development** afresh and also **examine the legislations** passed by various states/UTs for setting up private universities. Until the report of this committee has been considered by CABE, no fresh recognition to any private university may be accorded either by the Union government or any of the state/UT governments. In the meantime, a UGC committee may **review recognition** already given to private universities and private deemed universities

which have come up in recent years for profit-making and also recommend how **emergence** of such universities may be **effectively stopped in future**. As a follow-up, the UGC must take decisive action against **unrecognised universities**.

22. Re-structure, re-constitute and duly empower the **National Elementary Education Mission (NEEM)** as promised by the National Policy on Education-1986 (as modified in 1992), rather than making its symbolic declarations from time to time, as has been the case so far.

23. Expand the scope of the proposed **National Commission on Education** to include **recommending policy changes and effecting improvements in the design of the ground-level programmes** in consonance with the Constitution, rather than limiting its scope to merely 'allocate resources and monitor programmes' as stated in the CMP. Unless this is done, the proposed Commission will soon find itself in a trap due to the prevailing flawed policies and misconceived design of schemes and programmes.

24. We urge upon the UPA Government to deliberate **with a sense of purpose and urgency** on the possibility of constituting, four decades after Education Commission (1964-66), a **full-fledged National Commission on Education** to look into all aspects of education as a whole in order to comprehensively respond to the rising aspirations of the vast majority of the people in the context of the changing global economic order and India's geo-political relationships.

Epilogue

This is not the moment to hesitate but to take bold and radical policy-related decisions for the larger good of the masses. This requires a change in the national priorities and distribution of the economic cake in accordance with the Constitutional

imperatives. Any dithering can place the nation at grave risk. Neither the UPA government nor the people of India can afford to lose this historic opportunity of re-constructing the education system

sd./-

Prof. Yash Pal

Chairperson, Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (BJVJ)
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Post-General Election 2004 Developments

PROVISIONS RELATING TO EDUCATION IN THE NATIONAL COMMON MINIMUM PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE

27th May 2004

Introduction

The people of India have voted decisively in the 14th Lok Sabha elections for secular, progressive forces, for parties wedded to the welfare of farmers, agricultural labour, weavers, workers and weaker sections of society, for parties irrevocably committed to the daily well-being of the common man across the country.

The UPA government supported by the Left Parties will have six basic principles for governance.

- to preserve, protect and promote social harmony and to enforce the law without fear or favour to deal with all obscurantist and fundamentalist elements who seek to disturb social amity and peace.
- to ensure that the economy grows at least 7-8% per year in a sustained manner over a decade and more and in a manner that generates employment so that each family is assured of a safe and viable livelihood.
- to enhance the welfare and well-being of farmers, farm labour and workers, particularly those in the unorganized sector and assure a secure future for their families in every respect.
- to fully empower women politically, educationally, economically and legally.
- to provide for full equality of opportunity, particularly in education and employment for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, OBCs and religious minorities.
- to unleash the creative energies of our entrepreneurs, businessmen, scientists, engineers and all other professionals and productive forces of society.

Education

The UPA government pledges to raise public spending in education to least 6% of GDP with at least half this amount being spent of primary and secondary sectors. This will be done in a phased manner,

The UPA government will introduce a cess on all central taxes to finance the commitment to universalize access to quality basic education. A National Commission on Education will be set up to allocate resources and monitor programmes.

The UPA government will take immediate steps to reverse the trend of communalization of education that had set in the past five years. It will also ensure that all institutions of higher learning and professional education retain their autonomy. The UPA will ensure that nobody is denied professional education because he or she is poor.

Academic excellence and professional competence will be the sole criteria for all appointments to bodies like the Indian Council for Historical Research, Indian Council for Social Science Research, University Grants Commission, National Council for Educational Research and Training, etc. Steps will be taken to remove the communalization of the school syllabus that has taken place in the past five years. A review committee of experts will be set up for this purpose.

A national cooked nutritious mid-day meal scheme funded mainly by the central government, will be introduced in primary and secondary schools. An appropriate mechanism for quality checks will also set up. The UPA will also universalize the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme to provide a functional anganwadi in every settlement and ensure full coverage for all children. The UPA government will fully back and support all NGO efforts in the area of primary education.

Proper infrastructure will be created in schools for NCC, NSS, physical development, sports and cultural development of all students.

Measures Relating to Women and Children Having a Bearing on Education

The UPA government will ensure that at least one-third of all funds flowing into panchayats will be earmarked for programmes for the development of women and children.

Village women and their associations will be encouraged to assume responsibility for all development schemes relating to drinking water, sanitation, primary education, health and nutrition.

The UPA government will protect the rights of children, strive for the elimination of child labour, ensure facilities for schooling and extend special care to the girl child.

Nutrition programmes, particularly for the girl child will be expanded on a significant scale.

Measures Relating to Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Having a Bearing on Education

All reservation quotas, including those relating to promotions, will be fulfilled in a time-bound manner. To codify all reservations, a Reservation Act will be enacted.

Landless families will be endowed with land through implementation of land ceiling and land redistribution legislation. No reversal of ceilings legislation will be permitted.

The UPA government will immediately review the overall strategy and programmes for the development of tribal areas to work out more viable livelihood strategies.

The UPA government is very sensitive to the issue of affirmative action, including reservations, in the private sector. It will immediately initiate a national dialogue with all political parties, industry and other organizations to see how best the private sector can fulfill the aspirations of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe youth.

The rights of tribal communities over mineral resources, water sources, etc as laid down by law will be fully safeguarded.

Measures Relating to Minorities Having a Bearing on Education

The UPA government will amend the Constitution to establish a Commission for Minority Educational Institutions that will provide direct affiliation for minority professional institutions to central universities.

The UPA will promote modern and technical education among all minority communities. Social and economic empowerment of minorities through more systematic attention to education and employment will be a priority concern for the UPA.

The UPA will establish a National Commission to see how best the welfare of socially and economically backward sections among religious and linguistic minorities, including reservations in education and employment, is enhanced. The Commission will be given six months to submit its report.

The UPA government will examine the question of providing Constitutional status to the Minorities Commission and will also strive for recognition and promotion of Urdu language under Article 345 and 347 of the Constitution.

Measures Relating to Regional Imbalance & Centre-State Relations Having A Bearing on Education

The UPA government is committed to redressing growing regional imbalances both among states as well as within states, through fiscal, administrative, investment and other means. It is a matter of concern that regional imbalances have been accentuated by not just historical neglect but also by distortions in Plan allocations and central government assistance. Even in the Tenth Five Year Plan, states like Bihar, Assam and UP have received per capita allocations that are much below the national average. The UPA government will consider the creation of a Backward States Grant Fund that will be used to create

productive assets in these states. The central government will also take proactive measures to speed up the industrialization of the eastern and northeastern region.

A special programme for social and physical infrastructure development in the poorest and most backward districts of the country will be taken up on a priority basis.

All centrally-sponsored schemes except in national priority areas like family planning will be transferred to states.

The State of J&K will be given every assistance to rebuild its infrastructure quickly.

All northeastern states will be given special assistance to upgrade and expand infrastructure. The Northeastern Council will be strengthened and given adequate professional support.

Administrative, Economic and Social Measures with Significant Implications for Education

Devolution of funds to Panchayati Raj Institutions will be accompanied by similar devolution of functions and functionaries as well.

Regular elections to panchayat bodies will be ensured and the amended Act in respect of the Fifth and Sixth Schedule Areas will be implemented.

The UPA government will ensure that the Gram Sabha is empowered to emerge as the foundation of panchayati raj.

The Right to Information Act will be made more progressive, participatory and meaningful.

The UPA administration will ensure the fullest implementation of minimum wage laws for farm labour. Comprehensive protective legislation will be enacted for all agricultural workers.

Controls that depress the incomes of farmers will be systematically removed. Farmers all over the country will receive fair and remunerative prices. The terms of trade will be maintained in favour of agriculture.

The UPA government is firmly committed to ensure the welfare and well-being of all workers, particularly those in the unorganized sector who constitute 93% of our workforce. Social security, health insurance and other schemes for such workers like weavers, handloom workers, fishermen and fisherwomen, toddy tappers, leather workers, plantation labour, beedi workers, etc will be expanded.

It also believes that there must be a direct link between privatization and social needs — like, for example, the use of privatization revenues for designated social sector schemes.

All subsidies will be targeted sharply at the poor and the truly needy like small and marginal farmers, farm labour and the urban poor. A detailed roadmap for accomplishing this will be unveiled in Parliament within 90 days.

It will initiate measures to increase the tax : GDP ratio by undertaking major tax reforms that expand the base of taxpayers, increase tax compliance and make the tax administration more efficient.

Special schemes to unearth black money and assets will be introduced.

The UPA reiterates its abiding commitment to economic reforms with a human face, that stimulates growth, investment and employment.

The UPA's economic reforms will be oriented primarily to spreading and deepening rural prosperity, to significantly improving the quality of public systems and delivery of public services, to bringing about a visible and tangible difference in the quality of life of ordinary citizens of our country.

Measures Relating to Official Languages Having a Bearing on Education

The UPA government will set up a committee to examine the question of declaring all languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution as official languages. In addition, Tamil will be declared as a classical language.

A Final Word

This is a common minimum programme (CMP) for the UPA government. It is, by no means, a comprehensive agenda. It is a starting point that highlights the main priorities, policies and programmes. The UPA is committed to the implementation of the CMP. This CMP is the foundation for another CMP — collective maximum performance.

The Indian Express, June 16, 2004

Elementary, it's education

Undoing the damage of the NDA era demands both thought and care

ANIL SADGOPAL

The damage inflicted by the NDA Government on education goes far beyond NCERT's induction of the sangh parivar's communal, divisive and obscurantist ideology in its curriculum framework, syllabi and textbooks. CBSE-affiliated schools, where NCERT books are mandatory, constitute less than 5 per cent of the secondary and higher secondary schools in the country (the percentage would be almost half of one per cent if the elementary schools are included). This, however, does not minimise the nation-wide implications of NCERT's moves to communalise education which the Common Minimum Programme has correctly identified as a priority concern.

Several other critical issues would emerge if one takes a more holistic view of the education policy. A decision taken by the previous government just before the elections poses a challenge to CMP that is yet to be recognised. This concerns the Draft Free and Compulsory Education Bill 2004.

This Draft Bill stands out as one of the most alarming policy documents ever prepared by the ministry since Independence. It attempts to (a) legitimise low quality educational streams for under-privileged sections of society; (b) provide legitimate space for extra-constitutional authorities to introduce their ideological agenda in school education while keeping them outside the purview of the constitutional framework; (c) negate the role of panchayati raj institutions; (d) promote privatisation and "corporatisation" of school education; (e) franchise parts or whole districts to corporate or religious bodies for running elementary schools; (f) shift the state's constitutional obligation towards elementary education to the parents and local communities; (g) promote "special schools" for disabled children at the cost of inclusive education; and introduce a range of other distortions. The UPA government must withdraw the Draft Bill and take steps to draft it afresh.

The other recent decision by the previous government pertains to the MoU (kept secret so far) it signed with the World Bank, DfID (UK) and European Commission for a credit of mere Rs 4,710 crore over the next three years (Rs 1,570 crore a year) for its much-hyped Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). This credit amounted to only 30 per cent of the requirement of SSA, the remaining 70 per cent being provided out of internal resources. Yet, the Bank got total control over the entire SSA through audit procedures and Joint Review Missions, dictating not just financial terms but also educational parameters and indicators. This is exactly what the Bank has been doing to our elementary education system for the past decade, with no evidence of any improvement in the ground situation. The CMP would do well to recognise the distortion and dilution of our education policy as a consequence of the external assistance the nation has accepted. The previous minister unabashedly declared that India could not educate its children unless external assistance was increased. The irony is that the external assistance to SSA amounts to mere 0.06 per cent of the current GDP level i.e. six paise out of every Rs 100 earned by India!

A most laudable measure in the CMP is the proposed cess on all central taxes to finance the commitment to elementary education. This would make it possible to do away with the external aid to SSA from next year onwards and restore Parliament's supremacy in policy formulation. An additional objective of the cess should be to fulfill the cumulative gap of educational investment that has been building up for almost four decades as a consequence of inadequate investment each year since the Kothari Education Commission recommended 6 per cent of GDP as the required level of investment. The promise of raising public spending in education to 6 per cent of GDP is not new but what brings this within the realm of feasibility for the first time is this cess.

However, the CMP has not recognised the criticality of the cumulative gap. An estimate of this cumulative gap was made by the Tapas Majumdar Committee Report (1999) which computed that an average of Rs 13,700 crore per year (i.e. merely 54 paise out of Rs 100 of national income) would

be required for the next ten years in order to bring all out-of-school children to the formal school system. Fulfilling this cumulative gap within a specified time frame should be the non-negotiable objective of levying the cess. This, of course, would be in addition to the commitment of reaching the investment level of 6 per cent of GDP for the purpose of maintenance and further development of education. In doing this, the CMP will also take a clear policy stance against the farce of the multiple track system which includes alternative schooling, education guarantee centres, multi-grade teaching and "back to school camps", the latest addition being NCERT's proposal for starting correspondence courses for the 6-14 age group — all of this for children belonging to under-privileged sections.

The CMP makes no reference to the Common School System, a long-standing policy imperative to which the national education policy has committed itself thrice (1968, 1986 and 1992). Several misconceptions about the Common School System have been systematically promoted by private school lobbies. For instance, it is the farthest thing from a uniform school system. Rather, it lays the basis for responding to the rich geo-cultural diversity of the country. The UPA government may consider supporting a nation-wide debate on this issue. Advanced economies of the world, including USA, Canada, several European countries or Japan, were built on the foundation of a publicly-funded efficient school system that ensured education of equitable quality for all children. This sociological principle of educational planning, hitherto ignored in India, is the basis of the Common School System. It also flows out of the CMP's commitment to women empowerment and "full equality of opportunity, particularly in education and employment for SCs, STs, OBCs and religious minorities". Indeed, it is the only historical option before us. The CMP can ignore this principle only at grave risk to India's survival as a civilised nation.

The writer is a senior professor of education.

Desperate 'Act' Towards All Round Commercialisation of Higher Education*

By

Vijender Sharma

In the backdrop of "advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) and their deep penetration in the higher education sector, globalization of higher education and entry of foreign universities in the country to be partners of local institutions or to establish independent campuses, and steady decline in the financial support available from the Government, both at the Central and the State levels", the University Grants Commission (UGC) had, in June 2003, appointed an Expert Committee to conduct a review of the governance, organization and management of Universities in the country and to recommend a *Model Act* for Universities of the 21st century in India, with a view "to prepare the Indian University system for the future." The Committee consisted Prof. B S. Sonde, Former V.C., Goa University as Convenor, along with Prof. Ram Takwale, Former V.C., IGNOU, Prof. A. Gnanam, Former V.C., Pondicherry University and Prof, G. D. Sharma, Senior Fellow, NIEPA as members and Dr.(Mrs) Pankaj Mittal, Joint Secretary, UGC as Secretary of the Committee.

Ground for Suspicion

The Committee prepared a Concept Paper in October 2003 entitled "Towards Formulation of Model Act for Universities of the 21st Century in India." While Part I of the Paper covers 'Towards Guidelines for a Model Act', Part II of the Paper is a Questionnaire seeking responses from various stake holders of the University system in the country, including Schools/Departments/Colleges, Faculty/ Staff/ Students/ Alumni Associations, Central / State Government Departments, Educational Trusts, Employers and

Parents, individually/ collectively, to respond to the Questionnaire so that the their responses could be used for the formulation of a *Model Act*.

The then BJP-led NDA Government, since the time it came to power at the Centre, and the UGC took so many decisions crippling the system of higher education in the country. On none of the issues, the then Central Government or any of its agencies including the UGC had any debate or discussion with the academia or any stakeholders: students, parents, and people at large. All decisions were imposed by notifications and circulars. The then Minister for Human Resource and Development, Murali Manohar Joshi, had not given even a single second's time since 1998 to the Federation of Central Universities Teachers' Associations (FEDCUTA) and All India Federation of University and College Teachers' Organisation (AIFUCTO) to discuss any of the issues or their concerns and demands. The fact that this was the first time that all concerned were called upon to respond to the questionnaire so that the responses "could be used for the formulation of a *Model Act*" had given rise to the suspicion about the intention of the Central Government. Contents of the Concept Paper and telegraphically worded leading questions in the questionnaire which were to be answered in Yes or No confirmed the suspicion that this was a desperate act of the then Government towards all round commercialization of higher education in India.

Real Pressure

Having crippled the higher education system in India and other developing and transition countries, the World Bank had evolved a 'new role' for itself in the higher education sector through a new Report (2002). But the prescriptions for the reforms in the higher education system in this Report were the same that the World Bank had been giving since 1986. The previous BJP-led NDA Government responded promptly to the World Bank pressure through the UGC which issued a Concept Paper for a Model Act for all universities in October 2003.

The World Bank Report

The World Bank Report 'Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education' published in 2002 points out that the developing and transition countries are faced with new trends in the global environment that affect not only the shape and mode of operation but also the very purpose of tertiary education systems. Among the most critical dimensions of change are the convergent impacts of globalization, the increasing importance of knowledge as a main driver of growth, and the information and communication revolution. The challenges that the tertiary education systems of most developing and transition countries continue to face, the Report points out, are the need to expand tertiary education coverage in a sustainable way, inequalities of access and outcomes, problems of educational quality and relevance, and rigid governance structures and management practices.

Having witnessed large-scale protests from the students, teachers and people at large against the policies pursued by their governments, including Government of India, the World Bank is now shedding crocodile tears in order to create much bigger space for itself in these countries in the area of higher education. According to the Report, "The World Bank is commonly viewed as supporting only basic education; systematically advocating the reallocation of public expenditures from tertiary to basic education; promoting cost recovery and private sector expansion; and discouraging low-income countries from considering any investment in advanced human capital. Given these perceptions, the rapid changes taking place in the global environment, and the persistence of the traditional problems of tertiary education in developing and transition countries, *reexamining* the World Bank's policies and experiences in tertiary education has become a matter of urgency."

The World Bank, therefore, put emphasis on the emerging role of knowledge as a major driver of economic development, *appearance of new providers of tertiary education in a*

"borderless education" environment, the transformation of modes of delivery and organizational patterns in tertiary education as a result of the information and communication revolution, the rise of market forces in tertiary education and the emergence of a global market for advanced human capital and the recognition of the need for a balanced and comprehensive view of education as a holistic system that includes not only the human capital contribution of tertiary education but also its critical humanistic and social capital building dimensions and its role as an important global public good.

An Enabling Framework

In order to meet these challenges, the World Bank directed the governments of these countries to "put in place ***an enabling framework*** that encourages tertiary education institutions to be more innovative and more responsive to the needs of a globally competitive knowledge economy and to the changing labor market requirements for advanced human capital."

In contrast to its earlier prescriptions, the World Bank now preached, "Investments in tertiary education generate major external benefits that are crucial for knowledge-driven economic and social development. . . . Tertiary education facilitates nation building by promoting greater social cohesion, trust in social institutions, democratic participation and open debate, and appreciation of diversity in gender, ethnicity, religion, and social class. Furthermore, pluralistic and democratic societies depend on research and analysis that are fostered through social sciences and humanities programs. Improved health behaviours and outcomes also yield strong social benefits, and higher education is indispensable for training the needed health care professionals." The Report further points out that the tertiary education plays a key role in supporting basic and secondary education, thereby buttressing the economic externalities produced by these lower levels. Improved tertiary education is necessary for sustainable progress in basic education.

With the *diminishing* State funding of tertiary education, a coherent policy framework, an enabling regulatory environment, and appropriate financial incentives. Student mobility can be encouraged by developing open systems that offer recognition of relevant prior experience, degree equivalencies, credit transfer, tuition exchange schemes, access to national scholarships and student loans, and a comprehensive qualifications and lifelong-learning framework. The regulatory environment should be one, the World Bank suggests, that encourages the private sector to expand access to good-quality tertiary education. Rules for the establishment of new institutions, including private and virtual ones, should be restricted to outlining minimum quality requirements and should not constitute barriers to entry. In the public sector to revenue may be generated from institutional assets, students and their families, and donations from third party contributors.

Directions for Future Bank Support

The World Bank proposed to play a central role by facilitating policy dialogue and knowledge sharing, supporting reforms through *programme and project lending*, and *promoting an enabling framework* for the production of the global public goods crucial to the development of tertiary education.

The World Bank noted that reform proposals have been met with "fierce resistance and opposition." In the formulation of a long-term vision for the country's tertiary education system as a whole, it will "play a *catalytic role* by encouraging and facilitating the policy dialogue on tertiary education reforms. This can often be accomplished through preemptive information sharing and analytical work in support of national dialogue and goal-setting efforts, as well as through project preparation activities aimed at building stakeholder *consensus* during the project concept and appraisal phases. *The Bank can bring to the same table stakeholders who would not normally converse and work together.*"

The Model Act

The World Bank basically directed the governments of developing and transition countries to respond to the necessities of the globalisation, emerging new trends in the higher education sector mentioned above, and make an enabling framework common to the entire education system. In return, it promised to bring about consensus among the stakeholders so that new market-oriented policies are implemented and not opposed by anyone.

It is actually this background in which the then BJP-led NDA Government responded to World Bank pressure through the University Grants Commission (UGC) which issued a Concept Paper in October 2003 entitled "Towards Formulation of Model Act for Universities of the 21st Century in India" with a view "to prepare the Indian University system for the future."

The Concept Paper

The Concept Paper notes, "Indian Universities, like their counterparts elsewhere in the world, have been performing many additional functions now a days, e.g., undertaking sponsored R&D and continuing education, providing knowledge-based advice and consultancy, preparation / publication of educational material like books / study reports / research papers and extending services to society. Of late, the worldwide advances, particularly in new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), are greatly influencing the University system in the country. However, major issues like **size, access, equity, relevance, quality and resource constraints** continue to dominate the working of Indian Universities." Since the "Universities are becoming complex institutions", an appropriate strategy needs to be adopted "for their governance, organization and management."

Therefore, the Acts of Indian Universities should be changed "to bring in some uniformity in the working of Universities" through a **Model Act framework**, so that there is a "smooth

transition from the earlier teacher-centric focus to the required learner-centric educational processes and activities," and so that the Universities accept "*the challenges of globalization to offer high quality education and other services in a competitive manner*". The new Acts of Universities would be "flexible and responsive to rapid changes taking place in the society (*Read: market - Author*)." According to the Paper, the new common Act for all the universities would help the universities to benefit from ICT revolution and to "become competitive nationally and internationally" and help "India to become a *Knowledge Super Power* by the year 2020."

The UGC expects that "early adoption of this *Model Act* by Universities in the country will enable them to meet the *X-Plan Vision and Strategy* of UGC and to keep pace with the worldwide changes taking place so rapidly in higher education and research." This *Vision and Strategy* of the UGC is to prepare the Universities and institutions of higher education for privatization and commercialization, and to make them financially self-sufficient and respond to the market. This X-Plan document clearly states, "*In a way, India has partially privatized the higher education by initiating non-grantable teaching programmes and dual fees structure for professional subjects.*"

In the proposed new structure, the UGC would have increased role in order to "provide advice/ guidance to ensure the quality/ standard of higher education." It is stated that the success of a University depends not only on the Act, but also on its personnel, their sense of dedication, discipline and responsibility, and the traditions/ conventions they establish. Therefore, the teachers are being called upon to revisit the governance of Universities and the content of University education "as the content and teaching methodology have to keep pace with the explosive growth of knowledge."

The conventional Universities form a significant segment of the University system in India at present. They have a long standing, with most of them being multi-faculty institutions engaged in general education in faculties like Arts, Science, Commerce.

They have been suffering because of their reduced funding over the last several years. However, this is being conceded by the UGC for the first time. "While, University funding by Central/ State Governments has been a well-established tradition in the country", the Concept Paper points out, "*this practice is steadily declining now a days.*" The setting up of professional Universities (e.g., technical, medical, law) and deemed Universities (by Private/Joint Sector), the Paper notes "is relatively new in the country, with the latter category expanding rapidly in recent years. However, private Universities and virtual Universities are of very recent origin, and they are only at few locations at present. But, *due to the commercial nature of their activities, their number and nationwide spread are likely to increase in the coming years.* Foreign Universities in the country are yet very few in number being mostly located in bigger cities. But, with the globalization of higher education and increased emphasis being laid by them on professional courses, it is expected that this category will also expand rapidly in the coming years." In this era of rapid commercialization of higher education, "so far, only a small segment of the University system has exhibited its readiness to meet the challenges of the 21st century. This makes it necessary to look into this issue from all angles and *correct the situation* urgently, for all the Universities in the country to become Universities of the 21st century." This *correct situation* means that the Universities would be forced to change their character which the University community established in last several decades and respond to the market rather than the needs of the people at large.

Commercial and Corporate Cultures

The academic units like faculties, departments, colleges, schools are generally academic in their approach, the central administration manned by officials may not be so. It is likely to be of the bureaucratic type. Some times, the Paper points out, "this can result in difficulties, as academic decisions being based on committees' deliberations may not be always *easy* and *practical* for implementation by the concerned officials. In such situations, it is only the wisdom and positive approach of senior academics in the University hierarchy that can come to

the rescue of the system." What is being suggested is that the collective functioning through committees should be replaced by the so called 'wisdom and positive approach of senior academics.'

With the Universities being forced to take many additional functions in order to raise funds, the Paper points out that "two new cultures have now come up, viz., **commercial culture and corporate culture**. The former culture is useful to support activities like continuing education, testing and consultancy, distance education and publication / distribution of course material, which are important for revenue generation and time bound work. On the other hand, the latter culture emphasizes the leadership role provided by *senior academics/officials* and the top-down planning and monitoring practices which may be introduced by them in the functioning of the University." The distance and continuing education, which cater to the needs of the disadvantaged sections of the society, has been declared to be a commercial activity. And instead of democratic and collective governance of the Universities by the University community, the Corporate Culture is sought to be introduced with so called *senior academics* rescuing the system. Who would these so-called *senior academics* be? Undeserving careerists and failed teachers who are found in abundance to help the Government to implement its anti-people agenda for some gratification.

Learning is a personalized process not dependent on technology, whereas educating is a social process dependent on interactivities between learners and teachers, which may make use of tools and technologies. As a result, education has to keep pace with the worldwide changes and on-going ICT revolution. With the changing society, the teaching-learning process must also change. Therefore, teachers and academic communities have been called upon to play a central role. "This can be done under the **framework** of the University's Act, with built-in flexibility to introduce changes as and when necessary in response to its changing needs (*of the market – Author*)."

Revenue Generation

In view of "the on-going globalization in the higher education sector, *the steady reduction in Government funding of the Universities*, and the increasing influence of ICT on education" a generalized University of the 21st century in the country has to "perform multiple functions." In addition to already existing traditional functions, the *Model Act*, applicable to all the types of Universities in the country, would include "**the mobilization of financial resources to become self sufficient**" as one of its objects and would have statutory provisions for raising resources through:

1. Sponsored R &D projects funded, apart from Government agencies, by industries and companies,
2. Consultancy and testing services for "industries, companies and other institutions in India/abroad,
3. Preparing the outgoing students for National/State level competitive examinations, interviews, entrepreneurship, new careers and other opportunities, and
4. Creation and preparation of educational/ research material like Text/ Reference Books, Audio/ Video- tapes/ cassettes, floppies/ CDs.

Further, "for financial and physical resources generation/ mobilization from various sources, like Central/State Governments, Non-Governmental Organizations, International Funding Agencies, Philanthropists and other donors," the Universities would be allowed to set up a "**Company or Registered Society**", and **associate and collaborate "with the Private Sector."** Thus the *Vision and Strategy* of the UGC in times to come is not only that the Universities should respond to the market needs, but **the universities should become the part of the market and private sector by setting up companies and registered societies for revenue generation.** The fundamental task of the Universities to assimilate, create and disseminate knowledge is of least priority for the *Vision and Strategy* of the UGC.

In the wake of "*diminishing financial support from the Government*", lot of emphasis has been put, in the Concept Paper and the Questionnaire, on revenue generation and financial self-sufficiency. Therefore, one of the main functions of the Vice Chancellor would be "mobilizing financial and other resources." In order to help the Vice Chancellor, an additional post of Pro-Vice Chancellor, a senior academic with knowledge or experience of business or finance, would be created to take charge of resource generation and related aspects. There would be provisions for constituting various Boards for distance education, publication, sponsored research, consultancy, etc. that would help raise funds. In a market-model university, departments that make money, study money or attract money are given priority. Heads of universities and institutions of higher education: the Vice Chancellors, Directors, Principals, are now assuming the role of traveling salesmen to promote their programmes.

Distance Education

In the *Model Act*, common for all the Universities, emphasis would be on "distance education for the society at large, which would be provided using audio/video broadcasts and/or ICT and related new technologies *as against the earlier correspondence courses, now becoming obsolete.*" Main slogan of private and business universities world over "**Any time, Any where, Any discipline learning for Any one**" has been made the central slogan for the distance education programmes of the universities in India. Following the practices of business universities, students would be allowed to take courses of their choice from many Universities at a time with the facility of inter-institutional students' mobility by mutual credits transfer, and Degree/Diploma would be awarded jointly by Universities in partnership. For this purpose "State-wide /Country-wide *virtual classrooms* would be set up."

The distance education, described by the Concept Paper as a commercial activity, would be one of the sources of **revenue generation**. However, the marginalized and disadvantaged sections of the society who opt for the correspondence courses

would be kept out of this stream as well. Only those sections who can pay the fees for profit-making courses and have access to electronic media and the Internet would be able to enroll in these courses. In order to make distance education as the main system of education the Concept Paper recommended that one of objects of the common *Act* should be "smooth transition from the earlier teacher-centric focus to the required *learner-centric educational processes and activities*." The proposed transition to learner-centric system would actually come out to be computer-centric system, which would be the main system for distance education.

Depoliticisation of Universities

Ambani and Birla had recommended to the Prime Minister in April 2000 that a legislation should be enacted "*banning any form of political activity on campuses of universities and educational institutions*." Responding to the requirement of these businessmen and since the Universities are proposed to be the part of market and private sector, the new *Act* would have statutory provision "for maintaining campus peace and harmony" and good public relations with respect to all its constituents, like students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, funding agencies, press/media, Government, UGC and society at large. For peace and harmony, even the normal trade union activities will not be allowed. This is clear from the questionnaire wherein responses have been invited on "Depoliticisation of the campus for a healthy academic environment."

Political Control of All Universities

There may be some flexibility "to maintain some variation in the *University Acts* to facilitate regional emphasis." The Concept Paper is "against curtailing the power and position of the Chancellors (*Governors of States at present - Author*)". In the new *Act*, President of India or Governor of the State would discharge the constitutional responsibilities relating to the Central/State University as Visitor and they would have '*powers of discretion and judgment*' in various functions relating to the University, including the appointment of the Chancellor and Vice

Chancellor and their duties and responsibilities, and deciding appeals, petitions, representations, etc. Further, though the universities will not be funded by the governments, but they would be controlled through Visitors (Governors) who are political appointees of the party in power at the Centre.

In order to facilitate networked learning centres distributed all over the country and even abroad, the jurisdiction of the Universities will not be relevant any more. The Executive (Management) Council, the highest authority with powers to frame Statutes/ Ordinances/ Regulations would have only Ex-Officio and nominated members and the provisions of elected representatives on this body would be withdrawn.

Conclusion

There are five points that emerge from the exercise of formulating the *Model Act*, common for all the universities, which show the intention of the Central Government and UGC:

- 1) They want to completely withdraw from the funding of the universities, colleges and institutions of higher educations.
- 2) They want the universities and institutions of higher education to prepare themselves to be part of globalisation and face the consequences in the event of India becoming part of General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and throws open its higher education sector to the transnational providers of education for profit-making.
- 3) Therefore, they want that the universities and institutions of higher education should not be dependent on the funding from the Government and its agencies.
- 4) That is why, they are trying to make an *Act* with the provisions by which the universities and institutions of higher education in India can do and become part of the business.

- 5) As a result, a vast majority of students who come from the disadvantaged and weaker sections and the lower middle class would be excluded from the benefits of higher education because these sections cannot bear the exorbitant cost of education.

In order to create an environment for these purposes, the then BJP-led NDA Government and UGC were working overtime for last several years by reducing state funding of and limiting access to higher education, heavy cost recovery, loans to students, terming higher education as a non-merit good, forcing assessment and accreditation of institutions, autonomous status to colleges, starting self-financing courses and by promoting self-financing institutions, increased workload of teachers and non-teaching employees, contractual appointments and privatization and commercialisation of higher education, etc. It was clearly understood by all stakeholders that if the *Model Act* was allowed to be adopted an orderly development of higher education in India in the 21st century would not take place. No longer will truth be sought through education, except whatever suits the corporate interests.

Therefore, the Questionnaire attached to the Concept Paper was not responded to by the people in the way the then Central Government and the UGC wanted. Rather a detailed critique of and opposition to the Government policy of privatization and commercialization of higher education under the dictates of the World Bank, WTO and GATS was the response of the teachers, students, parents and all stakeholders in higher education.

As citizens of India, we have to ensure that the new UPA Government takes care of public interests and act to protect public services like health and education from the predatory elements that preach the ideology of the marketplace as the solution to every issue. The attempt to introduce a *Model Act* was a desperate attempt of the BJP-led NDA Government towards all round commercialization of higher education in the country. **The UPA government must withdraw this Concept**

Paper on Model Act so that the process of dismantling the higher education system in the country is reversed.

*This is the revised and combined article of three articles which were published in the weekly organ of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) 'People's Democracy' as follows:

1. "UGC'S MODEL ACT FOR 21ST CENTURY UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA: Desperate 'Act' For Commercialisation of Higher Education - 1", Vol. 27, No. 51, 21.12.2003
2. "UGC'S MODEL ACT FOR 21ST CENTURY UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA: Desperate 'Act' For Commercialisation of Higher Education - 2", Vol. 27, No. 52, 28.12.2003
3. "Withdraw UGC's Model Act For All Universities", Vol. 28, NO. 30, 25.07.2004

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WHAT DOES THE BUDGET 2004-2005 HAVE FOR CHILDREN?

EXTRACTS RELATING TO THE EDUCATION SECTOR



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INDIA'S CHILDREN AND THE UNION BUDGET 2004-05

There are over 40 crore children (0-18 years) in India — more than 40 per cent of the country's population. Of these 19 crore are between 6-14 years. They are all our young citizens. Needless to say, development programmes that are meant for the society as a whole are also going to benefit children, as they will to all other sections of society. However, from time-to-time the government makes special commitments to children. Budget analysis enables us to assess how far the policy and programme commitments made specifically to children and the goals set for them by the government are translated into financial commitments. Indeed, are we putting our money where our mouth is? After all the budget of any country is a reflection of its political and economic priorities.

'Child Budget' is not a separate budget. It is merely an attempt to disaggregate from the overall allocation made, those made specifically for programmes that benefit children directly.

This is a quick analysis of the budgetary allocations made specifically for children based on the budget presented by the Finance Minister Shri P. Chidambaram [Expenditure Budget Vols. I & II; Annual Reports of concerned ministries].

Who is a child?

For purposes of this 'Child Budget' analysis, child has been defined in consonance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000. For practical purposes we disaggregate all programmes and schemes, from various ministries/departments, that are meant for persons below the age of 18 years.

The Finance Bill presented by the Finance Minister has allocated only 2.44% of its total budget estimates for children. Will this be enough to meet the needs of 40% of the total population?

Table 1 : Share of Children in the Union Budget

(In percentage)

Year	Child Development*	Child Health**	Education***	Child Protection****	Total
2003-04	0.49	0.34	1.47	0.025	2.33
2004-05	0.42	0.42	1.57	0.03	2.44

Source: GOI Expenditure Budget 2003-04, 2004-05 (Vols 1&2).

* Min. of HRD, Min. of YA&S. ** Min. of H &FW.

*** Min. of HRD, Min. of SJ&E, and Min. of TA. ****Min. of SJ&E, Min. of Lab.

Table 2: Percentage Share of Various Sectors in the Total Child Budget

Year	Total Child Budget	%Share of Child Development	% Share of Child Health	% Share of Education	%Share of Child Protection
2003-04	10234.73	21.4	14.7	62.9	1.0
2004-05	11678.02	17.3	17.3	64.2	1.2

Source: GOI Expenditure Budget 2003-04, 2004-05 (Vols 1&2); Min. of HRD, Min. of YA&S, Min. of H &FW, Min. of SJ&E, Min. of TA, Min. of Lab.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

The analysis is based on budget allocations made by the Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resources Development, which is the nodal agency for child development. However, it also includes budget allocations made by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, as some of its programmes contribute to the holistic development and growth of children, and have therefore been included in this sector (The detailed descriptions of the programmes and schemes are in Annexure 1*). Needless to say, the largest allocation is for ICDS, which is the most important programme addressing the needs of children in the 0-6 age group, who have been left out of the ambit of the 86th Constitutional Amendment making education a fundamental right only for the 6-14 year olds.

* Not included here.

GOALS SET BY	TARGET GOALS
National Policy for Children 1974	Policy of the state to provide adequate services to children both, before and after birth, . . . to ensure full physical, mental and social development.
National Policy on Education 1986	Focus on Early Childhood Care and Education; recognises and reiterates the need for interventions for the crucial 0-6 age group.
National Plan of Action 1992	Reduction in severe and moderate malnutrition among under-5 children by half between 1990 and the year 2000 A.D. Reduction in incidence of low birth weight babies (2.5 kg or less). Control of Vitamin A deficiency and its consequence. Expansion of early childhood development activities including appropriate low-cost family and community-based interventions.
10th Five-Year Plan (2002-07)	Universalisation of ICDS will be achieved during the Tenth Plan in all the 5652 blocks of the country.

Table 3: Share of Child Development in Union Budget¹

(In Crore Rs)

	2002-03 (BE)	2002-03 (RE)	2003-04 (BE)	2003-04 (RE)	2004-05 (BE)
1. Integrated Child Dev. Services	3971.72	3725.72	4119.82	3800.46	3946.44
2. Day Care Centres	25.80	22.10	32.50	21.40	41.00
3. Contribution to UNICEF	3.89	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10
4. National Institute of Public Cooperation & Child Development	11.50	8.50	10.70	10.20	11.75
5. Other Schemes	12.19	6.13	8.69	4.62	14.61
6. Balika Samridhi Yojana	0.00	1.80	13.50	0.01	0.03
Child Development Budget - Total	1846.10	1768.35	2189.31	1840.79	2017.93
Union Budget - Total	410309.47	404013.25	43879.25	474254.67	477829.04
Child Dev. Budget as %age of total Union Budget	0.450	0.438	0.499	0.388	0.422

Source: DWCD, Min of HRD, GOI Expenditure Budget 2003-04, 2004-05 (Vols 1&2).

¹ Details of programmes and schemes are in Annexure 1 (not included here).

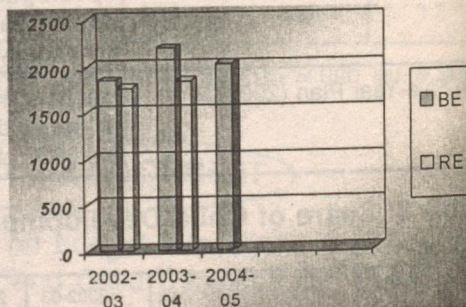
Investing in early years of child's life is crucial for a number of reasons. These are the years in which a child's cognitive, physical, language and social development are at its peak. Provision of childcare is linked to women being able to go to work and older siblings being able to go to school. Investing in Early Childhood Care and Development is also linked to lowering infant mortality and malnutrition rates.

When elementary education for the 6-14 year age group was made a fundamental right, the government promised that every effort would be made to address the needs of the 0-6 age group. The Common Minimum programme of the UPA government promised to universalise the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme to provide a functional anganwadi in every settlement and ensure full coverage for all children.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

- As a proportion of this year's total budgetary allocations, the allocation on Child Development Programmes and Schemes is only 0.42% and 17.3% of the total child budget.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT BUDGET
(0-18 YEARS)



- 16 crore children are below the age of 6 years
- Even by conservative estimates, of all the children in the 0-6 age group, 5 crore are below the poverty line
- Their mortality rate, low weight at birth and health status remains cause for concern
- Although the need for early intervention in early childhood care and education (ECCE) is well established, they have been left out of the 86th amendment of the Constitution making education free and compulsory
- Intervention in ECCE is closely linked to the health and empowerment of the mother

- *The falling sex ratio in the 0-6 age group has raised serious concerns about their right to survival*
- *According to FORCES, * crèches for providing day care services are drastically suffering cuts. While 10 years ago 9788 crèches had been sanctioned, the crèches sanctioned subsequently (94222 in 2002-03) were not proportionate to the growth in population. In fact there was a decrease witnessed.*

- According to the Government, ICDS is especially targeted towards the disadvantaged groups. The current allocation (a decline of 8.2% from previous year) may not be sufficient to universalise ICDS even for the children below poverty line, especially because of the closure of the World Bank assisted projects and the ICDS training programme. How will the deficit be met? If the CMP's promise of universalisation of ICDS services is to be realised, there will be need for more trained anganwadi workers as well as running costs for the ICDS centres.
- The survival of children is one of the first and most basic of all rights. The falling sex ratio have amply displayed that the very survival of the girl child is at stake. It was to address the discrimination faced by the girl child that 'Balika Samriddhi Yojana' was launched with great fanfare in 1997 by the then Prime Minister of India, Shri. I. K. Gujral and then revised in 1999. It was his gift to the girl child. While the Centre launched 'Balika Samriddhi Yojana', many of the states had their own similar schemes and programmes. Our decadal analysis in 2000 revealed that the allocation for this scheme had shown full utilisation only in its first year. Subsequent expenditure figures had shown under-utilisation. In the Tenth Plan, the government had decided to transfer this scheme to the State Governments, and therefore the 2002-03 budget showed zero allocation initially i.e. in the Budget Estimates (BE), which was later revised during the year to make some allocation in the Revised Estimates (RE). Last year's BE for this scheme suddenly showed a steep increase to Rs. 13.50 crore, with a drastic

fall in the RE. This year only 0.03 crore have been earmarked for it. This is clearly an example of lack of serious thinking, analysis and co-ordination within the government.

Child Education

The budget of Child Education has been drawn out of Department of Elementary Education and Literacy and Department of Women and Child Development (Ministry of Human Resources Development) – the Departments that are primarily responsible for Child Education. Some schemes from Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and Ministry of Tribal Affairs have also been taken into account, that are linked with the school system and contribute directly towards Child Education.

GOALS SET BY	TARGET GOALS
Constitution of India	Free compulsory education for all children upto 14 years by 1960.
National Policy for Education (NPE) (1986)	All children having attained 11 years age by 1990 will complete 5 years of schooling. By 1995 all children upto 14 years will be provided free and compulsory education.
National Policy for Education (NPE) (modified in 1992) and the Programme of Action	Universal Primary Education by 1995, which was subsequently, shifted 2000.
National Plan of Action, 1992	'... by the end of the current century'.
Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan 2001-02	All children in school, Education Guarantee Centre, Alternate School, Back to School Camp by 2003. 5 years of primary schooling for All children by 2007. 8 Years of Schooling and Universal Retention by 2010.
10th Five-Year Plan (2002-07)	All children in school by 2003. All children to complete 5 years of schooling by 2007.

The Finance Minister in his budget speech has promised the following:

- Empowering the people, especially poor, with universal access.
- Provide 'Basic Education' and make sure that the child remains in school for at least 8 years.
- Make sure child is not hungry while she or he is in school.
- 2% cess that will yield about Rs. 4000-5000 crore in a year. This will be earmarked for education.
- Cooked mid-day meal for primary school children.
- Technical Education - Upgrade 500 ITIs over the next 5 years at the rate of 100 ITIs a year.

Table 4: Share of Child Education in Union Budget²

(In Crore Rs.)

	2002-03 (BE)	2002-03 (RE)	2003-04 (BE)	2003-04 (RE)	2004-05 (BE)
Elementary Education (HRD)					
1. District Primary Education Programeme	1330.00	1237.00	1200.00	800.00	600.00
2. Joint GOI-UN Prog. for Primary Education	20.00	13.50	5.00	1.50	—
3. Kasturba Gandhi Swantantra Vidyalaya	7.65	0.02	8.50	1.0	100.00
4. Lok Jumbish	60.00	60.00	70.00	125.00	29.41
5. Mahila Samakhya	20.00	9.00	30.00	14.00	30.00
6. National Bal Bhavan, N.Delhi	6.45	5.90	6.40	4.83	7.25
7. National Council of Teacher Education	4.50	4.50	6.25	5.82	7.75
8. NFE and Alternative Innovative Education	1.80	9.80	0.00	0.00	0.00
9. Nutritional Support to Primary Education	1057.50	1021.50	1175.00	1375.00	1675.00
10. Operation Black Board	58.50	20.09	0.00	0.00	0.00
11. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan	1512.00	1220.03	1951.25	2732.32	3057.08
12. Shiksha Karmi Project in Rajasthan	40.00	15.02	10.00	10.00	39.34
13. Strengthening of Teacher Training Institute	186.30	148.01	207.00	150.00	207.00
(A) Elementary Edu.:Sub.Total	4304.70	3764.37	4669.40	5219.47	5752.53
Secondary Education(HRD)					
14. Access with Equity	18.00	10.00	20.00	16.51	30.00
15. Central Tibetan Schools Society Admn.	17.41	15.20	16.00	15.97	16.40
16. Information Commn. Technologies	99.90	24.90	111.00	25.00	97.00
17. Integrated Education for Disabled Children	31.50	31.50	35.00	38.50	39.00

² Details of programmes and schemes are in Anexure3

	2002-03 (BE)	2002-03 (RE)	2003-04 (BE)	2003-04 (RE)	2004-05 (BE)
18. Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan	621.27	621.27	644.00	661.57	644.49
19. NCERT	47.60	50.05	50.00	54.00	55.00
20. National Open School	13.50	8.00	15.00	7.00	7.00
21. National Scholarship Scheme	9.55	1.95	10.18	2.23	9.22
22. Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti	446.60	446.60	490.00	569.56	523.00
23. Other Programmes	9.43	3.33	1.38	1.90	2.38
24. Population Education Project	2.03	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
25. Quality Improvement in Schools	20.70	20.70	26.00	7.80	20.00
(B) Secondary Education: Sub.Total Elem./Sec. Ed. (Other Ministries)	1337.49	1234.50	1418.56	1400.04	1443.49
26. Pre-matric Scholarship Scheme	14.50	12.50	14.50	10.00	16.00
27. UNDP Asst.-Children with Disabilities	2.37	2.00	1.00	1.00	0.3
28. Girls Hostels	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	22.0
29. Boys Hostels	23.00	23.00	23.00	33.00	26.0
30. Other Programmes for welfare of SC	44.20	7.70	75.50	21.50	35.70
31. Common Programme-SC, ST & OBC	93.41	74.51	99.66	86.83	74.84
32. Ashram Schools in Tribal Sub-Plan Area	14.00	10.00	14.00	7.00	14.00
33. Schemes - PMS, Book Bank etc.	68.49	38.09	56.49	51.28	65.49
34. Schemes of Hostel for ST Girls and Boys	24.00	14.00	24.00	19.38	24.00
35. Grant-Rural Sch'l for Dev. of Playfield	3.00	3.00	3.60	3.60	4.50
36. Incentives - Prom'n of Sports Activities	5.09	2.23	15.06	9.76	9.00
(C) Education (Other Min.) Sub Total	312.06	207.03	346.81	263.35	291.83
(D) Child Education-Total	5954.25	5205.90	6434.77	6882.86	7497.07
Union Budget - Total	410309.47	404013.25	438795.07	474254.67	477829.04
Child Ed. as %age of Union Budget	1.45	1.29	1.47	1.45	1.57

Source: GOI Expenditure Budget 2003-04, 2004-05 (Vols 1&2)

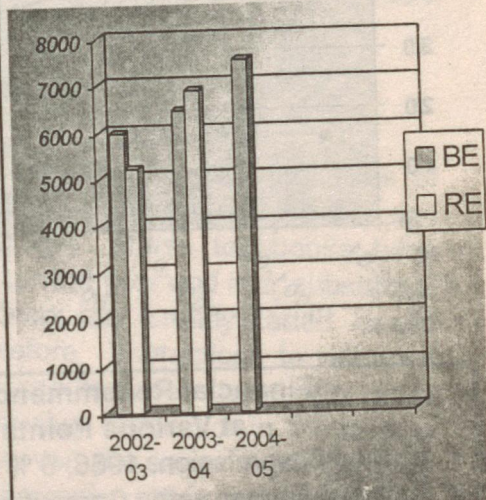
Note : Items 1-13 under Dept. of Elementary Education & Lit., Min. of HRD
 Items 14-25 under Dept. of Secondary & Higher Education, Min. of HRD; Items
 26-31 under Min. of SJE
 Items 32-34 under Min. of Tribal Affairs; Items 35,36 under Min. of YA&S.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

- Although there is a 16% increase in commitment towards provision of resources for universalisation of elementary education, and education as a whole, can the money available meet the requirement? This increase must be also seen against 6% inflation.

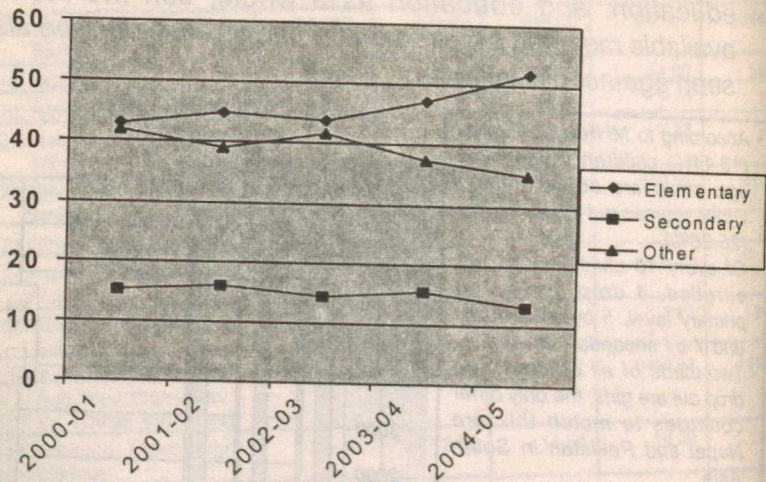
- According to MHRD 3.54 crore (18.44%) children in the 6-14 age group are out of school. Other sources put it at 4.8 crore (25.26%).
- Of every 10 children who are enrolled, 4 drop out at the primary level, 5 by elementary and 7 by secondary level.
- Two-thirds of all children who drop out are girls; the only other countries to match this are Nepal and Pakistan in South Asia.
- India has the highest number of child labourers in the world.
- The Education For All (EFA) monitoring report, released by UNESCO on 6 November 2003, cautioned that India is 'at risk of not achieving the goal by 2015'.

EDUCATION BUDGET
(6-18 years)



- It is indeed interesting to point out that the current Government's commitment to allocate 6% of the GDP is only a reiteration of a recommendation that was made in 1966 as per the requirements at that time. Is this sufficient even today?
- More than 50% share of the allocations of the education ministry is for elementary education. But is it still enough to ensure that all children out of school are in school? GOI estimates 3.54 crore out-of-school children in the 6-14 age group. As per Saikia Committee's recommendations (1997) at least Rs. 3355.92 crore is required to send these children to school – this is in addition to the money required for those already in school. In 2003-04, the allocation was Rs.4645.3 crore. Using this as base year, the requirement in 2004-05 is Rs.8001.22 crore against which Rs.5752.00 crore is allocated! Will the 2% cess cover the deficit?

Percentage Share of Elementary, Secondary and Higher Education in the Education Budget (Ministry of HRD)



Financial Recommendations Made at Various Points of Time

- Kothari Commission, 1966: 6 % of GNP for education
- Acharya Ramamurthy Committee, 1990: Should exceed 6% of GNP
- CAGE, 1991: The practice of treating education as a residual sector in the matter of allocating resources
- National Policy on Education 1986: From 8th Plan onwards outlay on education will uniformly exceed 6%
- Saikia Committee, 1997: An additional investment of Rs. 40,000 crore in the next five years, i.e. an additional Rs.8000 crore per annum
- Tapas Majumdar Committee, 1999: An additional Rs.1,36,000 crore over 10 years ending 2007-08, i.e. Rs.13,600 crore per year
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: Rs. 98,000 crore for 10 years
- 93rd Constitution Amendment Bill financial memorandum: Rs. 9800 crore per year
- Tenth Five Year Plan: Rs. 55-60 thousand crore over 5 years
- CMP of UPA Government, 2004: 6% of GNP

F.11-16/2004. Sch.4

Government of India

Ministry of Human Resource Development
Department of Secondary & Higher Education

Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi,
the 12th June, 2004.

ORDER

The issues of communalisation and inadequacies of history textbooks of the NCERT have engaged public and academic attention for a long time. These text-books have been mostly printed for the current year and in a substantial number of schools teaching work has already started, based on these books. It is, therefore, impractical to withdraw these books at this stage and replace them with more appropriate books without causing dislocation in the studies of millions of students. However, the same impracticability should not result in our children learning either communal views or distorted facts of history. Even as the processes are initiated to address the long term remedial measures, including re-constitution of Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) and the initiation of the process of curriculum framework review, as a short term measure, it has been considered necessary to do a quick review of these books by a panel of eminent historians of impeccable credentials, to suggest what needs to be done in the short term. If they so recommend, the Government will direct the NCERT and the CBSE to issue appropriate directions to the teachers to transact the curriculum as per those recommendations. In particular, the recommendations should be for removing distorted and communally biased portions and for inclusion of short passages which will fill in the gaps that some of these books are supposed to be having or could develop after the removal of the aforesaid mentioned passages. In order to advise on these issues the Government has constituted the following panel of historians :

(i) **Prof. S. Settar**

Currently Dr. S. Radhakrishnan visiting Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore and formerly the Chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research. Prof. Settar is a distinguished historian of Ancient India.

(ii) **Prof. J. S. Grewal**

Prof. Grewal, among various positions held, has also served as Vice-Chancellor of Guru Nank Dev University and as the Director of Indian Institute of Advanced Studies at Shimla. He is distinguished historian of the medieval period and the foremost scholar of Sikh history.

(iii) **Prof. Barun De**

An eminent historian of modern India. Has studied at Kolkata, Oxford and Burdwan Universities and IIM, Kolkata. He was the founder Director of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute for Asian Studies, Kolkata. He has several important publications to his credit.

The three distinguished historians have been requested by the Government to submit their recommendations at the earliest so that the interventions could be made, if necessary, as early as possible, in the academic session that has already started in some schools in the country. Joint Secretary (School Education) in the Ministry of Human Resource Development will provide secretariat and logistics support to this group.

(O. Nabakishore Singh)
Director

LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO. 106
TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.07.2004

NCERT Books

*106. SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN
SHRI TATHAGATA SATPATHY

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the Government has constituted a three member committee of eminent historians to review the existing NCERT school history books along with other subjects;
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the terms and conditions of the committee;
- (c) whether the existing history books would be studied by the students for the academic year 2004-2005;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps being taken to protect students' future in view of changes in the textbooks ?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE
DEVELOPMENT
(SHRI ARJUN SINGH)

(a) to (e) : A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN PARTS (a) to (e) OF THE REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 106 BY SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPA AND SHRI TATHAGATA SATPATHY REGARDING NCERT BOOKS DUE FOR ANSWER ON 13TH JULY, 2004.

(a) & (e) Yes, Sir. The panel comprises three eminent historians, namely, Prof. S. Settar, currently Dr. S. Radhakrishnan visiting Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore and formerly the Chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research, Prof. J. S. Grewal, former Vice-Chancellor of Guru Nank Dev University and former Director of Indian Institute of Advanced Studies at Shimla and Prof. Barun De, an eminent historian of modern India and first Director of the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute for Asian Studies, Kolkata.

The Terms of Reference of the Panel were as follows :

"The issues of communalization and inadequacies of history textbooks of the NCERT have engaged public and academic attention for a long time. These textbooks have been mostly printed for the current year and in a substantial number of schools teaching work has already started, based on these books. It is, therefore, impractical to withdraw these books at this stage and replace them with more appropriate books without causing dislocation in the studies of millions of students. However, the same impracticability should not result in our children learning either communal views or distorted facts of history. Even as the processes are initiated to address the long term remedial measures, including reconstitution of Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) and the initiation of the process of curriculum frame-work review, as a short term. If they so recommend, the Government will direct the NCERT and the CBSE to issue appropriate directions to the teachers to transact the curriculum as per those recommendations. In particular, the recommendations should be for removing distorted

and communally biased portions and for inclusion of short passages which will fill in the gaps that some of these books are supposed to be having or could develop after the removal of the aforesaid mentioned passages. The three distinguished historians have been requested by the Government to submit their recommendations at the earliest so that the interventions could be made, if necessary, as early as possible, in the academic session that has already started in some schools in the country. Joint Secretary (School Education) in the Ministry of Human Resource Development will provide secretariat and logistics support to this group."

The panel has submitted its report. I regret to inform the House that the complaints made about the errors and biased nature of the books, have been found to be correct by the panel.

Among other things, the report brings out the following :

The textbooks prepared since 2000 are 'so full of errors and sub-standard' that the panel finds it impossible to recommend their continuation. The errors are so many that rectification of each one of them is almost impossible.

It also states that there is a common strand of bias that runs through the entire series. This bias gives more weight to Hindu religious practices and revival movements distinguished from other religious or modernizing traditions that have been, in the last one thousand years, as much, a part of India's composite culture as the ones of earlier origin.

They, therefore, propose that a list of alternative reading material viz. books prepared by private publishers may be recommended for students of Class VI to X for the current academic year till alternative material prepared, through due process, is prepared by the NCERT in time for the next academic year.

The Panel is aware of the fact that alternative material is unavailable for classes XI and XII at present. The three members have made suggestions that either on the existing books or on reviving the old books, it would be necessary to issue proper advisories to teachers. Whereas, Prof. Barun De has suggested that, the book on 'Modern India' by Bipan Chandra for Class XII should be revived, if necessary, by updating it. Prof. Grewal has similarly suggested that the book on 'Medieval India' by Satish Chandra should be revived with a proper advisory. For the 'Ancient Period', Prof. Settar has suggested further scouting for alternative reading material.

The findings of the Committee have put the Government in a very difficult situation. On the one hand, because the panel has found the books to be of unacceptable quality and content, it is not appropriate to continue with them. On the other, the academic session has begun quite some time back in some schools and it would be unfair to students and teachers to be asked to use different textbooks at this late stage. Making available alternative text throughout the country will also pose serious problems of logistics and cannot be arranged in a satisfactory manner till very late in the academic session. At the moment, the Government is trying to address this serious dilemma which has been caused by the distortion of history books.

The recommendations of the panel of historians will be put up for consideration of the Executive Committee (EC) of the NCERT in its meeting on the 14th July, 2004. While taking a decision, the EC will no doubt keep the interest of students as their foremost concern.

STATEMENT IN LOK SABHA BY
MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

20.07.2004

While answering the Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 106 on 13th July, 2004, I had reported on the findings of the panel of three eminent historians, on the text books of History prepared by the NCERT. I had then promised that the recommendations of the panel will be put up for consideration of the Executive Committee (EC) of the NCERT and had hoped that the EC will no doubt keep the interest of students as their foremost concern.

The report of the panel was accordingly considered by the EC for two days and they have taken the following decisions :-

"The Executive Committee accepted the report of the Committee of the Historians, Prof. S. Settar, Prof. J. S. Grewal and Prof. Barun De in so far as their finding that the history books were biased, badly written and full of inaccuracies rendering them unsuitable for continuation.

In view of the above, it was decided that from the academic session 2005-06, the earlier books of history will be restored with appropriate modifications in line with the existing curriculum and minor corrections wherever required.

Because of the already advanced stage of the current academic session, it was, unfortunately, not practical to change all the books at this stage. It was, however, decided that the NCERT text books which were replaced by present text books will be printed in sufficient numbers to enable at least 5 copies to be sent free to each school taking the CBSE syllabus. These books would also be available in the market for purchase. These books could be used by teachers and students for reference.

A series of workshops and training would be organized for teachers to help them transact the curriculum with the current textbooks and reference to the old books, for a proper understanding of the issues in class room teaching.

A short advisory should be expeditiously issued by the NCERT in close consultation with school teachers and historians to help them develop an appropriate perspective in teaching.

In accordance with these decisions, the HRD Ministry will issue appropriate directions to the CBSE to suitably guide the question paper setters and evaluators. The NCERT and CBSE could constitute joint teams for this purpose.

The NCERT will forthwith take-up the revision of the National Curriculum Framework in conformity with all the laid down and by conventionally established procedure.

The Committee was also deeply concerned about the quality and content of textbooks other than in History. While it expected that the proposed curriculum framework review will take care of the concerns in the medium term, it was important that all the text books are subjected through a quick review to take corrective steps wherever required, before the next academic session.

The Director, NCERT is authorized to work out all the operational details of effective and timely implementation of the above decisions.”

The Government are in agreement with the decisions of the Executive Committee of NCERT. I understand the anguish of the Hon'ble members of this House, and more acutely aware of the anxieties of students, teachers and the parents of children on this issue. The Executive Committee of the NCERT have deliberated on this issue in great depth and full understanding of the issues. They have given their decision which is optimum and comprehensive in the given circumstances. We hope that such a sorry episode in our academic history will help us to evolve a consensus by which the sanctity of academic institutions and processes are not compromised and no one is allowed to cynically play with the future of our children and diminish in any way, the idea of India that took shape during our freedom struggle and is so sacredly enshrined in the Constitution of India.

Government of India
Ministry of Human Resource Development
Department of Secondary & Higher Education

B. S. Baswan
Education Secretary

Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi,
the 21st July, 2004.

D.O.No.11-17/2004-Sch.4

Dear Professor Dikshit,

The National Policy on Education 1986, as modified in 1992, envisages the following:

"11.5 The implementation of the various parameters of the New Policy must be reviewed every five years. Appraisals at short intervals will also be made to ascertain the progress of implementation and trends emerging from time to time".

2. The Programme of Action (POA) 1992, prepared under the National Policy on Education 1986 lays down some of the concerns to be addressed through the review. Your attention is drawn to Chapter 8 of the POA.

3. Since the present curriculum framework was released four years ago, it is time to initiate the process of review and renewal of the curriculum. The NCERT may initiate action for curriculum renewal.

4. While undertaking the review, you may kindly ensure that the processes as laid down or that have evolved over a period of time, are not violated. You are aware of the criticism regarding the short-circuiting and the inadequacies of procedures followed during the finalization of the earlier review.

5. The textbooks of the NCERT have drawn serious academic criticism during the last few years. You are already in the process of handling the controversy regarding the History books. While understating the present review, you may like to address the question of how the books emanating from a new curriculum framework could be insulated from such distortions.

6. While undertaking the review, we are sure you would take into account the Yashpal Committee report on 'Learning Without Burden' and chapter 8 of the POA.

7. The NCFSE should always be in harmony with the idea of India, as enshrined in its Constitution. It could be worthwhile to keep reminding everyone associated with the review of the following words in which the noble idea of India has been given in the Preamble to the Constitution:

"WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation....."

8. We are confident that the formulation of the new NCFSE will generate enthusiasm among the academic community and the wider civil society. You may accordingly set in motion all the attendant activities for this purpose.

With regards and best wishes for this venture,

sd./-

[B.S.Baswan]

Prof. H. P. Dixit
Director, NCERT
National Council for Education, Research and Training,
17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg,
New Delhi – 110 016.

**STATEMENT OF SHRI ARJUN SINGH,
UNION MINISTER OF HRD, AT THE CONCLUDING
SESSION OF THE CABE MEETING (11.08.2004)**

Various Hon. Members have raised a range of issues and given very important suggestions. It is important that we follow up on each of these ideas. While we at the Ministry level and those with the various organizations of the Ministry, which deal with some of these issues would be taking up these suggestions for active consideration immediately, it is also necessary to utilize these suggestions and insights for medium and long-term policy perspectives.

The CABE has in the past constituted Committees for some important issues. I propose to constitute the following committees for some of the critical issues which have emerged from these deliberations :

- 1) CABE Committee on Free and Compulsory Education Bill. The Committee will also address other issues connected with elementary Education. I will request Shri Kapil Sibbal, MoS. Science and Technology to chair this Committee.
- 2) CABE Committee on Girls Education and the Common School System. I will request Shri Tarun Gogoi, CM Assam to chair this Committee.
- 3) CABE Committee on Universalisation of Secondary Education. I will request Shri Ghanshyam Tiwari, Education Minister, Rajasthan to chair this Committee.
- 4) CABE Committee on Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions. I will request Shri Kanti Biswas, Education Minister, West Bengal to chair this Committee.
- 5) CABE Committee on Integration of Culture Education in the School Curriculum. I will request Prof. U. R. Ananthamoorthy to Chair this Committee.

- 6) CABE Committee on Regulatory Mechanism for the Text books and parallel text books taught in school out side the Government System. I will request Prof. Zoya Hassan and Prof. Gopal Guru to co-chair this committee.
- 7) CABE Committee on Financing of Higher and Technical Education. I will request Prof. Bhalchandra Mungekar, Member, Planning Commission, to Chair this Committee.

With your permission I will announce the other members on these committees later. We will also co-opt some other experts on these committees. The Committees should give their reports within 6 months. Some committees could take a little longer.

Kumbakonam School Tragedy in Tamil Nadu

Statement by a few concerned citizens

We, the citizens concerned about children and their education, are greatly shocked and deeply grieved at the tragic loss of innocent young lives in a terrible fire mishap in a school in Kumbakonam.

We are particularly disturbed to learn that one unaided and two aided schools were allowed to function in one and the same building, flouting all norms. We are shocked at the callous and indifferent manner in which the Noon Meal Centre was permitted to function. The regulatory authority seems to have hardly functioned.

While the unaided schools, like the Kumbakonam school, have been permitted to function with no standards or accountability, we understand that similar conditions prevail in a large number of Government, local body and aided schools too.

This great tragedy has sent shock waves throughout the country and has mandated the need for self-introspection to take immediate steps for reviewing not only the safety dimensions in schools but also other aspects such as provision of drinking water, sanitary facilities etc.

In this context we appreciate the measures the Govt, of Tamil Nadu has been taking, in the wake of the tragedy, to ensure that safety norms are enforced in schools in future. We also welcome the announcement made that a judicial commission is being set up to enquire into all aspects of the tragedy and also to recommend measures to prevent recurrence of such tragedies in future.

1) We would like to request that the terms of reference for the intended Commission are comprehensive and cover the specifics that ultimately led to the tragedy. We particularly seek the inclusion of the following in the terms of reference :

- How long has the school been functioning in violation of norms? How was the initial approval and recognition granted without verification of infrastructure?
- Who are the authorities who failed in their responsibilities?
- How was the unaided school permitted to function in buildings supposedly constructed with govt. grants while the aided school children were pushed to thatched sheds?

2) In addition to the measures already initiated by Tamil Nadu govt. we would like to make a few other recommendations for early action to avoid recurrence of such tragedies.

1. The unaided schools have, by and large, been functioning with no norms and no monitoring by regulatory authorities. This has encouraged most of these schools turning into commercial ventures, with callous indifference to student welfare and cutting corners on safety measures. So, the stipulations prescribed in the Grant-in-Aid Code should be updated and streamlined and made equally applicable to unaided schools. There can be no difference between students in aided and unaided schools / sections in standards that need to be maintained.

2. **Mere regulation without enforcement is an invitation to violation and corruption.** *While this is true of all areas of governance, this is especially critical when it comes to safety of public structures.* Therefore we not only need governmental inspection mechanisms but also public watchdog bodies to ensure that the end result of safety regulations is achieved.

3. Towards that objective, in each district, a panel including representatives from PTAs, reputed NGOs and other concerned citizens must be constituted by the District Collector to inspect all existing schools using a comprehensive checklist. Schools found unsafe should

be asked to CLOSE DOWN FORTHWITH. Children studying therein are to be transferred to other recognized schools at no cost to the students.

4. **Every school building should possess the license issued under the Tamilnadu Public Buildings Licensing Act, 1965.**
5. There are many schools which have been started / recognized on false representation with regard to infrastructure and other requirements. Many instances of irregularity in obtaining building licenses or structural stability certificates are also reported. Often the builder/ architect connected with the construction of the building in question grants the stability certificate. The panel should be asked to document the deviations of such institutions so that appropriate action for continuance / non-continuance of recognition may be decided. A grace period of three months may be given for rectification in deserving cases.
6. In future either PWD or a panel of engineers nominated by the collector should be given the responsibility of issuance of stability certificate. Not only the structural stability but also the special needs of an educational institution such as availability of sanitary facilities, playground, proper ventilation, width of staircases, and so on should be considered in giving the certificate. It should also be ensured that schools are not located in narrow streets and in residential areas.
7. Kindergarten and primary classes should be located only on the ground floor of a building. In case of multi-storied buildings, they should be so designed as to provide for multiple entry and exit staircases of sufficient width to enable easy movement of children.
8. **The noon meal centers should not be located near the classrooms. Safety regulations regarding use of fuel should be framed and issued for adoption.**

9. **The NMC staff as well as all teachers should be given orientation in safety measures including fire-fighting.**
10. The required specifications must be given full publicity, using all the channels available so that any member of the public can bring violations to the notice of authorities.
11. Parents must also be warned that they run the risk of finding their children out of school if they admit their children in schools that do not conform to the guidelines.
12. The Public School System should be strengthened with regard to infra-structure and quality of education. Government, local body and aided schools should be enabled to offer the best of education.
13. The craze for English medium should be countered by ensuring that the study of English as a second language is effective in govt, local body and aided schools. Proper orientation of teachers in this regard should be given. Govt. must mount a massive campaign to convince parents that Tamil medium, with good English teaching, in place of present day low quality English medium education would be in the best interest of their children. The comparative advantage of Tamil medium education should be demonstrated by the Govt. schools. The campaign must be on a scale and with the priority given to such national programmes as Family Planning.
14. English medium is only one of the factors luring children to sub-standard unaided schools. The large number of vacancies in teachers' posts in govt, local body and aided schools does not inspire any confidence among parents. So, filling up teacher vacancies is an essential part of the package needed to improve the system.
15. We welcome the suggestion of the Hon'ble Chief Minister to introduce shift system in schools. It would

greatly help optimise infrastructure in schools. However, when it is introduced, additional teachers must be posted for the new shift.

16. The regulatory system should also be considerably strengthened. It is learnt that around 100 posts of district level educational officers are vacant. They also need to be filled and their functioning made transparent and accountable.

(We would greatly appreciate those supportive of the above statement informing any of the signatories.)

V. Vasanthi Devi, Former Vice-Chancellor

S. S. Rajagopalan, Educationist

K. Ramakrishnan, Former Director, School of Management, Bharathiar University

R. Ramanujam, Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai

V.K.Natraj, Director, Madras Institute of Development Studies

Mr. Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director, People's Watch – Tamil Nadu.

Times of India, Wednesday, August 18, 2004,

Back to Basics: CABE Examines Social, Cultural Basis of Education

ANIL SADGOPAL

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), now reconstituted, met recently after a gap of more than 10 years. The recent meeting was completely dissimilar in tenor and content to the previous one, the only commonality being HRD minister Arjun Singh's presence on both occasions. The reasons for this dissimilarity are not far to seek: In the intervening decade, Indian education had to struggle against two major assaults, one from the global market forces and the other from communal and divisive forces. While market ideology considerably diluted the notion of social justice and equality guaranteed by the Constitution, the communal forces challenged the multi-ethnic, multilinguistic and multicultural foundation of Indian nationhood.

The two-day CABE meet squarely confronted these challenges. It not only took up the education policies of the previous government, but also delved into perennial problems pertaining to universal access and quality of instruction. The minister, among other things, said the time had come to review the 1986 policy. He announced the formation of seven committees, each focusing on a key issue.

The first would take a fresh look at the Free and Compulsory Education Bill drafted by the NDA government which came under criticism from several quarters. The Bill is a political declaration of state's retreat from its constitutional obligation towards education. It also promotes control through extra-constitutional authorities. Yet, the decision for its review was least expected from a minister who had stated in a recent television interview that he did not find anything particularly objectionable about the Bill.

Still more unexpected was the subject of the second committee, viz common school system (CSS). The last time this subject was uttered at CABE was in 1988 when it constituted a committee under the leadership of Prof D S Kothari, former chairperson of the Education Commission (1964-66). But its report was so threatening that it was put on the back burner. The concept of the common school system was, however, incorporated thrice in education policy — in 1968, 1986 and 1992. Yet, the past decade played havoc with the idea by instituting a variety of parallel, low quality educational streams, such as non-formal centres, alternative schools and EGS centres, essentially through World Bank-sponsored school interventions.

The regular teacher was replaced by an under-qualified, untrained and underpaid para-teacher. The Operation Blackboard norms approved by the Parliament for the number of teachers, classrooms and educational aids were diluted. These policy dilutions were dictated by the structural adjustment programme of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The committee will review this thrust.

The subject of the third committee surpasses even the second in its departure from established policy stance. It will deliberate upon universalisation of secondary (not elementary) education. It has been argued that the constitutional goal of providing eight years of elementary education is not adequate anymore. The new goal must, instead, be to guarantee education at least up to the high school stage, if not the plus-two stage, without which most opportunities for technical education and employment, including reservations for SCs and STs, would remain inaccessible.

The fourth committee will dwell on the autonomy of institutes of higher education. The NDA government attempted to undermine their autonomy in more ways than one. The UGC Model Act for universities was designed to this end. This issue, of course, came into the limelight when Murli Manohar Joshi tried to dictate the fee structure of the IIMs.

The fifth committee will look at ways and means of integrating cultural education in the school curriculum, with a critical focus on the Hindutva thrust. As opposed to Hindutva, the introduction of issues relating to the pluralist character of Indian nationhood will be examined by this committee.

The sixth committee will explore regulatory mechanisms for what is taught by parallel textbooks outside the government system, e.g., in Saraswati Shishu Mandirs and madrassas. This is in response to a growing concern that certain bodies use schools to propagatate communal prejudice.

The seventh committee will deal with the issue of financing of higher and technical education. This task includes the challenge of privatisation and commercialisation, which cannot be delinked from the state's role in regulating global market forces. The committee may also have to deal with India's stance vis-a-vis the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

What does all this mean? We must recall that at least three of the seven subjects — Free and Compulsory Education Bill, Common School System and universalisation of secondary education — do not find a mention in the UPA government's common minimum programme. The inclusion of these issues in the CABE agenda is indicative of the pressure created by educationists and social activists on the government and the impact of the electoral mandate against neo-liberal and communal politics. The intelligentsia will have none other than itself to blame if it fails to widen the political space that CABE has created after a decade.

The author is Professor of Education, Delhi University.

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

- Anil Sadgopal

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:

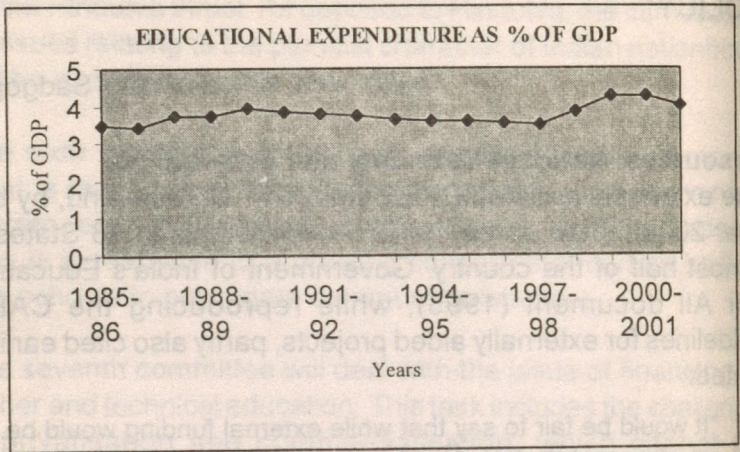
"It would be fair to say that while external funding would be an interim contribution to meet the resource gap, there is *no alternative other than augmenting domestic resources* to achieve the objective of EFA. Economic liberalization and the consequent financial restructuring can be *expected to facilitate 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.

* Delivered as '2004 Durgabai Deshmukh Memorial Lecture', 15 July 2004, Council for Social Development & India International Centre, New Delhi.

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 to become a part of the political discourse at the national level.

We need to advance our understanding beyond the Ambani-Birla formulations (GOI, 2000) 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. 1 has four significant comments on the position taken by UPA in its CMP on this issue).¹ 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.²

In Conclusion

At the beginning of my lecture I identified three challenges from the life of Durgabai Deshmukh 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, reproduced in this booklet).

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, 2002, 2003). 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.

¹ 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.

² According to 'Education For All - National Plan of Action' (GOI, 2003), 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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- Change of focus from elementary education to primary (up to class V) education, virtually defining primary stage from the upper primary stage to lower primary stage.
- Establishing non-formal stream and thereby diverse as parallel systems to school, thereby thereby streamlining the school.
- Substituting money for education, trying to make them synonymous and diverting concern and resources from elementary education to other lower programmes.
- Isolating education from its socio-economic context, reluctance to address issues such as child labour, depletion of common property resources, domestic chores engaging children, etc.

Excerpted from Report of the National Commission on the Education of India, 1984.
Child Development Centre for Child Welfare, UNICEF, and Department of
Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government
of India, November 1984.

Education: A New Paradigm for India, 1984.

POLICY DILUTIONS, DISTORTIONS AND DIVERSIONS DURING THE EARLY NINETIES

(Extracted from BJVJ's Lokshala Document, March 1995)

The central issues that have governed the formulation and implementation of the national policies with regard to universalisation of education in the post-independent India have been discussed in-depth in the accompanying Background Paper (November 1994).^{*} This paper emphasises the following trends :

- Progressive dilution of the national (not merely Governmental) commitment to fulfilling the Constitutional obligation towards the education of all children upto the age of 14 years, particularly in the years preparatory to and in the wake of the World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien (Thailand) in March 1990.
- Change of focus from elementary (upto class VIII) to primary (up to class V) education, virtually delinking primary stage from the upper primary stage.
- Establishing non-formal stream and literacy drives as parallel systems to school, thereby relatively disempowering the school.
- Substituting literacy for education, trying to make them synonymous and diverting concern and resources from elementary education to adult literacy programmes.
- Isolating education from its socio-economic context; reluctance to address issues such as child labour, depletion of common property resources, domestic chores engaging children etc.

* Excerpted from Report of the National Consultation on UN Convention on Rights of the Child organized jointly by Indian Council for Child Welfare, UNICEF and Department of Women and Child Development (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India), November 1994.

- Lack of interest in the question of irrelevance of education for the vast majority of children due to the limited role which education plays in preparing children for meaningful vocations in life.
- Reducing girls' education to the narrow view wherein women are envisaged as merely 'useful products', ready receptors or transmitters of demographic messages or proficient wage earners, thus violating the girl child's right to education as a human.
- Promoting Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) which takes only a limited view of education and aims at conditioning the child's mind with an anti-poor bias.
- Continuous attrition of the Common School System by organizing parallel school systems by organizing parallel school systems (e.g. Kendriya Vidyalayas, Sainik Schools, Navodaya Vidyalayas and non-formal stream); also by allowing unchecked commercialization from the pre-school level upwards to professional degrees.
- Unpreparedness to change priorities of resource allocation within the national economy in favour of the weaker sections of society as a means of re-distribution of social justice.
- The widening resource gap in education, building up over the past three decades, now being used to provide a rationale for inviting international aid; possibility of adverse impact of the external aid on the social character of education.

TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE VISION OF UNIVERSALISATION OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

(Extracted from BJVJ's Lokshala Document, March 1995)

The alternative vision presented here can be described in terms of the following major perceptual changes:

- **Strengthening** the Common School System as an essential means for both universalisation and ensuring of equity and social justice.
- **Taking** an integrated view of eight years of elementary education from the standpoint of curricular re-organisation, infrastructural planning and resource allocation.
- **Emphasising** the holistic view of education and its transformative role.
- **Striving** for the fullest development of the human potential of the child, implying a shift from viewing the child merely as a 'national resource' or 'useful product'.
- **Interweaving** productive work and social action into the learning process and with the various disciplines of knowledge with the aim of making education socially relevant.
- **Forging** dynamic linkages between the school and the community and vice versa.
- **Evolving** child-centred pedagogy such that it gives ample scope for expression of locally meaningful manifestations, thereby promoting socio-culturally diverse ways of perceiving education.
- **Using** mother tongue as the medium of learning in the early primary stages, with provision for gradual switching over to the regional and link languages.

- **Organising** effective programmes for wiping out the practice of child labour through both socio-economic and legal measures, while linking this endeavour with universalisation of education; *enabling children to find meaningful vocations in life becomes a central concern of education.*
- **Placing** school at the centre-stage of all efforts to move towards UEE and not allowing it to be marginalized by parallel non-formal streams and literacy drives for children.
- **Empowering** the school such that it 'reaches out' to all children in a locality, including the 0-6 age group and the disabled children as well as those living in the so-called 'unserved' habitations; it must have the option, through adequate physical facilities and other resources placed at its disposal, of changing its timing or the locale of classes, recruiting and training local youth as teachers, re-organising the curriculum and its transaction and adopting all possible creative ways of 'reaching out'; in other words, the structure and process of the school needs to be 'non-formalised'.
- **Viewing** Early Childhood Care and Education (including ICDS) as an essential component of UEE since it prepares young children for the school and helps in sensitizing the entire process of planning at the elementary level through its playway and child-centred approach, thereby preparing the school also to receive the children; it further enables the older children, particularly the girls, engaged in care of the younger siblings to attend school.
- **Promoting** convergence of services at the Block Panchayat level in order to eliminate the factors that perpetuate domestic chores, particularly in the case of the girl child; this will include provision of day-care and education for the children in the 0-6 age group as well as provision of water, fuel and fodder within the habitation.

- **Giving** priority to programmes of empowerment of women in all aspects of socio-economic life with the aim of transforming the gender bias that hampers participation of the girl child in the educational process.
- **Reviewing** the evaluative parameters of education with the aim of eliminating their current bias against the qualities and orientations that are natural to the children of the weaker sections of society; the prevailing notions of merit, talent, competency and excellence would need to be transformed through sustained and indigenous research.
- **Re-organising** the pre-service and in-service programmes of teacher education at the pre-school and elementary school levels, particularly in the DIETs; the teacher education curriculum needs to be changed with the aim of preparing teachers for the challenge of UEE as well as transformation of the social character of education.
- **Catalysing** DIETs to draw their agenda from the disaggregated and diverse plans prepared by the schools and local communities, with responsibility for implementation lying entirely in the hands of the school staff and Village Education Committees (VECs).
- **Involving** village Panchayats, along with the Block and District Panchayats, as also the School Complexes in working out the designs, strategies and targets of universalisation; the urban counterparts at the level of *Mohallas*, *bastis* or Wards are to be similarly involved in the school system.

While the State continues to be Constitutionally responsible for ensuring 'free and compulsory education', the community has to be empowered not only to participate in the educational process and its planning, but also to control it. Meaningful and effective mechanisms and structures for achieving this objective are yet to be designed as part of evolution of the Panchayati Raj framework.

Viewing A Nation-wide Process

The challenge of a convincing demonstration of the alternative vision of UEE outlined above persuades us to think in terms of a minimum critical size at the national level. The conventional strategy of beginning with a 'laboratory-scale' or 'micro-level' (i.e. a School Complex, Block, Tahsil/Taluka or District) experiment and then testing it on a pilot scale, before undertaking a nation-wide process, may not be a viable strategy in this context on theoretical grounds. This is because a nation-wide process is not merely a sum total of 'micro-level' operations, but it demands **creation of effective systems and linkages among a spectrum of concerned institutions as well as characteristically different dynamics that is inconceivable in the smaller operation.**

It may further be argued that the alternative vision is contingent on a major perceptual change regarding the very purpose and content of education which means going much beyond the realm of only technological or management changes. We are fortunate that the various individual elements of the alternative vision have been tested and demonstrated to be viable time and again in a host of imaginative and bold educational experiments in both pre- and post-independence India. It is time that we learn from the lessons of these experiments, rather than being bogged down in 're-inventing the wheel'. Indeed, the alternative vision is in some ways the result of a conscious synthesis of the various individual 'alternatives' already demonstrated successfully in areas such as community participation, creating School Complexes, working with Panchayati Raj institutions, networking, involving teachers in reviewing and re-organising curriculum, pedagogic transformation, linking productive work with the learning process, relating content with socio-cultural diversity, women empowerment and change in gender perspective, re-modelling teacher education and other such critical elements. The alternative vision is further informed in-depth policy analyses, leading to fresh policy perceptions. What is under test at this juncture is how to interweave the insight thus gained into a wholesome alternative programme for

UEE and also how to create larger systems and processes that would bring about the necessary structural and perceptual changes within the nation's institutions concerned with education.

The proposed nation-wide process is not viewed merely as mechanical implementation of a set of pre-determined programme elements for the purpose of quantitative spread or qualitative improvement. It is instead envisaged as a transformative process which brings about a change in a fundamental sense in the perceptions and roles of a wide range of persons (including teachers) and institutions engaged in education. Indeed, if UEE is to be achieved within a foreseeable future, a majority of those concerned with education (*and not just teachers*) would have to review and transform their ways of perceiving, imparting and organizing education itself. For instance, in the post-independence scenario, the educational initiative has shifted from the hands of the community to the Government and its varied agencies. This has resulted in various distortions including over-centralisation, uniformity that suppresses nation's rich plurality, dependence on bureaucratic culture and, more importantly, disempowerment of the teachers, parents and community in general. One must emphasise, however, that in this new paradigm, the people would take the lead in moving towards UEE, with the Government not only playing a supportive role but also fulfilling its constitutional obligation by making all the necessary resources available equitably.

The issues and questions thrown up by this proposed people's surge towards UEE would have to be debated at fora ranging from professional bodies and Village Panchayats to the Vidhan Sabhas and Parliament. What is needed is a change in national ambience regarding the very direction, social and academic content and process of education. Nothing less than a people's movement, involving self-reflection and transformation of the self, would be required to shake the nation's conscience and put the children and their education (along with their nutrition, health, family care and civil rights) at the centre of the national concern.

COMMON SCHOOL SYSTEM: EMPOWERING THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS*

a plea for political priority for the only historical option for India

- Anil Sadgopal

The crisis was foreseen by the Kothari Education Commission (1964-66) which unequivocally recommended the Common School System with neighbourhood schools as the National System of Education for all children of India. What is a Common School System? The most important feature of a Common School System is equitable (not uniform) quality of education for all types of schools, be they Government, government-aided, local body or private schools. Six essential and non-negotiable attributes of equitable quality of education need to be specified : (i) minimum physical infrastructure, including library, teaching aids, playgrounds and many other features (e.g. early childhood care centres and pre-primary schools attached to primary/elementary schools); (ii) professional quality of teachers and teacher : student ratio; (iii) diversified and flexible curriculum to reflect the geo-cultural plurality of the country, while emphasising certain core curricular features of nation-wide significance; (iv) pedagogy for holistic, child-friendly and liberative education; (v) apart from gender sensitivity, pedagogic and social empathy for the dalits, tribals, cultural and ethnic minorities and the physically or mentally challenged children; and (vi) de-centralised and community-controlled school system, while fully maintaining State's Constitutional obligation.

The Government of India resolved to promote the Common School System in the National Policy on Education, 1968 followed by commitment by the Indian Parliament twice respectively in the 1986 policy and its modified version of 1992. Yet, the concept could not be translated into practice because

* This concept was first evolved and elaborated in the LOKSHALA Programme for Universalisation of Elementary Education, organised by Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha with academic support from Maulana Azad Centre for Elementary and Social Education of the Department of Education, University of Delhi.

the political leadership and bureaucracy at all levels along with the intelligentsia found an escape route for their own children viz. the private school system. This shift in commitment from the Government school system to the private school system implied an increasing loss of political, bureaucratic and social will to improve the Government schools. The present policy support to privatisation and commercialisation of education amounted to legitimisation of status quo of disparity, discontent and disempowerment of the vast majority of Indian people.

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) appointed a Committee on Common School System in 1988. The CABE Committee proposed a ten-year phase-wise programme for reconstruction of the present school system into a Common School System. In 1990, the Acharya Ramamurti Committee, constituted to review the 1986 Policy, extended the CABE Committee proposals further. The chief features of a phase-wise re-construction programme may be summarised as follows : (a) Highest political priority to improvement of both the access and the quality of the Government, local body and the government-aided schools; (b) De-centralisation of decision-making and management of schools through the Panchayati Raj framework and making the school entirely accountable to the community it serves; (c) Fulfilling the Constitutional obligation of a minimum of eight years of elementary education (instead of five years of primary education) under Article 45 to all children up to 14 years of age (including the early childhood care and pre-primary 0-6 age group); (d) Allocation of adequate financial resources, getting out of the '6% of GNP' trap; (e) A pedagogically and socially rational language policy for the medium of education (not instruction) common to all schools, so that language becomes a means of articulation, rather than imposition; (f) A carefully constructed programme of incentives, disincentives, persuasion and eventually legislation to gradually bring the private schools into the fold of the Common School System; incentives to private schools may include grants for children from low-income groups, computed at the rate of allocation per child in Government schools,

such that all children in the neighbourhood have access; disincentives may include gradual withdrawal of all hidden subsidies to private schools, like the cheap land, tax-free income and exemption from income tax on donations, teachers trained at public cost, etc.

The elite in India have always been dismissive of the concept of Common School System by mocking at it as being politically too radical and, therefore, infeasible. In contrast, the poor and the lower middle class have for long internalised the concept as the only means for their empowerment and social justice. It is an irony that such an equitable public school system has been prevalent in some form or the other in several European countries, USA and Canada. Indeed, this is the only historical option left for India for building a cohesive, secular and just society. The diversionary educational agenda including adult literacy, non-formal centres, Alternative Schools or Education Guarantee Scheme, will have to be given up. The agenda of 'Empowerment of Schools' for creation of a Common School System must receive topmost priority in national political agenda.

November 30, 2000

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR SINCE THE BJVJ CONVENTION¹

Within less than two weeks of the BJVJ convention¹ held in early November 2000, the NCERT released its controversial document entitled, 'National Curriculum Framework for School Education'. This document was read along with the Ambani-Birla report submitted to the Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry in April 2000 and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan document prepared by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in December 2000. These three education policy documents reveal a blatant attempt to,

- (a) lay the foundations of Brahmanical, patriarchal and mono-cultural hegemony over the school curriculum in order to destroy the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual character of the composite Indian heritage;
- (b) institutionalise cheap and low quality educational streams for poor children that are parallel to the school system, thereby legitimise a new principle of educational planning - a different layer of educational facility for each segment of society - so that the age-old social hierarchy is maintained;
- (c) juxtapose elementary education against higher education in order to justify the agenda of privatisation and commercialisation of the entire higher education system and handing over of this sector to the trans-national corporate capital, thereby denying a legitimate space to the vast sections of Indian society in the nation's politico-economic power structure; and
- (d) introduce centralised screening for admission in professional courses and accreditation of higher education institutions in the name of uniform or higher academic standards but with the hidden agenda of discriminating against the vast under-developed regions of the country, thereby maintaining regional imbalance.

The past year is also known for the infamous notification issued by the UGC extending financial support to those Universities which will start courses in *Jyotirvigyan* (Astrology, not

¹ 'People's Science Convention on Education, Development and Globalisation' organised by Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha from November 3-5, 2000 in Delhi.

Astronomy) and *Pourohitya* (Bramhanical *Karmakand*). It was for the first time since independence that the UGC decided to promote unscientific thought and fatalism. What further insult could one inflict on the great Indian heritage of rich contributions to human knowledge in astronomy, mathematics, metallurgy and medicine and to the scientific philosophy of Lokayat? The people's science movement may also note that the UGC took this regressive step while refusing funds for Delhi University's teacher education programme in elementary education (B.El.Ed.).

The ink had barely dried on these policy documents and notifications that the Ministry of HRD started its assault on the teaching of history in particular and the social sciences in general. The mindset of the forces of religious fundamentalism was revealed in the NCERT notification dated October 23, 2001 asking the CBSE not just to delete certain paragraphs from various history textbooks but also to ensure that these paragraphs are neither discussed in the classroom nor any questions framed on them during examinations. A naked attempt to distort historiography and suppress critical inquiry! The objective of this cynical exercise was to orient the school-going children (for once, fortunately, half of India's children continue to be out-of-school!) for accepting the contours of a 'Hindu Rashtra' rooted in *Hindutva*². This concept contradicts the very spirit of our composite heritage as symbolised in the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Ashfaqullah. This parochial vision of India is contradictory to the concept as inherited from the Indian freedom struggle against British imperialism and as enshrined in our Constitution.

Hindutva together with globalisation will also marginalise the *dalits*, tribals, linguistic and cultural minorities, other backwards castes, the disabled and, above all, the women. The hegemony of the corporate and patriarchal elite, comprising mainly the upper castes, will be complete in the 'Hindu Rashtra'. In order

² *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 rights.

to establish this hegemony, people's resistance will be brutally crushed by using draconian laws such as the POTO and denouncing democratic dissent as being 'unpatriotic and anti-national'. All these trends were legitimised during the past year in the name of fighting terrorism, instead of inquiring into the political genesis of terrorism and taking pro-people measures in order to eliminate the political basis of terrorism itself. One may recall the arrest of 5 students in Delhi soon after the terrorist attack on WTC in New York. The 'crime' of these students was to distribute leaflets calling upon India to retain its independence in deciding its stance vis-a-vis the war unleashed by USA on Afghanistan. Ironically, while the civil liberties of certain linguistic and cultural minorities (including those from the north-east) were threatened by POTO, the forces of militant Hindutva were given a free hand to raise their pitch on Ram Janmabhoomi in spite of its inherent danger to national unity. This phenomenon needs to be recognised as **pseudo-nationalism!**

This overview will be incomplete without a reference to what happened on November 28, 2001. On this day, the Lok Sabha unanimously passed the Constitution (Eighty-Sixth) Amendment Bill. The Government claimed that this Bill will accord the status of Fundamental Right to education. However, the Bill in fact withdrew the right to education already available to the children under Supreme Court's Unnikrishnan Judgement.³ Yet, all political parties, irrespective of their ideologies, voted in favour of the Bill. This convenient consensus in the Indian polity for denying right to education of equitable quality for all children represents a new phenomenon. There seems to be an emerging consensus to allow the State to abdicate itself of its Constitutional obligations towards education as dictated by the Structural Adjustment Programme imposed on India by IMF and World Bank. In this sense, the Bill is a watershed in post-independence India in so far it marks the dangerous acceptance of the agenda of globalisation by the political elite.

³ A detailed analysis of how the Constitutional Amendment withdrew the right to education is given in BJVJ's publication entitled, 'Political Economy of Education in the Age of Globalisation: Demystifying the Knowledge Agenda' by Anil Sadgopal (January 2003).

We have seen during the year the shaping of India Inc. Let us look into one instance. Under the guise of fighting pollution in Delhi, the Supreme Court ordered the closure of thousands of small scale industrial units in Delhi, forcing lakhs of people to migrate back to their villages which they had to leave originally for want of employment. Those who had no where to go were forced to shift to the margins of Delhi, without housing, sanitation, transport, schooling or health facilities. And of course without employment. The Supreme Court's orders thus enabled the Delhi State Government to continue its march towards the goal of making a Paris out of Delhi!

Talking of the Courts, one can not avoid noticing the changing trends. The Supreme Court is cherished by the poor people for its decision during the eighties of declaring that the pavement-dwellers of Mumbai have a fundamental right to live on the pavements unless the Government provides them with a valid alternative. The same Court will also be remembered for the Unnikrishnan Judgement (1993), declaring that Constitution's Article 21 (Part III) of the Right to Life is meaningless unless the Article 45 (Part IV) relating to education is read along with it, thereby according education the status of Fundamental Right. However, the same Court, under the impact of globalisation, reversed its decision on Sardar Sarovar Dam and ruled that construction of the Dam must be allowed in order to promote industrial development. This order was given without inquiring into as to whom will the presumed development benefit and without ensuring rehabilitation of the tribals to be displaced by raising the height of the Dam. From the pavement-dwellers of Mumbai and poor children's right to education to the Sardar Sarovar decision, it is a globalised somersault for the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India!

India is increasingly being seen more as a market than a nation. Merely 15-20% of the people constituting its upwardly mobile middle class will provide a globalised market of the size of Europe. Egged by this short-sighted goal, the Indian State is pushing its agenda of selling India Inc. through disinvestments, opening doors for foreign direct investments in every facet of Indian life (including education and culture), pro-market stance

on WTO and Intellectual Property Rights and many such measures. In this mad rush, the needs of the masses and the nation's patriotic goals are being fast marginalised. Communalisation of the Indian polity is being used to support the agenda of globalisation. Religious fundamentalism will, on the one hand, provide an effective tool in the hands of the State to suppress all dissenting voices in the name of pseudo-patriotism and, on the other hand, help stabilise the market for the forces of globalisation. For these forces, it does not matter which religion does the fundamentalism belongs to as long as fundamentalism serves their purpose of promotion of market and profit. The emerging collusion between the trans-national forces of globalisation and religious fundamentalism of the Indian State today poses a challenge that the people had not known before. Analysing the nature of this collusion and building up the agenda for establishing an alternative vision of the future, must now be perceived by all social movements as a patriotic task of the highest priority.

January 1, 2002

EPILOGUE

The announcement made by the Union Minister of HRD on August 11, 2004 constituting seven CAGE committees, each one on a critical issue, amounts to opening new battlegrounds for policy rectification. The documentation exercise undertaken in this booklet is aimed at defining the contours of these battlegrounds. These committees need to be viewed as new political spaces for social intervention. This is exactly the challenge before academic, social and cultural bodies, teachers' and students' organizations, trade unions, associations of writers and cultural workers and social activists. If this opportunity is not utilized effectively, the gains of the past few months are likely to be nullified.

The seriousness of this matter can be appreciated by taking a leaf out of the recent history of policy formulation. The National Policy on Education-1986 was widely criticized by a large number of students', teachers', youth and women organizations for its bias against the weaker sections of society. In 1990, the Central Government led by Shri V.P. Singh took note of this public criticism and constituted a review committee under the chairpersonship of Acharya Ramamurti to (a) make education an effective instrument for securing a status of equality for women and persons belonging to the backward classes and minorities; (b) give a work and employment orientation to education; (c) exclude from it the elitist aberrations which have become the glaring characteristic of the education scene; (d) lay special emphasis on struggle against the phenomenon of casteism, communalism and obscurantism; and (e) move towards a genuinely egalitarian secular social order.

The Acharya Ramamurti Committee subjected the 1986 policy to a detailed analysis and interacted widely with all the concerned sections of society. In its report (December 1990), the review committee gave wide-ranging recommendations for a new policy framework that would ensure a major transformation in the entire educational system from pre-primary to higher education. It recommended, among others, a concrete plan to move towards a Common School System,

an alternative vision of universalizing elementary education, institutionalization of measures to ensure equality of status for women, SCs, STs, backward classes and cultural and linguistic minorities, elimination of regional imbalances, relating secondary education with sources of livelihood, engagement of higher education with issues of social development, steps to liberate institutions of their inherent casteist, communal and cultural bias, inculcation of scientific temper and egalitarian spirit, a rational language policy, major curricular, pedagogic and examination reforms, a revitalized framework for centre-state partnership, decentralization of management and decision-making and finally a set of new principles for financing of education.

The Narasimha Rao Government, wedded to economic reforms and implementation of a policy of globalization, got cold feet. Ironically, the CABE then also headed by Shri Arjun Singh constituted yet another committee in July 1991 to consider the report of the Acharya Ramamurti Committee and recommend policy modifications. This CABE committee, chaired by Shri Janardhana Reddy, submitted its report in January 1992 in which all the major recommendations of the Acharya Ramamurti Committee were either rejected, marginalized or diluted. The result: the 1986 policy was retained with only inconsequential modifications. Two significant facts may be recalled in this connection. First, the Janardhana Reddy Committee report was signed by certain non-official members with impeccable credentials. At least two out of those are on record for not even clearly remembering what they had signed; they deny any association with its retrogressive recommendations. Second, some of the political parties currently in UPA or its allied parties had their representatives in the Janardhana Reddy Committee (they were Education Ministers in various state governments). These political leaders duly signed its report which amounted to rejection of Acharya Ramamurti Committee report. One of these state ministers belonged to the Janata Dal that formed the Central Government which had constituted the Acharya Ramamurti Committee in 1990! Interestingly, at a public meeting held two years after the Janardhana Reddy Committee report was released, some Members of Parliament belonging to a significant ally of UPA

claimed that their party was fully committed to the Acharya Ramamurti Committee report and its representative state minister could not have signed the report of the Janardhana Reddy Committee. The truth was, however, otherwise. What do these facts tell us about policy formulation? We may never have a clear answer but one thing we can be sure of is the non-seriousness with which this process is taken by both the intellectuals as well as the politicians. The irony is that several of the issues raised by the Acharya Ramamurti Committee (e.g. Common School System, education of the girl child, education as a fundamental right, autonomy of institutions) are the issues of the CABA committees again, of course after a gap of 14 years!

This is the whole point of narrating the above story. If we do not take the process of policy formulation seriously, we would have no one other than ourselves to blame. Creation of a political space for social intervention in policy formulation is just the beginning of the battle. Unless we participate in this battle and do our utmost to influence the deliberations of the CABA committees, how can we expect the committees to come up with well-formulated and meaningful recommendations? Who will ensure that the committees have access to all the relevant policy documents, research studies, field surveys and reports? Who will ensure that these committees interact with educationists, social activists or public bodies in order to become acquainted with critical experiences and alternative perceptions of policy issues? We have to also build up adequate public pressure so that the committees do not yield to the forces of the global market and communalism and keep the people's interest in mind while formulating their recommendations. If this booklet helps in establishing the significance of the role each one of us can play, either individually or collectively, by intervening in the CABA committees, the purpose of this exercise would have been more than served. This will also mean that we will be doing our duty to ensure that the people's mandate given to the UPA government against economic reforms without a human face and communal and divisive politics would be redeemed.

"In the paradigm of globalization, the Universities are being perceived as 'knowledge producers' and the pupils as 'knowledge consumers', thereby making knowledge a mere commodity in the globalised market the 'producer-consumer' paradigm of knowledge will begin to define the hidden agenda of globalised education 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 globalization, rather than accepting it as the unchallenged destiny of crores of our children. 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 relationship with the society. We need to recognize that the central thematic challenge of globalization to the quality and direction of education is indeed epistemic (i.e. related to the nature and sources of knowledge). It is only by learning to deal with this epistemic 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 globalization. This will be our best bet for rejuvenating the freedom struggle to move towards an enlightened, just and humane society within India as well as globally."

- Anil Sadgopal (2003)
Political Economy of Education in the Age of Globalisation,
Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha, New Delhi, p. 46-49.

Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (BJVJ) is an all-India people's science network founded in 1991-92 under the chairpersonship of Prof. Yash Pal, the renowned space scientist-cum-educationist. BJVJ works through its Basic Units established locally in different parts of India. It views Indian development in the perspective of the nation's rich geo-cultural diversity. It has faith in the synergy emerging out of the endeavour of a wide spectrum of social movements acting on the issues relating to land, forest and water as well as means of livelihood in relation to technology. The issues of social and gender equity continuously inform BJVJ's consciousness, organisational sensitivity and all of its activities.

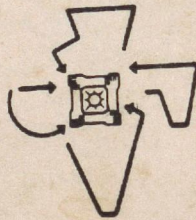
In 1995, BJVJ organised the LOKSHALA Process for demonstrating the role of social intervention in educational transformation as a people's response to resist the World Bank's increasing control of Indian education. It recognises globalisation as a naked attack on our educational policies whose objective is to dilute, disintegrate and distort the education system. BJVJ is engaged in exposing globalisation's agenda of forcing the Indian State to abdicate itself of its Constitutional obligation towards education in particular and social sector in general. BJVJ also focuses on globalisation's linkage with the politics of communalisation and acts to build up people's resistance to the assault of religious fundamentalism on pedagogy and curriculum.

BJVJ opposes hegemony of all kinds – social, cultural, patriarchal, economic and political. It, therefore, strives to build a world where people's plural responses will primarily help to re-define the concept of 'good life' in different ways and re-construct knowledge accordingly. For this purpose, BJVJ promotes the political philosophy of 'struggle and re-construction' (*sangharsh aur nirman*) as concretised by the brave iron ore mine workers of Chhattisgarh under the visionary leadership of Shaheed Shankar Guha Niyogi from 1977 till his martyrdom in 1991.

BJGVJ Documentation

**LOKSHALA PROJECT
FOR
UNIVERSALISATION OF ELEMENTARY
EDUCATION**

Demonstrating an Alternative Vision



March 1995

BHARAT JAN GYAN VIGYAN JATHA

prepared in collaboration with

Maulana Azad Centre for Elementary and Social Education

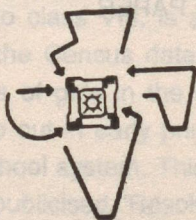
Department of Education, University of Delhi

THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

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LOKSHALA PROJECT
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EDUCATION

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THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION

As a legacy of the Indian freedom movement, the Constitution of India set out an unambiguous goal for education of the nation's children in the following Directive Principle of the State Policy :

"The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years." (Article 45)

The above goal was to have been achieved by 1960! Yet almost 35 years after the target year, the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE), i.e. upto class VIII, is as elusive as ever. According to the latest analysis of the Census data available, almost one-half of all children and two-thirds of girls in the 6-14 age group either do not enter school at all or drop out in early primary years or, to put it better, are 'pushed out' of the school system. This state of affairs prevails even 8 years after the much-publicised 'Resolve' of the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, regarding UEE. The NPE had declared that universal primary education, i.e. upto class V, shall be achieved by 1990 and UEE by 1995. The Education For All (EFA) document released by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 1993 stated that 'EFA by AD 2000 is a daunting task', while the UEE Status Paper of the same Ministry declared in 1994 that 'UEE by 2001 AD is a daunting task' (It is not clear how do the Ministry's perceptions of EFA and UEE differ in this context, if at all). Instead of being confused by these varying declarations, it would be best to quote the following statement from the Ministry's Annual Report (1993-94) :

"Despite expansion of education, vast ground is yet to be covered for fulfilling the Constitutional mandate of UEE. Drop out rates are significant; retention of children in schools is low; wastage is considerable. There are striking disparities in access to Elementary Education – disparities as between regions, rural and urban areas, boys and girls, the affluent and the deprived and the minorities and the others."

Notwithstanding the above admission of the grave situation by the Ministry, the statement still does not reveal the reality fully. Probably, the statement in the Govt. of India's National Plan of Action for the Child in 1992 is closer to the reality. It sets out a more humble goal when it assures 'completion of primary education by at least 50% of girls as well as boys by 1995.' If this is what we *hope* to achieve in 1995 in the case of primary education, the task with regard to UEE may turn out to be far more daunting than what the Ministry makes it out to be, whether in 2001 AD or much later into the twenty first century.

THE PERSPECTIVE

An inquiry into the data collected by the National Sample Survey (42nd Round) in 1986-87 shall be helpful in coming to grips with the strategies needed for an effective approach to UEE. It showed that,

- About one-third to one-half of the out-of-school children find school either boring, irrelevant or threatening (i.e. failure in examinations).
- Almost 40-45% of the out-of-school children have to stay away from school due to economic compulsions as well as the demands of home or family life.

The implications of this important finding are clear.

- The children in the first category could be expected to be attracted by and retained in the school system if the curriculum and learning process are re-organised along the lines of child-centred education. However, the children of the second category may still not respond unless socio-economic factors are addressed. The issues of child labour (the likely number being almost 5 crores) and involvement of children in supplementing family incomes as well as in gathering of fuel, fodder and water and in attending to younger siblings have a direct bearing on UEE. Qualitative improvements in the educational process and emphasis on the critical role of socio-economic conditions in UEE are, therefore, to be judiciously combined.

Let us not mistake it. Fulfilment of the goal of UEE is not just a function of providing more building funds or additional teachers (even if half of them are women, as assured by the Operation Blackboard), organising more frequent teacher training programmes, replacing textbooks or even the handing over of the primary school to the village Panchayat, as is envisaged in the new Panchayati Raj Act. It requires nothing less than an alternative vision of the educational process (if not also its purpose) and its relationship with the real world of children. Many of the recent official discourses on organising externally funded DPEP (District Primary Education Programme), substituting literacy for education, giving centre-stage to population control measures in girls' education or applying other over-simplified prescriptions (e.g. Minimum Levels of Learning or MLL) have only helped divert attention from pivotal issues.

The central issues that have governed the formulation and implementation of the national policies with regard to universalisation of education in the post-independent India have been discussed in-depth

in the accompanying Background Paper (November 1994).* This paper emphasises the following trends :

- Progressive dilution of the *national* (not merely Governmental) commitment to fulfilling the Constitutional obligation towards the education of all children upto the age of 14 years, particularly in the years preparatory to and in the wake of the World Conference on Education For All held in Jomtien (Thailand) in March 1990.
- Change of focus from *elementary* (upto class VIII) to *primary* (upto class V) education, virtually delinking primary stage from the upper primary stage.
- Establishing non-formal stream and literacy drives as parallel systems to school, thereby relatively disempowering the school.
- Substituting literacy for education, trying to make them synonymous and diverting concern and resources from elementary education to adult literacy programmes.
- Isolating education from its socio-economic context; reluctance to address issues such as child labour, depletion of common property resources, domestic chores engaging children etc.
- Lack of interest in the question of irrelevance of education for the vast majority of children due to the limited role which education plays in preparing children for meaningful vocations in life.

* Excerpted from Report of the National Consultation on UN Convention on Rights of the Child organised jointly by Indian Council for Child Welfare, UNICEF and Department of Women and Child Development (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India), November 1994.

- Reducing girls' education to the narrow view wherein women are envisaged as merely 'useful products', ready receptors or transmitters of demographic messages or proficient wage earners, thus violating the girl child's right to education as a human.
- Promoting Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) which takes only a limited view of education and aims at conditioning the child's mind with an anti-poor bias.
- Continuous attrition of the Common School System by organising parallel school systems (e.g. Kendriya Vidyalayas, Sainik Schools, Navodaya Vidyalayas and non-formal stream); also by allowing unchecked commercialisation from the pre-school level upwards to professional degrees.
- Unpreparedness to change priorities of resource allocation within the national economy in favour of the weaker sections of society as a means of re-distribution of social justice;
 - The widening resource gap in education, building up over the past three decades, now being used to provide a rationale for inviting international aid; possibility of adverse impact of the external aid on the social character of education.

TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE VISION

The alternative vision presented here can be described in terms of the following major perceptual changes:

- **Strengthening** the Common School System as an essential means for both universalisation and ensuring of equity and social justice.

- **Taking** an integrated view of eight years of elementary education from the standpoint of curricular re-organisation, infrastructural planning and resource allocation.
- **Emphasising** the holistic view of education and its transformative role.
- **Striving** for the fullest development of the human potential of the child, implying a shift from viewing the child merely as a 'national resource' or 'useful product'.
- **Interweaving** productive work and social action into the learning process and with the various disciplines of knowledge with the aim of making education socially relevant.
- **Forging** dynamic linkages between the school and the community and vice versa.
- **Evolving** child-centred pedagogy such that it gives ample scope for expression of locally meaningful manifestations, thereby promoting socio-culturally diverse ways of perceiving education.
- **Using** mother tongue as the medium of learning in the early primary stages, with provision for gradual switching over to the regional and link languages.
- **Organising** effective programmes for wiping out the practice of child labour through both socio-economic and legal measures, while linking this endeavour with universalisation of education; *enabling children to find meaningful vocations in life becomes a central concern of education.*
- **Placing** school at the centre-stage of all efforts to move towards UEE and not allowing it to be marginalised by parallel non-formal streams and literacy drives for children.

THE EMPOWERED SCHOOL

- Each school must be made responsible and accountable for the education of all children in the locality, giving it freedom for innovating and adopting strategies for 'reaching out' to children belonging to various segments of society.
- All features considered desirable for non-formal education are equally desirable for the school. Schools must be 'non-formalised' and made relevant to the lives of the majority of the children in the locality.
- While keeping the common core of the national curricular framework in mind, the school should have the option to re-organize the curriculum, relate content to the local or regional reality and work out its own child-centred pedagogy for transacting the curriculum.
- The school shall further have the option to chose the timing of holding the classes, organize the classes in one or more clusters, locate the classes in one or more parts of the locality, recruit additional 'para teachers' (like *Shikshakarmis*) to teach in the unserved habitations and adopt any other locally meaningful ways of attracting children to the school; the Village Education Committee (VEC) shall be intimately involved at each step of the afore-mentioned micro-planning and implementation.
- Parallel programmes, such as non-formal education, literacy drives for the 9-14 age group or distance education, shall not be allowed to marginalise the school; if and when the community feels the need, the VEC and the school

can jointly organize educational programmes for the benefit of youth and adults. These then become part of the school activity, thus empowering it, rather than marginalising it.

- Adequate physical facilities must be provided to the school along with a full complement of teachers and additional funds for fresh initiatives for UEE placed at the disposal of the Headmaster/VEC.
- Early Childhood Care and Education programmes for the 0-6 age group, including creche and pre-primary education, would be linked with the school and be made part of its extended responsibility.
- The school should be responsible for the education of the disabled children. Depending upon the nature and degree of disability, such children could be either brought into the integrated classroom or special arrangements could be made for them elsewhere with the help of DIET and District Panchayat body.
- In consultation with the VEC, the school shall be free to design its own plan for UEE and set its own time frame for achieving the target.
- -In consultation with the School Complex and DIET, the school shall make arrangements for the training of its teachers, especially the 'para teachers'; the latter shall be eventually integrated into the school staff.
- All schools should be part of a Common School System functioning through neighbourhood schools.

VIEWING A NATION-WIDE PROCESS

- **Empowering** the school such that it 'reaches out' to all children in a locality, including the 0-6 age group and the disabled children as well as those living in the so-called 'unserved' habitations; it must have the option, through adequate physical facilities and other resources placed at its disposal, of changing its timing or the locale of classes, recruiting and training local youth as teachers, re-organising the curriculum and its transaction and adopting all possible creative ways of 'reaching out'; in other words, the structure and process of the school needs to be 'non-formalised'.
- **Viewing** Early Childhood Care and Education (including ICDS) as an essential component of UEE since it prepares young children for the school and helps in sensitizing the entire process of planning at the elementary level through its playway and child-centred approach, thereby preparing the school also to receive the children; it further enables the older children, particularly the girls, engaged in care of the younger siblings to attend school.
- **Promoting** convergence of services at the Block Panchayat level in order to eliminate the factors that perpetuate domestic chores, particularly in the case of the girl child; this will include provision of day-care and education for the children in the 0-6 age group as well as provision of water, fuel and fodder within the habitation.
- **Giving** priority to programmes of empowerment of women in all aspects of socio-economic life with the aim of transforming the gender bias that hampers participation of the girl child in the educational process.
- **Reviewing** the evaluative parametres of education with the aim of eliminating their current bias against the qualities and

orientations that are natural to the children of the weaker sections of society; the prevailing notions of merit, talent, competency and excellence would need to be transformed through sustained and indigenous research.

- **Re-organising** the pre-service and in-service programmes of teacher education at the pre-school and elementary school levels, particularly in the DIETs; the teacher education curriculum needs to be changed with the aim of preparing teachers for the challenge of UEE as well as transformation of the social character of education.
- **Catalysing** DIETs to draw their agenda from the disaggregated and diverse plans prepared by the schools and local communities, with responsibility for implementation lying entirely in the hands of the school staff and Village Education Committees (VECs).
- **Involving** village Panchayats, along with the Block and District Panchayats, as also the School Complexes in working out the designs, strategies and targets of universalisation; the urban counterparts at the level of *Mohallas*, *bastis* or Wards are to be similarly involved in the school system.

While the State continues to be Constitutionally responsible for ensuring 'free and compulsory education', the community has to be empowered not only to participate in the educational process and its planning, but also to control it. Meaningful and effective mechanisms and structures for achieving this objective are yet to be designed as part of evolution of the Panchayati Raj framework.

VIEWING A NATION-WIDE PROCESS

The challenge of a convincing demonstration of the alternative vision of UEE outlined above persuades us to think in terms of a minimum critical size at the national level. The conventional strategy of beginning with a 'laboratory-scale' or 'micro-level' (i.e. a School Complex, Block, Tahsil/Taluka or District) experiment and then testing it on a pilot scale, before undertaking a nation-wide process, may not be a viable strategy in this context on theoretical grounds. This is because a nation-wide process is not merely a sum total of 'micro-level' operations, but it **demands creation of effective systems and linkages among a spectrum of concerned institutions as well as a characteristically different dynamics that is inconceivable in the smaller operation.**

It may further be argued that the alternative vision is contingent on a major perceptual change regarding the very purpose and content of education which means going much beyond the realm of only technological or management changes. We are fortunate that the various individual elements of the alternative vision have been tested and demonstrated to be viable time and again in a host of imaginative and bold educational experiments in both pre and post-independent India. It is time that we learn from the lessons of these experiments, rather than being bogged down in 're-inventing the wheel'. Indeed, the alternative vision is in some ways the result of a conscious synthesis of the various individual 'alternatives' already demonstrated successfully in areas such as community participation, creating School Complexes, working with Panchayati Raj institutions, networking, involving teachers in reviewing and re-organising curriculum, pedagogic transformation, linking productive work with the learning process, relating content with socio-cultural diversity, women empowerment and change in gender perspective, re-modelling teacher education and other such critical elements. The alternative vision is further informed by in-depth policy analyses, leading to fresh policy perceptions. What is under test at this juncture is how to interweave the insight thus gained into a wholesome alternative programme for UEE

and also how to create larger systems and processes that would bring about the necessary structural and perceptual changes within the nation's institutions concerned with education.

The following objectives of the first phase of a nation-wide process may be listed :

- i) Drawing relevant lessons from the educational experiments of both pre and post-independent India and interweaving these into an alternative programme of action.
- ii) Identifying, mobilising and networking institutional structures (such as teachers' organisations, DIETs, Universities, voluntary bodies, banks, industries and Panchayati Raj institutions) concerned with the educational and related socio-economic agenda.
- iii) Building up Regional and Sub-regional Resource Centres in various geo-cultural regions of India comprising of people from Universities, school systems and voluntary bodies.
- iv) Undertaking a series of regional (about 40 districts) and sub-regional (4-5 districts) campaigns throughout the country for identifying Project Co-ordinators (a minimum of 100) for organising UEE programmes at the level of Blocks, Tahsils/Talukas or Districts (or Wards in the case of urban areas).
- v) Organising preparatory work which shall include,
 - working out an alternative curricular framework for elementary education by drawing upon the various experimental curricula already available; this framework is to be designed in such a manner so that it would provide a basis for developing locally meaningful curriculum, texts and learning processes;

- designing and conducting orientation-cum-training workshops with the identified Regional and Sub-regional Resource Teams and the Project Coordinators and their respective team members;
- unfolding a process for DIETs and School Complexes for enabling them to draw their agenda from schools and VECs; and
- undertaking bench-mark surveys and studies to provide insights into local priorities, community perceptions, appropriate initial strategies and possibilities of effective interventions.

The proposed nation-wide process is not viewed merely as mechanical implementation of a set of pre-determined programme elements for the purpose of quantitative spread or qualitative improvement. It is instead envisaged as a transformative process which brings about a change in a fundamental sense in the perceptions and roles of a wide range of persons (including teachers) and institutions engaged in education. Indeed, if UEE is to be achieved within a foreseeable future, a majority of those concerned with education (*and not just teachers*) would have to review and transform their ways of perceiving, imparting and organising education itself. For instance, in the post-independence scenario, the educational initiative has shifted from the hands of the community to the Government and its varied agencies. This has resulted in various distortions including over-centralisation, uniformity that suppresses nation's rich plurality, dependence on bureaucratic culture and, more importantly, disempowerment of the teachers, parents and community in general. All of this has to undergo a paradigm change if we intend to make school education available to all children of India with equity and social justice. One must emphasise, however, that in this new paradigm, the people would take the lead in moving towards UEE, with the Government not only playing a supportive role but also fulfilling its constitutional obligation by making all the

necessary resources available equitably to the Panchayati Raj institutions, voluntary bodies and other community initiatives. The canvas on which this transformative process has to unfold may include,

- institutions ranging from day-care centres and pre-primary schools to high schools and colleges (including private/elite institutions);
- Universities, professional institutions, laboratories and research centres;
- institutions engaged in elementary teacher education (e.g. DIETs), special education (education of the disabled) and other specialised functions (e.g. vocational education, physical education, education of the performing arts, educational technology), Boards of Examinations and other testing agencies etc. ;
- Central and State-level agencies engaged in educational planning, research, administration and training, such as NCERT, NIEPA, NCTE, Central Institute of Vocational Education, SCERTs;
- Government Departments and Directorates of Education at the Central as well as the State-levels;
- the newly emerging structures at both the Central and State-levels for implementing and evaluating the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP);
- bureaucrats, planners, teacher educators and teachers, researchers and, above all, the political leaders;
- media and advertisement agencies ;

- teachers' and student organisations, other professional bodies, Parent-Teacher Associations, Village (or Ward) Education Committees and, eventually (or even simultaneously), the trade unions and political parties;
- organisations of the youth, women and cultural workers; science clubs and people's science groups;
- voluntary bodies, Panchayati Raj institutions and other development agencies; and
- various types of community organisations and fora.

The issues and questions thrown up by this proposed people's surge towards UEE would have to be debated at fora ranging from professional bodies and Village Panchayats to the Vidhan Sabhas and Parliament. What is needed is a change in national ambience regarding the very direction, social and academic content and process of education. This shall include loosening of organisational barriers and egos, leading to networking and paralleling, both horizontally and vertically, in all sorts of creative ways. Nothing less than a people's movement, involving self-reflection and transformation of the self, would be required to shake the nation's conscience and put the children and their education (alongwith their nutrition, health, family care and civil rights) at the centre of the national concern.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

It is proposed that the responsibility for unfolding LOKSHALA'S nation-wide catalytic process is carried, at least to begin with, by the Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (BJVJ)* and University of Delhi's Maulana Azad Centre for Elementary and Social Education (MACESE) of the Department of Education. In this arrangement, BJVJ, an all-India people's science network with active units in about 300 Districts, shall be mainly responsible for implementation and field-level inputs, while MACESE shall be concerned with academic planning and related functions (see Fig. 1). Of course, both BJVJ and MACESE shall associate various Government and voluntary bodies and resource persons in order to be able to play their respective roles effectively. This linkage between a voluntary body and a University may provide a cue for the basic organisational nucleus which would have to be created at regional and sub-regional levels throughout India. In this arrangement, we underline the complementarity of roles – the voluntary body gaining from the academic and research capability of a University Department or individual faculty members and the University benefitting from the non-bureaucratic dynamic functioning of an enthusiastic and committed voluntary body. In many of the 180-odd Universities, it would be possible to liaison with the University Departments of Education, while in others an inter-disciplinary collective of Individual faculty members could be identified, as was the case with the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP) in the seventies wherein faculty members from the Departments of Physics and Chemistry of Delhi University played the leading role. The

*Until recently known as Bharat Jan Gyan Vigyan Jatha (BJGVJ), it was organised in September 1991 and financially supported by National Council for Science and Technology Communication of the Department of Science and Technology (Govt. of India) until March 1995. A significant proportion of BJGVJ's project needs, amounting to almost 75%, were always self-generated by the activists themselves in the form of cash, kind and services. This spirit of voluntarism is being further strengthened in the current phase.

U E E - VIEWING THE NATIONAL PROCESS

प्रारम्भिक शिक्षा का लोक व्यापीकरण-राष्ट्रीय प्रक्रिया

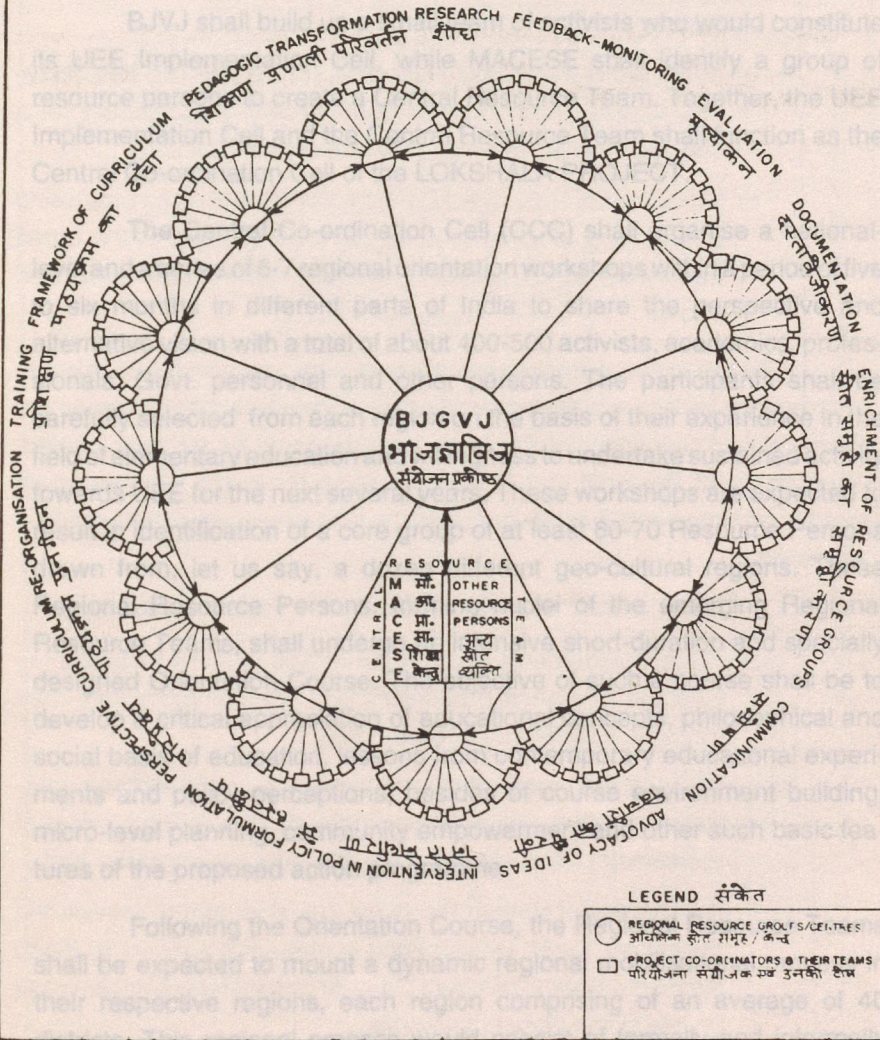


Fig 1

University Grants Commission would be expected to provide critical support by making available adequate number of Teacher Fellowships to enable the faculty members from Colleges and Universities to focus their energies on this task, as it has done earlier in similar efforts (Precedence for this was set in 1972-73 with HSTP).

BJVJ shall build up a small team of activists who would constitute its UEE Implementation Cell, while MACESE shall identify a group of resource persons to create a Central Resource Team. Together, the UEE Implementation Cell and the Central Resource Team shall function as the Central Co-ordination Cell of the LOKSHALA PROJECT.

The Central Co-ordination Cell (CCC) shall organise a national-level and a series of 6-7 regional orientation workshops within a period of five to six months in different parts of India to share the perspective and alternative vision with a total of about 400-500 activists, academics, professionals, Govt. personnel and other persons. The participants shall be carefully selected from each region on the basis of their experience in the field of elementary education and willingness to undertake sustained activity towards UEE for the next several years. These workshops are expected to result in identification of a core group of at least 60-70 Resource Persons drawn from, let us say, a dozen different geo-cultural regions. These Regional Resource Persons, forming nuclei of the emerging Regional Resource Teams, shall undergo an intensive short-duration and specially designed Orientation Course. The objective of such a course shall be to develop a critical appreciation of educational concepts, philosophical and social basis of education, lessons from contemporary educational experiments and policy perceptions, besides of course environment building, micro-level planning, community empowerment and other such basic features of the proposed action programme.

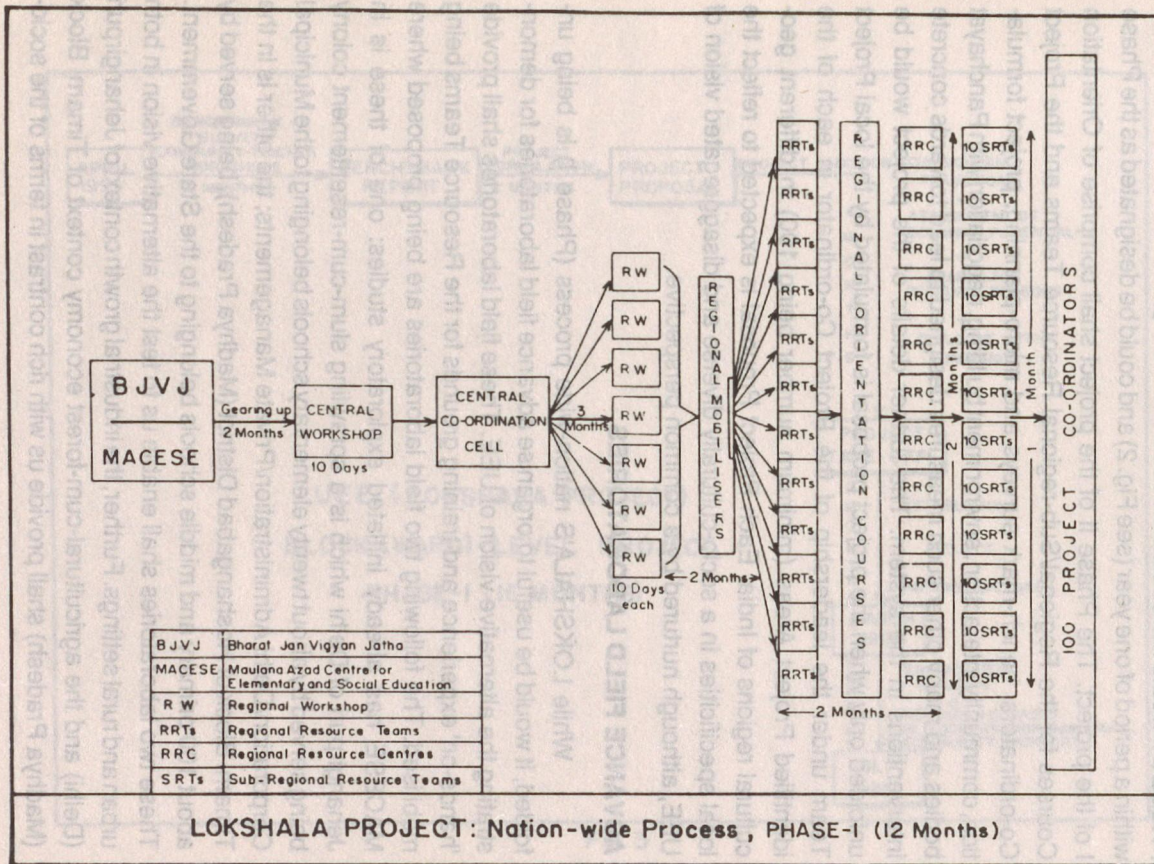
Following the Orientation Course, the Regional Resource Teams shall be expected to mount a dynamic regional mobilisational process in their respective regions, each region comprising of an average of 40 districts. This regional process would consist of formally and informally

organised interactions, meetings and seminars in Universities and colleges, professional institutions, DIETs, voluntary bodies, banks, industries and also amongst various professional and community organisations. Each regional process should result in identification of –

- a) additional members for strengthening the Regional Resource Teams (RRTs) ;
- b) about ten Sub-regional Resource Teams (SRTs), each comprising of 4-6 Resource Persons, to take responsibility for a sub-region of an average of 4 districts each; and
- c) a minimum of 100 Project Co-ordinators (full-time) for organising and leading Block-level or bigger UEE projects in the broad framework as indicated in the alternative vision described above.

As the regional process gains momentum, steps would be taken to identify Universities/Colleges/professional institutions/voluntary bodies where Regional and Sub-regional Resource Centres could be formally located. Thus about 12 Regional and 120 Sub-regional Resource Centres would need to be organised. For this purpose, the following co-operation shall be expected :

- UGC to make available at least 100 Teacher Fellowships;
- State Governments and/or local bodies to make available the selected Resource Persons/Project Co-ordinators from their respective cadres on special leave;
- Privately managed schools and colleges, banks and co-operatives, industries and voluntary bodies to 'donate' the services of the selected Resource Persons/Project Co-ordinators; and
- the Ministry of Human Resource Development to provide the necessary funds for providing sustenance support to those Resource Persons/Project Co-ordinators who are not covered by any of the above categories.



LOKSHALA PROJECT: Nation-wide Process , PHASE-I (12 Months)

Fig. 2

Once the Regional and Sub-regional Resource Centres are organised and the Project Co-ordinators identified, the LOKSHALA PROJECT would have reached the take-off stage. This should be possible within a period of one year (see Fig. 2) and could be designated as the Phase I of the project. The Phase II of the project shall comprise of Orientation Courses for the Regional/Sub-regional Resource Teams and the Project Co-ordinators, bench-mark surveys and micro-planning, project formulation, community interaction, environment building, negotiation with Panchayat bodies and many other such measures designed to lead towards concrete interventions in the system. The further details of the project would be unfolded only when the project proposal is formulated by the local Project Team under the leadership of the Project Co-ordinator in each of the identified Project Areas (minimum number being 100) in different geo-cultural regions of India. Each Project Proposal is expected to reflect the local specificities in a socio-culturally diverse and disaggregated vision of UEE, although nurtured by a common perspective.

ADVANCE FIELD LABORATORIES

While LOKSHALA'S nation-wide process (Phase I) is being unfolded, it would be useful to organise advance field laboratories for demonstrating the alternative vision of UEE. These field laboratories shall provide 'hands-on' experience and training grounds for the Resource Teams being mobilised. The following two field laboratories are being proposed where MACESE has already initiated exploratory studies: one of these is in Jehangirpuri of Delhi which is a sprawling slum-cum-resettlement colony being served by about twenty elementary schools belonging to the Municipal Corporation/Delhi Administration/Private Managements; the other is in the Timarni Block of Hoshangabad District (Madhya Pradesh), being served by about 100 primary and middle schools belonging to the State Government. These two laboratories shall enable us to test the alternative vision in both urban and rural settings. Further, the industrial growth context of Jehangirpuri (Delhi) and the agricultural-cum-forest economy context of Timarni Block (Madhya Pradesh) shall provide us with rich contrast in terms of the socio-

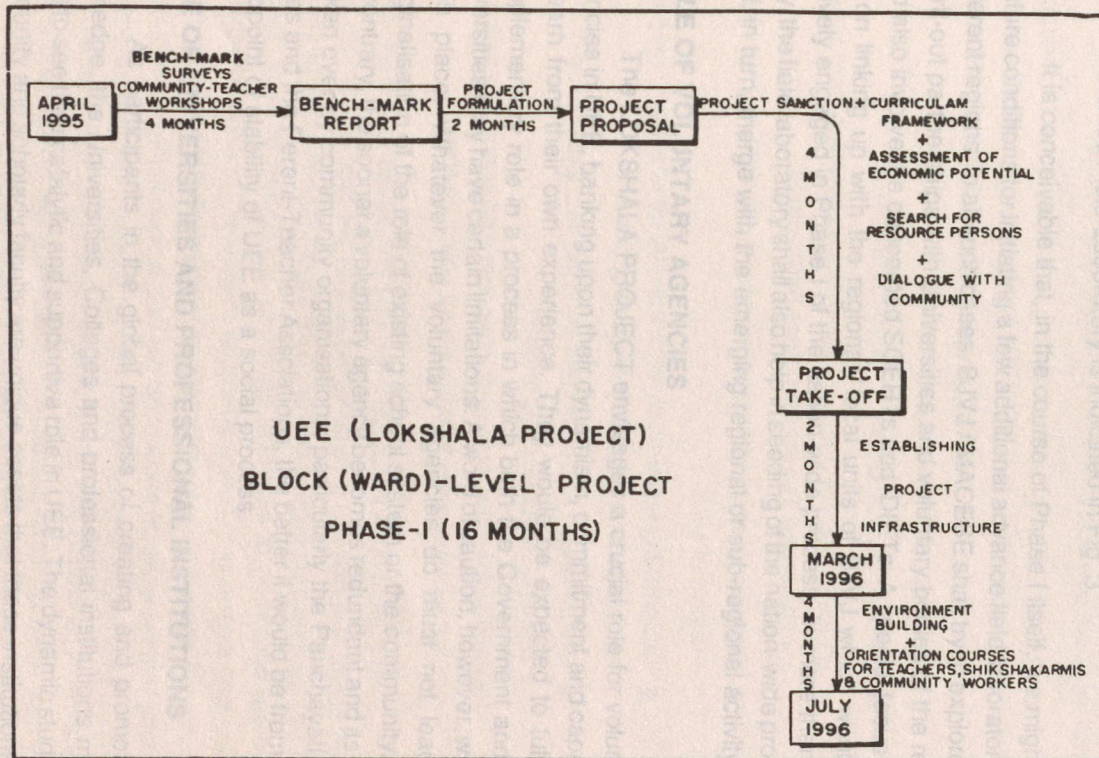


Fig. 3

economic factors that define relevance of education.

A suggestive schedule of activities in Phase I (16-months) of a typical Advance Field Laboratory is indicated in Fig. 3.

It is conceivable that, in the course of Phase I itself, we might find mature conditions for initiating a few additional advance field laboratories in different regions. In all such cases, BJVV / MACESE shall try to explore and work-out partnerships with Universities and voluntary bodies of the region and also involve the concerned SCERTs and DIETs. A special focus shall be on linking up with the regional / local units of BJVV which would be actively engaged in Phase I of the nation-wide process. In more than one way, the field laboratory shall also help in seeding of the nation-wide process and, in turn, merge with the emerging regional or sub-regional activity.

ROLE OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

The LOKSHALA PROJECT envisages a crucial role for voluntary agencies in UEE, banking upon their dynamism, commitment and capacity to learn from their own experience. They would be expected to fulfill a complementary role in a process in which both the Government and the Universities may have certain limitations. A word of caution, however, would be in place. Whatever the voluntary agencies do must not lead to marginalisation of the role of existing school system or the community. On the contrary, the sooner a voluntary agency becomes redundant and its role is taken over by community organisations, particularly the Panchayati Raj bodies and the Parent-Teacher Associations, the better it would be from the standpoint of stability of UEE as a social process.

ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES AND PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS

As participants in the global process of creating and promoting knowledge, the Universities, Colleges and professional institutions must begin to see their catalytic and supportive role in UEE. The dynamic student community and scholarly faculty are unique assets that these institutions of higher learning and research need to harness for the national cause of

ensuring universal elementary education. The LOKSHALA PROJECT hopes to mobilise and work out collaborative arrangements with such institutions all over the country for this urgent purpose. The functions expected from the Universities, Colleges and professional institutions include,

- conceptualising and designing a curricular and pedagogic framework that can provide a basis for regional/sub-regional/local Resource Teams to prepare the locally relevant teaching-learning materials and processes;
- creating evaluation and monitoring systems;
- planning and conducting orientation and training programmes for Resource Teams and other participants;
- organising short-term and long-term professional courses in support of UEE;
- undertaking research work for building up an indigenous knowledge basis for educational development;
- documenting and communicating the field experience of implementing the UEE programmes;
- advocating the emerging concepts and policy perceptions at the national level to bring about policy changes.

The LOKSHALA PROJECT is being conceived as a multi-dimensional social response to a national crisis that we face at the turn of the century. No national purpose can be more urgent than the task of ensuring universal education of equitable quality to all children of India. Delay of almost half a century in taking adequate measures for achieving this goal has already given ground for intervention by international funding agencies. It is time that we wake up and accept our own responsibility in enabling two-thirds of nation's girls and half of the children acquire meaningful elementary education. The crucial role of the Government in this nation-building task may also need some re-definition. The Government is expected to sensitively resonate with the emerging social response, rather than dominate or

control it, and yet fulfill its constitutional obligation. If this requires major structural and inter-sectoral re-adjustments, besides transformation of the role of our institutions, it is exactly what we must be prepared to undertake. Any hesitation in this regard is likely to jeopardise the very basis of our survival as an independent society dedicated to human welfare.

BACKGROUND PAPER*

Among wide-ranging Articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Articles 28 and 29 focus attention on the right to education. The Article 28-1 (a) states :

"States Parties recognize the right of the child to education and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular : (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all."

The ratification of the UN Convention (CRC) by India in December 1992 reaffirms an already existing and long-standing obligation of the State enshrined in Article 45 of the Indian Constitution to provide 'free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years'. The Constitution had envisaged the achievement of this goal by 1960!

The CRC provides the scope to further expand and enrich this obligation to include all children upto 18 years of age, in keeping with CRC's definition of the child, instead of only upto 14 years.

- ◆ However, the recent official discourse on education in India reveals a contrary trend. During the last two years, there has been evidence of a progressive dilution of commitment to fulfilling the Constitutional obligation, both in terms of the number of years of schooling and the quality of education. This trend became particularly evident in the years following the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990.

* Excerpted from the Report of a National Consultation on Rights of the Child organised jointly by Indian Council for Child Welfare, UNICEF and Department of Women & Child Development (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India), November 1994.

◆ The Indian development planners had until recently interpreted the Constitutional obligation under Article 45 as elementary education for eight years from Class I to VIII on the understanding that most children would begin their schooling at the age of 6 years. It was expected that the Indian ratification of CRC shall lead to deepening and enriching of the State's obligation towards education of the child in which case the scope of the Article 45 and other related Articles would have had to be enlarged in the following critical ways:

- Covering Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) of children in the 0-6 age group under Article 45 as a state responsibility and viewing it as a right of the child; the current ECCE programmes (including ICDS Scheme), operating largely as a welfare measure, could manage to reach only 10.2% of the total child population in the 0-6 age group, as per an official estimate made in 1990; the future plans envisage incremental expansion of such programmes, but are a far cry from provision of complete coverage.
- Including the handicapped children under Article 45; the current programmes reach a minuscule proportion of the estimated more than one crore (by far an underestimate) of them.
- Expanding the facilities of secondary and higher secondary education to cover an increasing proportion of the children that are included in the CRC definition (merely 5-7% of the children in the 14-18 age group are covered today); curricular reorganization to ensure concept formation, scientific attitude, skill development, capability to deal with and intervene in social reality and other widely acknowledged educational goals is to be viewed in this context as an essential instrument of equity and justice, rather than as merely a desirable attribute for the education of

the few who could afford it; the notion of vocational education as a parallel stream for the less than privileged students is to be replaced by curriculum which interweaves productive work with various academic disciplines as a medium of learning and attitudinal transformation for **all** the students at the secondary and higher secondary stages, as already advocated by a review committee. During the last two years, however, no evidence of moving towards the afore-mentioned enlargement of the meaning of Article 45 was available.

- ◆ In the post-Jomtien phase, the long-standing commitment to ensure eight years of elementary education for all children has been reduced, for all practical purposes, to five years of primary education (i.e. upto Class V) and virtually de-linked from the upper primary stage (i.e. Classes VI to VIII) from the standpoint of both curriculum and infrastructural planning and resource allocation. Such a measure amounts to violation of the Constitutional directive and denial of the right of the child under CRC. This dilution in the policy commitment is clearly evident from the manner in which the externally funded District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), restricted to first five years of education for the 6-11 age group, is being promoted as the dominant strategy for Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE). Further, the Constitutional obligation would be 'officially' considered to have been fulfilled even if the entire primary schooling is substituted by what the NPE (1986) projected as 'equivalent through the non-formal stream'.

The process of dilution did not end here. In the wake of CRC's ratification by India, the National Literacy Mission (NLM) has come to include the out-of-school children in the 9-14 age group in its ambit. As a result of this development, the state's responsibility could be assumed to have been fulfilled if three (**not** even five)

years of primary education for the 6-9 age group is followed by coverage of the children in the 9-11 (**not even** 9-14) group in an **adult literacy** (as distinct from **educational**) programme. In this 'educational' scenario of the post-CRC India, 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 NLM's adult literacy programme for the next two years, without even having stepped into the village school ! This scenario will allow the state to co-exist quite comfortably with,

- perpetuation of child labour;
 - decreasing access to common property resources for the majority of the people, leading to increasing load on children for gathering fuel, fodder and water and attending to younger siblings; this of course is only a prelude to further erosion of the right of the girl child in particular, owing to the child marriage practice;
 - continuance of social, gender and regional inequities and disparities with respect to wages, distribution of developmental benefits and participation in decision-making;
 - the local school remaining ineffective and marginalised; and
 - the various segments of society having access to different layers of school streams as per their financial capacities, thereby reproducing the inequalities.
- ◆ The following are certain additional developments that have begun to distort the educational agenda in India in the post-Jomtien phase :
- Blurring of the very meaning of education and the key terminology in the policy documents. For instance,

literacy, from being just one parameter of education is being promoted in the post-Jomtien phase as a national goal to such an extent so as to make it almost synonymous with education.

- The concept of 'Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL)' was first spelt out by NCERT in 1991 and promoted by EFA from 1993 onwards as a tool for evaluation and organization of the learning process. It takes only a limited view of education, focussing on preparing 'socially useful' and contributing adults'. The NCERT document tends to envisage education in terms of inputs and outputs. The MLL evaluative criteria do not emphasize qualities such as 'critical thinking', 'reasoning', 'judging', 'creativity' or 'sensitivity' — the very essence of education. In particular, the Environmental Studies curriculum is presented not in terms of specific competencies, but with an anti-poor bias aimed at conditioning the child's mind. Also lacking in a child development perspective, the document is basically interested in shaping of children into uncritical acceptors of prevailing unjust social realities and the unsustainable development model. This is sought to be achieved by MLL by confusing competencies for development of critical, creative and humane qualities amongst the children.

- Education for girls has been referred to in the recent policy documents with increasing use of terms like empowerment and change. A close look at the way in which these terms are used, however, reveals a trend of looking upon women as ready **receptors** of demographic messages, **literate** mothers for transmission of these messages and more **proficient**

wage earners without control over their mode of production, rather than of empowering them to transform their role in society as equal partners. This is why rise in female literacy levels is presented as a mechanistic goal that would by itself lead to improvement in the social or demographic parameters (IMR, birth rate, crude death rate, family size, couple protection rate etc.) even without change either in the socio-economic conditions or society's perspective on gender. This view is utterly violative of the girl child's right to education as a human.

- An increasing tendency to view education, particularly primary education and literacy, as an isolated domain for social action, ignoring the inextricable link between education and the socio-economic factors.
- A total lack of interest in exploring the ways in which education has become irrelevant to the lives of a large majority of our children. This can be seen in focussing attention **only** on issues such as child-centred education (undoubtedly a laudable and urgent objective) and not even discussing the lack of social relevance of education for child labour.
- The unpreparedness for changing priorities of resource allocation within the national economy in the past in favour of the weaker sections of society has now become the rationale for inviting large international investment in the primary education sector. This trend ignores the fundamental role of the principle of re-distribution of resources within the system. The problem is further aggravated because international aid is being accepted without clarity of

our own national goals, thus giving ample scope to the aid-givers to influence the very direction and role of education in social transformation.

The goal of transforming the elementary school system to enable it to **reach out to all children** (including the handicapped as well as those living in the so-called 'unserved' habitations) must be pursued as a national priority. In this perspective, the school is placed at the centre of any 'strategy' for moving towards UEE as well as universalization of ECCE (see Box on 'The Empowered School'). Accordingly, the parallel streams of non-formal education (NFE) and NLM's coverage of the 9-14 age group under its adult literacy campaigns must not be allowed to marginalise, or divert attention or resources from, the elementary school system in the name of 'pragmatic strategies'. The urgency of this task is to be seen in terms of the wide gap that exists between the goal of UEE and the ground reality. As per the latest available analysis of the census data, less than half of India's children and only about one third of the girls in the 6-11 age group attended school. This grim picture is further skewed by serious social, gender and regional disparities.

In order to ensure the right of the child to education 'on the basis of equal opportunity', as is envisaged under CRC, there is no alternative but to implement the concept of the Common School System throughout the country in both letter and spirit. This concept, inherited by the post-independent India as a legacy of the freedom movement, was strongly advocated by the Kothari Commission (1964-66) and successively re-iterated by the National Policies on Education in 1968 and 1986 and also retained in the revised policy in 1992. Although considered essential for promoting 'social cohesion and national integration' and for advancing the cause of equity and justice in society, it has been practised more in its breach. Layer upon layer of school streams

(e.g. Kendriya Vidyalayas, Sainik Schools, Navodaya Vidyalayas) were added by the Government to already existing multiple layers of privately funded elite schools in order to satisfy the rising aspirations of various better-off segments of society. The relatively recent push given to the non-formal stream and the post-CRC inclusion of the 9-14 age group in NLM's adult literacy campaigns with the purpose of making them virtually a substitute for elementary schooling are noteworthy indications of the governmental policies. The ongoing promotion of vocational education as a parallel stream at the secondary stage, chiefly for the less than privileged, also falls in this category of official measures. Such policies can be seen as logical extensions of the well-established practice of the continued attrition of the Common School System.

The state of education described above has been acknowledged and recognized many times over by various government commissions, review committees and advisory panels on education. Wide-ranging recommendations to redress the inequities and disparities in education have been made. The problem, however, has been that these unambiguous recommendations have failed to influence the Government agenda. In an attempt to understand the State's attitude towards education and its framework for working out priorities and strategies, an analysis of the recent policy documents was undertaken. This reveals a consistent pattern in the State's policies which amounts to strong resistance to any effort to re-define the prevailing educational goals or to overhaul the well-entrenched system of education. The reason for this lies in the value that the State attributes to the education of its people. The analysis of policy statements (as cited in the original paper) shows that the State attributes to it an instrumental value (such as its impact on economic growth, demographic targets etc.), rather than an intrinsic value for the fullest development of the child's potential as a matter of basic human right. This leads us, therefore, to at least one defining principle of the

State's view of education - the principle of maintaining the existing social order. This principle may be termed as '**Education for Social Order**', which is a far cry from '**Education as a Human Right**'.

If CRC is to be honoured in all seriousness, it then logically follows that a radical restructuring of the entire educational endeavour is called for, implying recognition of **education as a human right**. It follows that the State will have to accept the responsibility for ensuring **free and compulsory common system of education of comparable quality for all the children of India upto 18 years of age in full consonance with the basic Rights of the Child**.

In order to achieve this goal, the system of education will have to be centred around empowerment of people for equity and social justice. This is possible only through a participative, egalitarian and responsive educational system. In this perspective, the school shall have to be transformed into a community-managed social institution (instead of being merely a State-controlled prescription) **where children first understand the world they live in, then participate in it and eventually intervene to re-define it**.

THE STATUS OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Committee for Review of National Policy on Education (popularly known as the Acharya Ramamurti Committee), constituted by the Government of India in 1990, analyzed the state of school system and the developments in it since the promulgation of NPE. Based upon this and the more recent studies, the status of the school system is presented below.

Enrolment

- ◆ A recent National Sample Survey conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (September 1994) has established that the percentage of non-enrolled children is far

higher than the official statistics show and also varies significantly for families in different occupations. This report further points out that the official data on both enrolment and retention lack reliability.

- ◆ Thanks to the various interventions in the wake of NPE 1986, the revised Programme of Action (POA) in 1992 acknowledged this situation and brought enrolment back into its priorities.

Disparities in Enrolment

There are major gender disparities in education with 1.5 times more boys than girls attending schools. The disparity is greater in rural areas.

- ◆ Although the percentages of SC/ST children among all students enrolled at the primary level represent their respective proportions in the population, their participation at the Middle and the High School level falls sharply in comparison to that of other children. The literacy levels among SC/ST women are alarmingly low, with the all-India percentage being as low as 10.9% for SCs and only 8.0% for STs.
- ◆ The actual gap between the literacy levels of SCs/STs and those of the non-SC/ST population groups had widened between 1961 and 1981.
- ◆ A study has identified 123 districts which have a Gross Enrolment Ratio for girls at the primary level of less than 50% and a rural female literacy rate of less than 10%.

Retention

- ◆ A large percentage of children drop out in the early stages of elementary education, with nearly 50% of them dropping out by Class V and 65% (70% in the case of girls) by class VIII. These figures are higher in the case of SC/ST population groups.

Physical Access to School

- ◆ The Fifth All India Educational Survey (1986) found that 94% of the rural population was served with a primary school within 1 KM and 85% had a middle school within 3 KM.
- ◆ The 'official norm' is based upon the assumption of what is considered a 'walking distance', without regard to difficulties of terrain and socio-cultural realities. The Acharya Ramamurti Committee Report shows how these norms may not be applicable in the case of girls who are engaged in work both within and outside the home. The walking distance norm also needs to be questioned in view of the restricted physical access to school for the girl child from the weaker sections of society, particularly due to the increasing incidence of sexual atrocities.
- ◆ In this perspective, almost 20% of the rural population (about 12 crores) did not have access to a primary school **within the habitation.**
- ◆ With respect to the issue of regional disparity, the Fifth All India Educational Survey (1986) has provided State-wise data establishing wide fluctuations with respect to the percentage of rural population having access to a primary school **within the habitation.**

Availability of Schools and Teachers

In spite of a rise in the absolute number of schools and teachers between 1965 and 1986, the number of schools and teachers per ten thousand persons progressively declined during this period.

- ◆ The impact of Operation Black Board, a major Government initiative for upgradation of school infrastructure, is yet to be investigated.

- ◆ Almost one-third of the primary schools in the rural areas continue to be single teacher schools, while another one-third have only two teachers each, i.e. two-thirds have two or less teachers each. Many primary schools lack even basic infrastructural facilities essential for any acceptable quality of education.

Curriculum and its Transaction

The prevailing curriculum of elementary education suffers from the following lacunae :

- Informational focus and over-emphasis on facts at the time of examination;
- Inflexible and unresponsive to the local needs and environment;
- Devoid of the component of skill formation;
- Lacking in social and cultural inputs from the community;
- Unrelated to the 'world of work' which exercises a strong pull on the life of a large number of children after the age of 10 years;
- Transaction mostly through lectures in a non-participative mode;
- Near-absence of activity-based learning; and
- Discouraging exploration, inquiry, creativity and initiative on the part of the students.

Recommendations made by both the Acharya Ramamurti Committee Report and the more recent Yash Pal Committee Report (1993) for reduction of the load of the school bag (which included the comprehension load) have been, by and large, ignored; each of the two reports were followed by appointment of further committees whose findings amounted to validation of the **status quo** in this regard.

Teachers and Administration

The Acharya Ramamurti Committee Report underlines the rather low status of the teachers in the educational process and society.

- The teacher is at the bottom of the administrative hierarchy.
- There is no focus on capacity-building and continued training for teachers. DIETs and SIETs have not been able to meet this need.
- Experiments in teachers empowerment, such as the Andhra Pradesh Teacher's Resource Centres, Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme and the more recent Shikshak Samakhya of M.P., are viewed more as marginal and local initiatives, rather than as experiences whose lessons could help transform the vision of elementary education.

RESOURCES

The Kothari Commission (1964-66) had recommended that 'the proportion of GNP allocated to education will rise from 2.9% in 1965-66 to 6.0% in 1985-86'. This recommendation was based upon anticipated economic growth rates during the ensuing two decades whereas the actual growth rates were much lower. Notwithstanding this fact, the percentage of GNP allocated to education fell far short of the recommended level, being only 4.0% in 1985-86 and 3.9% in 1986-87.

- ◆ The National Policy on Education, 1986, reiterated the earlier commitment on resources and assured that 'from the Eighth Five Year Plan onwards, it will uniformly exceed to 6% of the national income'. However, this level has remained almost stable around 3.9% from 1986-87 to date. In the EFA documents, the Government indicated that the anticipated level may be reached in the Ninth Five Year Plan, i.e. 1997-2002. In view of the cumulative gap in resource investment in education building up over almost three decades, the old recommendation of investing 6% of GNP in education may not be adequate any more and would need drastic upward revision.
- ◆ The share of education in the Five Year Plan outlays has been progressively decreasing from a level of 7.86% in the First Five Year Plan to 3.55% in the Seventh Five Year Plan.
- ◆ A matter of serious concern is the rising trend from NPE (1986) onwards of suggesting that the community itself has to raise an increasing share of resources for elementary education. Given the impoverished state of communities, the notion of participation cannot be extended to absolve the state of its financial and other obligations.
- ◆ The recurring expenditure per student on primary education declined from Rs. 27 to Rs. 20 (at 1950-51 prices) between 1970-71 and 1980-81. Even the gradual rise in the per student expenditure during the eighties has to be seen in the background of the decline in the earlier decade. An official document has acknowledged that 'there is need to step up the level of total resources to be allocated for education, even to maintain the present level of quality of education'.
- ◆ There has been a rapid rise in the availability of international funding for elementary education in the post-Jomtien phase.

External assistance totalling upto about Rs. 2,500 crores is expected to flow into the elementary education sector during the Eighth Five Year Plan in a number of projects in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, U.P., Madhya Pradesh and others. The impact of the external funding on the post-Jomtien upsurge in governmental attention regarding UEE needs to be viewed in the context of the following issues :

- The inflow of external funds does not seem to go along Government's own policy statement in the EFA document which states that 'there is no alternative but to augment domestic resources if the objectives of EFA are to be achieved'.
- The total amount of international funding adds upto only 4.22% of the anticipated public expenditure on elementary education, a minuscule sum which could have been internally mobilized, given a level of commitment which would permit a change in the priorities of resource allocation.
- External funding also carries with it the inherent danger of influencing national policies, strategies and even the direction of education, a fact underlined by the guidelines formulated by CABE for externally aided projects.

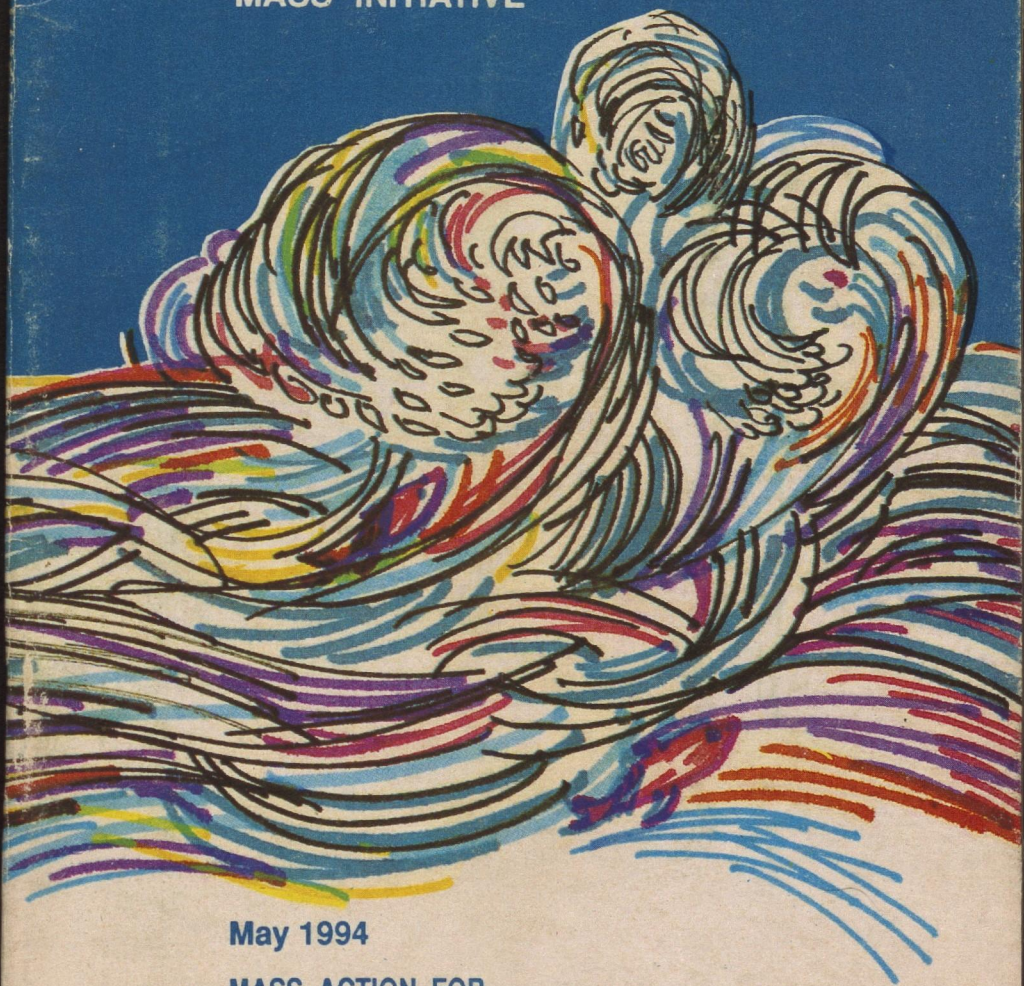
**TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE VISION
THE EMPOWERED SCHOOL**

} Deleted from the Background paper since this material is essentially covered in the accompanying Project Proposal of the LOKSHALA PROJECT.

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BHARAT JAN GYAN VIGYAN JATHA

COUPLING PEOPLE'S SCIENCE
WITH
MASS INITIATIVE



May 1994

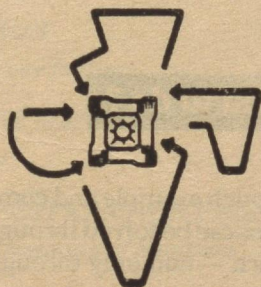
MASS ACTION FOR
NATIONAL
REGENERATION

These are the masses of toiling people who constitute the majority of Indian population. They are like an ocean — like a vast ocean. The waves that rise up from the ocean are like the struggles waged by the toiling masses. The froth that is formed on the surface of ocean's water is like the leadership of the masses. As long as there is not enough water — not infinite water — there would be no making of the waves. And as long as there are no waves, there shall not be any froth either !



BHARAT JAN GYAN VIGYAN JATHA

MASS ACTION FOR NATIONAL REGENERATION (MANAR)



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Catalysed by the National Council for Science & Technology Communication
of the Department of Science & Technology, Govt. of India

For whom ?

- ★ For those of us whom our macro-development plans have left behind.
- ★ For all those who participate to develop a better sense of belonging; for sharing of knowledge and understanding; for modulating the knowledge of those who think they know; for making our knowledge more fertile; for creating an empathy with our own present and possible futures.
- ★ For combating a sense of cynicism amongst the young, giving them an avenue to seek fulfilment and to contribute.
- ★ For focussing the energies and passions of millions of our people on our real problems, sidelining many of the peripheral issues that often sub-divide and weaken us.

In short, for all of us, for INDIA.

What do we intend to do ?

- ★ To help generate, through example and communication, conviction that our basic problems can be solved through a self-reliant, humane and scientific approach — and only through such an approach.
- ★ To directly address, and alleviate, through deep intellectual and physical involvement, some of the basic problems afflicting the Indian society.
- ★ To savour, and to project, the cultural diversity of this country, as also the common thread that knits us together.
- ★ To strengthen the developing urge of a people now ready to move on their own feet, through the content and processes of a massive multi-dimensional adventure.
- ★ To help transform the attitudes as also the content of knowledge and consciousness of our people, including the educated elite, through their total involvement with the deep reality of Indian existence.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 1. BGVJ | — Bharat Jan Gyan Vigyan Jatha |
| 2. DST | — Department of Science and
Technology, Govt. of India |
| 3. LOC | — Local Organising Council of BGVJ |
| 4. MANAR | — Mass Action for National
Regeneration (a programme of BGVJ) |
| 5. NCSTC | — National Council for Science and
Technology Communication
(a Division of DST) |
| 6. NOC | — National Organising Council of
BGVJ |
| 7. SOC | — State Organising Council of BGVJ |

LOOKING BACK

The Jatha that was

A little over an year ago, there was a great deal of effervescence throughout the country. Thousands of BHARAT JAN GYAN VIGYAN JATHA (BJGVJ) volunteers, carrying the message of people's science, criss-crossed about 50,000 villages and several hundred towns and cities. Moving as enthusiastic but well-trained Jathas they interacted with tens of millions of people in dozens of dialects and languages. They knew of no constraints. The barriers of caste, creed and culture broke down. Women lifted their veils in amazement to look at what these young volunteers were doing in front of their village *chaupals* or around their wells. Old people nodded in appreciation and commented about the scientific practices that they had inherited from their past. The children, bubbling with their natural curiosity, joined the Jathas and contributed their own creative ideas. The young and mature adults critically examined the vision of tomorrow's India that these Jathas painted before them.

The Kala-jatha teams made multi-media presentations through posters, songs, street plays, demonstrations, exhibitions, dialogues etc. These covered six varied themes, viz. Health, Water, Environment, Superstitions and Scientific Thinking, Appropriate Technology and Literacy. Yet, there was a common fabric that knitted them together — the fabric of a self-sustaining, dynamic and constructive mass initiative, permeated with the spirit of people's science.

Jathas had a mission. They brought hope where despair reigned. They talked of potential for change where cynicism was the norm. They presented scientific facts and ideas concerning medicine,

forestry, agriculture, housing, water management or astronomy from India's long past and showed how some of these could still be made relevant to our present times. They pointed to the knowledge lying in nation's laboratories and libraries that needed to be harnessed for the welfare of people at large. They stressed the need to act, to move ahead and to churn up things around us, rather than to wait for someone else to solve our problems.

The mission of the Jatha was *Manthan*, nation-wide *Manthan*. Perhaps the young volunteers were too naive. Yet they had opted to be naive, rather than be good-for-nothing cynics.

To be sure, there was nothing odd about the format of Jatha that BJGVJ had chosen. Jathas made a great deal of cultural sense. Whenever India faced a social crisis in her history, her leaders led Jathas — from the times of Gautam Buddhæ to those of Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya and Sufi Sæints. This is what Mahatma Phule did to mount a battle for the awakening of *dalits* and to spread women's education. Mahatma Gandhi led the 'Salt Jatha' to arouse nation's conscience against British imperialism and to carry the message of a self-reliant India. In our own little way, we also tried to walk in the footsteps of these visionaries. We were inspired by the Science Jathas which the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishat had organised in Kerala in the seventies as an unusual experiment in giving birth to the modern form of people's science movement. We took cue from the BHARAT JAN VIGYAN JATHA of 1987 and BHARAT GYAN VIGYAN JATHA of 1990 which had blazed the trail for us.

Our Jathas moved in the winter of 1992-93 when a large part of India was burning in communal flames in the wake of the Ayodhya crisis. In those gloomy weeks, it indeed took moral fibre to go out on the streets and talk of science, development and an optimistic tomorrow which the people themselves would help mould.

It was as recent as August 1993 when the last BJGVJ Jatha was still moving. This was in Sikkim which took its own time to come in but when it did, the people of Sikkim surprised all of us by their enthusiasm.

As the dust settled down, it was already February or March of 1993. The exhibitions had been folded, the anti-superstition and food adulteration detection kits carefully packed away and the numerous song and street play scripts filed systematically for the

next Jatha. Twenty nine State Organising Councils (SOCs) and the 350-odd District Organising Councils (DOCs) got down to their knees to write their reports, analyse their experiences and settle their accounts. The numerous Local Organising Councils (LOCs), initiated during Jatha at the level of either individual or clusters of villages / *bastis*, wondered how the enthusiasm generated locally would be harnessed into concrete developmental action.



As nature has ordained it she expects anything that is taken from her to be returned to her in the same form or other.... In the same way, in the economic field any transaction that results in a one-sided exchange will lead to poverty.

— J.C. Kumarappa

SEWAGRAM SAMMELAN

An attempt to analyse and rejuvenate

It was in the first week of April 1993 that about 350 representatives from the DOCs, SOC's and dozens of associated voluntary organisations gathered at Sewagram, near Wardha (Maharashtra). These volunteers were eager to share their excitement and experience of Jatha and to brace themselves up for the next phase, i.e. Mass Action for National Regeneration (MANAR). Mahatma Gandhi's hut provided an appropriate backdrop and inspired the volunteers from every nook and corner of India to reflect upon the implications of their work for the millions of our people who have been consistently denied the fruits of modern knowledge and development. A whole array of questions were posed by the participants for the Sannelan. This happened in the midst of reporting from different Districts and during raising of hundreds of local issues that were thrown up by the Jathas. What would be the role of science and scientific thinking in MANAR? What form of technology needs to be employed, if at all, in order to erase inequality and injustice that afflicts our society? What changes are required in our Science and Technology Policies in order to ensure sustainable development? What are the socio-economic and other implications of a self-reliant India? What would be the role of our Universities, schools, research laboratories, official and non-official development agencies, banks, hospitals and co-operative societies in MANAR? What about the village squares, playgrounds, highway *dhabas*, urban coffee houses, Mahila Mandals and media offices? What would be the organisational form of community initiative for development? What is the role of people's science

movement in stemming the rising tide of communalism and divisive forces? Answers to such questions could at best be tentative. As the discussion was summed up at the end of the 4-day Sammelan, the following outcomes of Jatha were recognised :

- The decentralised style of functioning enabled the rich diversity of the country to be reflected in the organisational process, ways of collecting funds and other resources from the people, methods of relating with the authorities and, above all, in Jatha presentations.

- The self-confidence of the activists in addressing the local issues and problems increased significantly.

- Districts were the units of planning and implementation of Jatha, whereas the role of National Organising Council (NOC) and SOCs was consciously only supportive and catalytic.

- There was a rising appreciation of the need to learn the ways of documenting, mapping and utilising regional or local resources for development.

- Notwithstanding the available Government help, the DOCs in several Districts preferred to go to the people and build up grassroot initiatives and support systems.

- In spite of six focal themes selected as common themes, various DOCs adopted diverse approaches in their presentations and in working out the specific combination of media as well as the content.

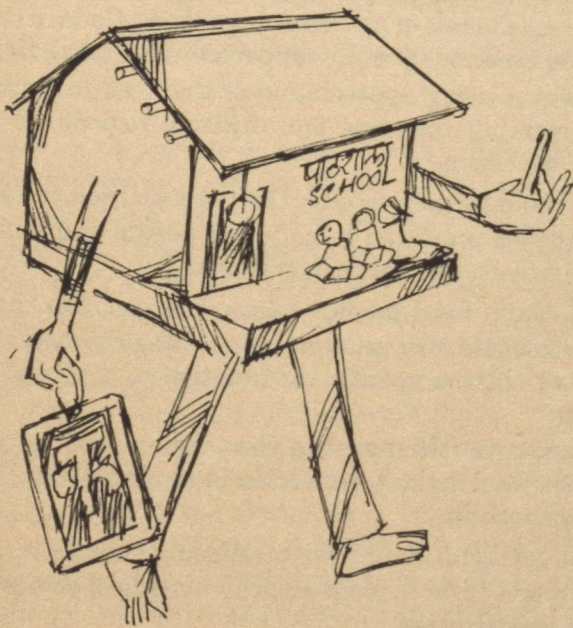
- Many activists felt that the Government policies in relation to the six focal themes were often in conflict with people's needs and aspirations.

- The conventional norms for measuring success in social action were found to be inadequate; the need to evolve a fresh set of norms was stressed.

- It was appreciated that watershed planning was not merely a technological imperative; instead it had an inseparable socio-political component. Whenever and wherever scientific water management was achieved through genuine people's initiative, the effort also led to significant social gains.

- Many of the Jatha workers who were engaged in adult literacy programmes realised that the root cause of illiteracy lay in the prevailing unjust and exploitative system. Further, it

was felt that the constitutional goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (not merely literacy) could only be achieved by working out strategies that ensured that every child in the school-going age was able to go to school or else the school itself reached out to all such children. This would be much facilitated by structural and qualitative changes in the school and by bringing it under direct management of the local community. Many felt that going on with the adult literacy work, without at the same time focusing attention on universal schooling, would be like trying to mop the floor dry with the water tap running !



Small is not just beautiful,
but can be powerful too!



SPIN-OFFS

Happenings we had not planned for

BJGVJ's decentralised approach was expected to lead to such outcomes that were not part of our initial plans. Indeed, such unanticipated outcomes are inherent to the style of functioning adopted by us. The following ground-level reports substantiate this expectation :

- The people of a village called Suhas-Owari in Allahabad District of U.P., frustrated by lack of Government response, took the initiative in their hands and constructed a 2 km-long approach road through *Shramdan*.
- Yet another village in the same District saw a decade-old dream being fulfilled — *pattas* of land were ultimately given to the landless tillers through the efforts of BJGVJ activists.
- The BJGVJ workers evolved a city plan for Muzaffarnagar (U.P.) and constituted a committee for its implementation.
- *Dalit*, muslim and other backward class women in Sarsawa and Nangal Blocks of Saharanpur District in U.P. led Jatha in several dozens of villages, without even the knowledge of DOC, and are today keen to carry on the MANAR work as a women's initiative.
- In a *kasbai* town of Saran District in Bihar, a system of repairing about a hundred non-operational hand pumps was set up at community initiative and potable water supply ensured to thousands of people.
- The BJGVJ activists in Monghyr town of Bihar repaired the defective water taps in 16 wards of the town; support from



Real planning consisted in the best utilisation of the whole manpower of India and the distribution of the raw products of India in her numerous villages instead of sending them outside and re-buying finished articles at fabulous prices.... Any plan which exploited the raw materials of a country and neglected the potentially more powerful manpower was lopsided and could never tend to establish human equality.

— Mahatma Gandhi
Harijan, March 23, 1947

the District administration followed.

- A bio-fertiliser comprising of micro-nutrients for foliar application, devised by a Patna-based BJGVJ activist, has been widely popularised amongst farmers by the SOC and DOCs in Bihar, both during and after the Jatha.
- The well-known Wardha system of rural latrines was promoted in the Jatha and post-Jatha phases and several Panchayats persuaded to shift the Jawahar Rojgar Yojana funds for this purpose in Wardha District of Maharashtra.
- The BJGVJ workers in Pondicherry have begun to shoulder the responsibility for National Literacy Mission's Programme.
- The BJGVJ teams in Arunachal Pradesh have succeeded in arousing consciousness for improved village sanitation. Special measures are being explored to achieve it, including a possible link up with tourism development programme of the State Government.
- Survey and documentation of medicinal plants in a number of Districts of Himachal Pradesh and Sonitpur District of Assam have been started with Jatha initiative.
- Responding to the shortage of raw material (i.e. leaf of a variety of palm) for manufacturing the traditional headgear (*Jhanpi*) of Assamese farmers, Golaghat DOC of Assam had set up nurseries to supply palm saplings to the village-based *Jhanpi* manufacturers. The latter have now begun to plant the saplings in their backyards as a future source of *Jhanpi* raw material.
- Improved agricultural practices have been promoted in parts of Jalgaon District of Maharashtra.
- Government estimates of the impact of drought on the cattle in Yavatmal District in Maharashtra have been challenged by a people's survey carried out during the Jatha and the authorities prevailed upon to rectify their action accordingly.
- Total village plans with focus on watershed planning have been evolved in a cluster of 40 villages in Ratnagiri District of Maharashtra.
- Campaign and lobbying for controlling industrial pollution of Kosi river in Rampur District (U.P.) have gathered momen-

tum through the initiative of BJGVJ activists.

- The Kala-Jatha team in Ranchi (Bihar) has now been transformed into an ongoing consciousness-raising group comprising of tribal boys and girls living in a sprawling industrial slum of Ranchi town.
- The Goa SOC has become aware of the need to re-orient a Government plan for promoting commercial palm cultivation at the cost of traditional coconut; an alternative proposal to use only wasteland for palm, without displacing coconut is being mooted.
- The BJGVJ workers of Sabarkantha District in Gujarat have educated the people on the dangers of food adulteration and promoted a testing kit devised locally as part of a consumer awareness campaign.
- Some schools and a hospital in rural West Delhi that were essentially non-functioning have been made functional as a result of local BJGVJ intervention.
- The software prepared for the Jatha, especially its booklets and poster series on Water and Housing and its Food Adulteration Detection Kit, has caught the imagination of a large number of voluntary social action groups as well as Government agencies and is being used widely for communication and training in many parts of the country.
- The entire set of BJGVJ software is being utilised by NCSTC/DST for conducting orientation programmes for about 400 Nehru Yuva Kendras all over the country for promoting scientific activity.

The list is literally endless and the enthusiasm of the BJGVJ workers, infectious.



ENGAGEMENT WITH OFFICIAL STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES

Initiating change from within

From the outset BJGVJ had aimed at interacting with nation's pace-setting institutions in the hope of learning from them and in turn sharing with them what we have learnt through Jatha work. We must admit that we had not made appropriate preparations for this task. Yet the enthusiasm of several of our teams was such that a meaningful relationship evolved with some of the official organisations. This happened in the case of Councils of Science & Technology in Assam (ASTECH) and Himachal Pradesh (HPSC for Sc., Tech. & Env.) which have become partners in our work and have begun to look like inspired social action groups.

The case of the Rural Technology Division of the Regional Research Laboratory at Jammu needs special mention. This Division of the CSIR laboratory had been doing research on improved techniques of fish cultivation for a fairly long time but its research gains remained confined within the laboratory walls. When its scientists got involved in BJGVJ, they discovered a viable mechanism in Jatha to carry their researches from laboratory to the village ponds with active participation of the people. Similarly, the Socially Useful and Productive Work (SUPW) programme in several dozen schools of different Districts of Arunachal Pradesh has been reorganised to incorporate the six focal themes of Jatha.

However, such exciting examples are far and few. These only mark the beginning of the long march ahead.

It may not be out of place here to sound a note of warning.

In some of our SOC's, an over-dependence on official agencies and their bureaucratic work styles has tended to cripple the BJGVJ effort to seek people's participation. Apparently, there is fairly widespread confusion, not limited to BJGVJ alone, regarding the nature of relationship which should exist between an official machinery and a social movement. On the one hand we have those who carefully evaluate the social character of the Government development programmes and judiciously link up with these to facilitate people's initiative. On the other hand, we have those who prefer to jump on the bandwagon of the Government schemes, now far too often internationally funded and regulated. In this regard, we do not seem to have learnt the requisite lessons from the previous Jathas, beginning from the now almost legendary Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishat's initiative in the mid-seventies down to our own in 1992-93.

The real challenge before the Jatha activists is to innovate ways of relating with official agencies such that participative and transparent work culture would permeate the future task of reorganising the various BJGVJ bodies. Thus our future plans for reorganising BJGVJ must reflect the diverse perceptions and aspirations of the communities in their specific socio-economic and cultural contexts, rather than the centralised formulations so typical of the Government machinery. At times, it may be wise to view and design our initiatives as 'limited interventions' in Government plans and thereby 'protect' ourselves from the debilitating bureaucratic culture. And here lies the art of 'cracking the hard nut without cracking in the process'.



PARALLEL CONCERNS

Decentralised and disaggregated initiatives

While Jatha focussed attention on six selected themes and the post-Jatha phase on MANAR preparation, there was adequate scope for the SOCs and DOCs to apply their energies on concerns that were either of regional / local significance or suited the specific interest or orientation of the Jatha activists. The following illustrations would make the point :

- In the wake of the Ayodhya crisis in December 1992, several of our teams engaged themselves in both the relief activities as well as programmes to strengthen communal harmony and national solidarity. Several DOCs in U.P. (Allahabad, Farukhabad and Deoria, for instance) and Bihar (Madhubani, Godda and others) organised *Sadbhavana Yatras* at their own initiative.
- The SOCs of Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal have jointly taken initiative in the field of elementary science education by organising a Purvanchal Jan Vigyan Prasar Samiti.
- The Ranchi DOC in Bihar has undertaken programmes to create awakening among farmers regarding the impact of Dunkel Proposals on agriculture.
- The SOCs of Manipur, Nagaland, Assam and Himachal Pradesh have shown interest in organising work on scientific utilisation of natural resources in a sustainable model. These concerns found concrete expressions in the recently held workshops respectively on 'Agricultural Programmes in the North-east' (an Assam SOC initiative) and 'Alternative to Jhumming' (a joint initiative of Nagaland and Manipur SOCs).

- The Maharashtra SOC organised State-level workshops on 'Universalisation of Elementary Education' (a Satara DOC initiative) and 'Watershed Planning' (a Ratnagiri DOC initiative) as these themes reflected the special strengths of the respective DOCs.

- The Sabarkantha DOC of Gujarat has organised a training programme for building up consumer awareness, an area in which it has long experience.

- While the Kerala SOC has started testing its model of 'Souharda Gram', the Orissa SOC has initiated a programme of adoption of a cluster of villages by each DOC for community-based developmental action.

- The Bihar SOC has selected three regional issues for special attention, viz.

- problems of flood-prone zones;

- problems of drought-prone zones; and

- development of hill tribes in south Bihar.

The DOCs in the respective zones are being activated accordingly.

- Given its rich experience in food preservation and related activities, the West Bengal SOC organised a training programme for the eastern and north-eastern States.

- The DOCs of Latur and Osmanabad Districts in Maharashtra organised relief and survey work in the wake of last year's earthquake.

- The recently held State Convention in Meghalaya has chalked out a plan for reorganising BJGVJ work in the State through its five distinguishable ethno-geographic zones, rather than beginning by constituting DOCs.

- In view of the deep involvement of the BJGVJ workers of Vijayawada DOC (Andhra Pradesh) with issues of women's development, they have taken the initiative of organising a workshop on 'Women and Health Systems — Towards an Indigenous Approach'.

- The DOC of Saran District in Bihar expressed grave concern about the growing crisis of fuel and fodder resources in the region. Accordingly, the Saran DOC has recently organised a workshop on this issue for the neighbouring Districts in Bihar and U.P.

BJGVJ encourages such parallel concerns.

INTROSPECTION

Growing beyond our failures

Beginning from the Sewagram Sammelan in April 1993, the process of reviewing and self-examination continued through several interactions at the State-level, District-level and Regional meetings. Through this brainstorming the following consensus seems to emerge :

- The short duration Jatha presentation (one to two hour long) was not an adequate mode for meaningful communication with people, though it was definitely effective in breaking the ice. A judicious combination of Jatha-style presentation and consciously promoted dialogue-cum-action was required.
- The strategy adopted by us in constituting SOCs and DOCs was not effective in winning the participation of women, *dalits* and tribals in the organisational work and decision-making mechanism. This, however, does in no way detracts attention from the fact that these critical segments of society participated in Jatha presentations in large numbers. The alienation of these segments from BJGVJ *organisational process* was recognised as a matter that needed priority attention. Changes in our work style and the kind of issues we select have become imperative if we wish to break this alienation.
- The underlying assumption in Jatha so far has been that the Government policies (to be distinguished from their implementation) concerning health, education, forestry, agriculture and all other aspects of development by and large provided an adequate framework for MANAR. As our engagement with

the people intensifies, it begins to dawn upon us that things may not be so straightforward and we may need to devote our energies in exploring alternative paths in development. Alternatives that would emerge through people's participation may be so powerful and creative that the present policy perceptions may have to be reviewed. A major task for MANAR is to define its own role in this process.

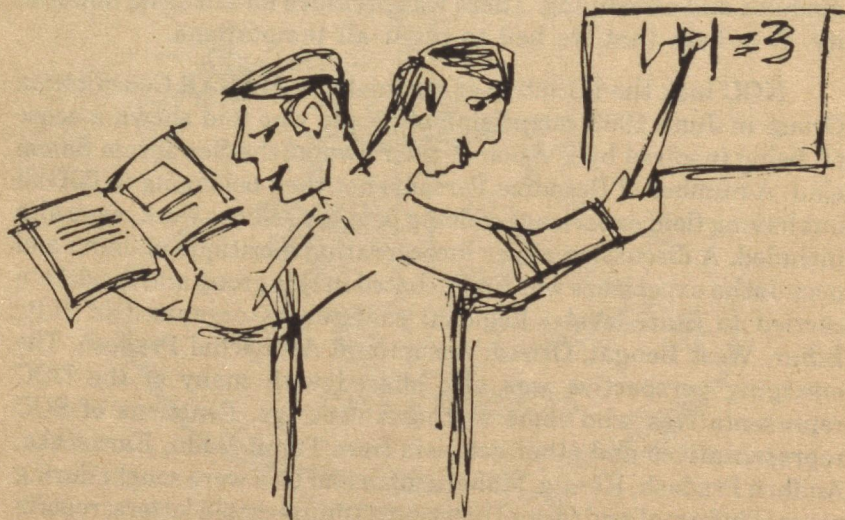
- By and large, we have viewed the voluntary sector as something aloof from the innumerable institutions functioning in the realm of development. Our activities could go on, predictably on miniscule scales, irrespective of what institutions such as the school system, primary health centres, panchayats, district-level rural development agencies, forest and agriculture departments, Nehru Yuva Kendras and NSS programmes, Universities and research laboratories were doing on a much larger scale and with far wider implications. We must now learn to interact with them and open dialogue with sympathetic persons in those structures on issues of mutual interests. Indeed, the luxury of staying aloof may not be allowed any further, with the new Panchayati Raj Act knocking on our doors. This Act intends to handover essentially all functions of development to the elected Panchayats. When, and if, that happens, the voluntary sector would have no choice but to open dialogue with the existing institutions. Let us learn to do this before it is too late!

- We have not been aware of the need to build up working relationships with social movements, voluntary organisations and other such processes already existing in the region of our activity. Special effort and ingenuity shall be required to establish meaningful links with like-minded streams of change and development. This is a pre-requisite for MANAR and also the essence of networking.

- Many of us have been contented with playing the role of a 'provider-supplier' or an intermediary ('gap-filling') agency. Time has come to question this role. MANAR implies charting of a new path, rather than merely doing 'more of the same.' To do this we would have to identify our chief concerns, plan well-defined and bold experiments, learn from them and then explore ways of intervening in the developmental process with

the aim of transforming it.

• Majority of the Jatha workers acted with the presumption that they were the repositories of knowledge and wisdom and that their primary task was to merely 'deliver' these to the 'passive masses'. The awareness was lacking that the people's science activists had to learn atleast as much, if not even more, as the people themselves. **Only those who know how to learn well would also know how to teach well.** This two-way learning process is a pre-requisite for meaningful social action and for moving towards a resurgent India. Knowing how to learn from the people and build upon what we thus learn poses a challenge for people's science activists. However, there is a still more formidable challenge — the challenge of 'Unlearning'. Unlearning obsolete ways of doing things, casting away obscurantist habits of thinking and changing ineffective styles of communication, are probably far more difficult propositions than learning afresh. Being aware of this and of the need to wage relentless struggle against pre-determined mindsets (i.e. 'cubicles' of mind), both from within and without, is more than half the battle won.



DRAFTING THE MANAR STATEMENT

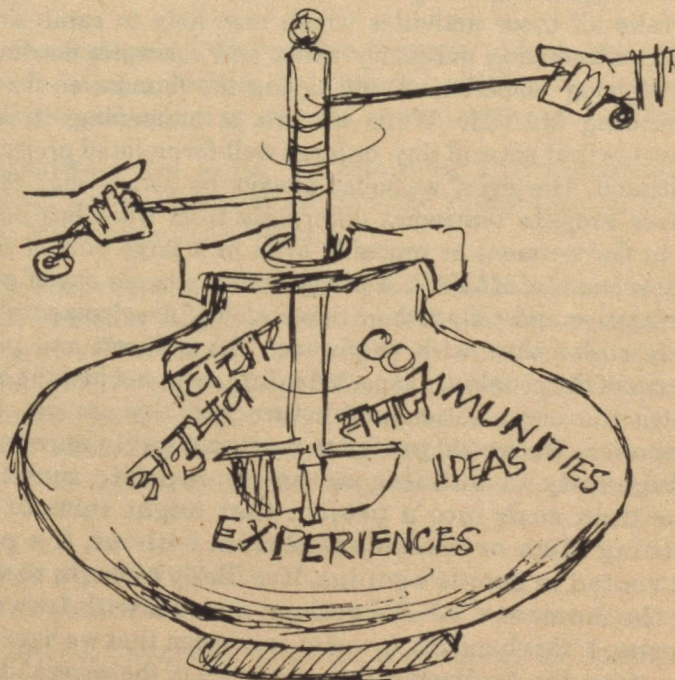
Feeling the pulse

Soon after Jatha was over, BJGVJ was seized of the question: How do we move from the phase of a well-formulated Jatha programme to the phase of a rather ill-defined, region-specific and plural MANAR *process* (not *programme*) and yet maintain a sense of common purpose? What mechanisms shall promote parallelism, networking and multiple autonomy and, at the same time, make us conscious of complementarity in each other's work? Many of our activists expected the NOC to spell out a clearly formulated action programme, backed by step-wise instructions, guidelines, modules and scheduling. There was pressure for ensuring uniformity. It is here that we had to resist all temptations.

NOC took the initiative of organising a MANAR Consultation Group in June 1993 comprising of people who had shown a sense of being inspired by a vision of their own at the Sewagram Sammelan. A number of Resource Persons, not then belonging to BJGVJ but having field experience of doing people's science work, were also included. A discussion paper incorporating a critique of Jatha and post-Jatha experience was first debated in this group and the debate carried to State-level / Regional conferences organised in U.P., Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The emerging perspective was also shared with many of the DOC representatives who came to these meetings. Reactions of SOC representatives and other activists from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra and Goa were sought during several informal and formal meetings. Innumerable letters, reports from SOCs / DOCs and project proposals offering insight into

diverse experiences further enriched these deliberations. Based upon these inputs, by September 1993, we were in a position to give shape to the MANAR Preparation Phase. The broad statement, released in October 1993 for open debate, provided a fairly adequate framework in which the SOCs / DOCs / LOCs could begin to concretise their region-specific tasks and programmes.

The MANAR Preparation Phase is an exercise in *Manthan* — i.e. **Manthan of ideas, experiences and communities**. We have now six months of field experience in carrying out this exercise under diverse socio-cultural conditions. We have also observed how an whole array of SOCs / DOCs at varying levels of organisational preparedness and differing perceptions of their social roles have responded to the challenge of MANAR. This experience has given us fresh insights into the problems involved in communicating and internalising the MANAR message and finally in translating the message into practice. Accordingly, the October 1993 statement has been further revised and is being presented here.



THE MANAR PREPARATION PHASE

Concretising the meaning of Manthan

The MANAR Preparation Phase (i. e. *Manthan*) is envisaged as a *process* rather than a *programme*. In this sense, it would have no tangible beginning and certainly no definite end. We would undertake all those activities which may help in catalysing this process, introducing necessary skills and concepts, documenting and analysing experiences and laying the foundation for a self-perpetuating MANAR. While all this is happening, it is quite perceivable that several tiny or large well-formulated projects may be initiated. However, we must always be aware that MANAR perceives projects somewhat differently from what has been the norm in Government or probably even in a large part of the voluntary sector. In MANAR, a project must emerge out of people's own initiative and reflect their perception of developmental needs and life styles they wish to pursue. The cultural and physical resources of the people are expected to influence not just the content but also the organisational structure and the nature of their participation. **We would prefer to wait and put in more energy and ingenuity in building up an appropriate social base, rather than rush into a project that might turnout to be something alien or transplanted from without. If a project is not rooted in people's genius, it is likely to begin to wither away the moment a BJGVJ activist or team withdraws from the scene.** If this happens, it would only mean that we have learnt nothing from the developmental experience of the several decades

since independence.

In many of our recent interactions, the activists themselves have emphasized yet another philosophical dimension of MANAR. They have pointed to the role of a dynamic relationship between re-construction (*rachana* or *nirman*) and struggle (*sangharsh*) in social transformation. While the rich experience of people's movements (e.g. that of the Chhattisgarh movement of iron ore miners in M.P.) in this regard may be borne in mind, this is still a higher dimension for which we may not be yet ready in MANAR.

In MANAR Preparation Phase or *Manthan*, we visualise the following three activities which would be initiated and operated either in tandem or with considerable overlap:

- **District Conventions**, with both Pre-Convention Gearing-up and Post-Convention Follow-up Components, aimed at identifying local resources and potential participants, formulating tasks and priorities and generating people's science / MANAR Groups (LOCs) in villages, *mohallas* and other localities.
- **Geo-cultural Perspective Groups**, to focus attention on macro-issues, priorities and options available for social or developmental action in various geo-cultural zones of India.
- **Institutional Fora**, for catalysing transformation from within various institutions from the village-level upwards to the State or national level.

It is neither possible nor desirable to schedule the above three proposed activities in any strict sense since these are expected to be taken up as per the felt need of the area or the capacity of the concerned BJGVJ team. Responding to the local situation, these activities may be taken up in any appropriate sequence or in parallel with each other. Let us now consider each of these one by one and discuss their objectives, methodology and content in some detail.

DISTRICT CONVENTIONS

— *rooting a process*

A District Convention is part of a process at the District-level aimed at (a) mobilising its people and physical resources for social



and developmental action, (b) concretising tasks and priorities and (c) organising people's science / MANAR groups (LOCs) at the level of a village / village cluster / *Mohalla* / locality. Each Convention would have a Pre-Convention Gearing-up and a Post-Convention Follow-up Component, the Convention itself being scheduled as an appropriate mid-point in this process. Whereas the exact details of this activity shall have to be worked out by the DOC, some broad guidelines may be discussed here.

The Pre-Convention Gearing-up Component shall entail an extensive study-cum-interaction tour of the District by the DOC activists. A priority objective would be to identify and document the physical and cultural resources of different zones of the District. While conducting this exercise, the DOC activists are expected to deeply engage themselves with the lives of the people and thereby become aware of their developmental concerns. By combining knowledge of the local resources with the issues agitating the minds of the people, we can create an exciting chemistry for community-based initiative.

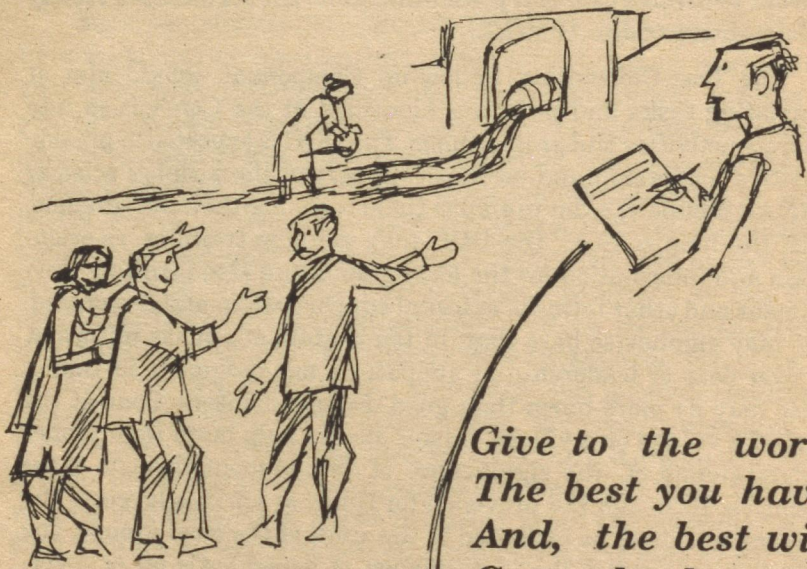
An additional objective of pre-Convention work would be to identify such individuals or voluntary groups who may have given an evidence of interest in social or developmental action or of some innovative capability useful in this context. For instance, it could be an artisan who may have worked out an improvement in some tool or machine, or a college teacher who may have enthused a group of students to undertake a campaign to clean up a local river, or a health worker who may have a plan for making vaccination facility accessible to all children. A woman who has shown courage and creativity in battling against sexual onslaught or other forms of atrocities against women or a school child who has been able to raise voice against oppressive atmosphere of the classroom, can be a great asset in giving meaning to MANAR. Similarly, the DOC team needs to have a special eye for a forest official who may have supported the initiative of a group of tribals in meeting their fuel and fodder requirements or for a fisherfolk collective which may have re-organised its fishing and marketing along co-operative lines. Nobody who is talented in any field of human activity, nor anyone who is inspired to contribute to social transformation, should be ignored. The District Convention can be viewed as part of an ongoing endeavour to bring together all such elements on a common platform who can act as foci of MANAR and provide creative

leadership in different localities of the District.

The Convention needs to be designed in such a manner so as to involve various District-level official and non-official development agencies, educational, health and cultural institutions, women and youth groups, student organisations, teachers' associations, trade unions, professional bodies, farmers' organisations, writers' groups etc. Special ingenuity shall be required to link up with people's movements, small or big, in the District and seek the participation of their representatives in the Convention. In light of the recent Panchayati Raj Act, the Convention would be meaningful only if some of the enlightened Panchayat representatives participate and help explore ways of undertaking constructive interaction with MANAR. The Convention itself (one- or two-day long) may be structured and conducted in a manner that would encourage the participants to articulate their perceptions of problems or issues of their respective localities and place these in a people's science perspective. This sharing of perceptions and analysis is expected to,

- a) enable integration of micro-issues or problems as well as of tasks, leading to the building up of what one might call the '**Development Action Map**' of the District;
- b) guide the DOC in working out the type of Resource Persons, physical resources and the extent of Government help that might have to be harnessed in support of various people's science / MANAR groups;
- c) inspire people with special skills and experience to go and work with those who may benefit from their involvement, thereby laying the foundation of a genuine District-wide network;
- d) define the role which the local Colleges, High Schools, agricultural and other research centres, women groups, Primary Health Centres, youth clubs and other such institutions might be able to play in MANAR;
- e) provide a framework in which the Government and Panchayati Raj institutions re-organise their own work such as to encourage people's initiative and control in the developmental process.

Another significant outcome of the Convention could be in



*Give to the world
The best you have,
And, the best will
Come back to you*



terms of **re-structuring and broad-basing of the DOC itself** in order to involve people representing different segments of society and localities of the District.

The Post-Convention Follow-up Component should aim at translating tasks and priorities identified at the Convention into concrete activities and programmes. The DOC is expected to provide sensitive leadership and selective support to the people's science/MANAR groups in order to enable them to realise their own dreams. With the help of SOC, the DOC may arrange training, re-orientation and information for the local groups and also facilitate Government and other forms of external support, when and if required. One may emphasise here that, in the context of a mass initiative, an over-dose of leadership or support or mis-judgment in timing these may do more harm than good. Frequent interactions at the level of a village or a village cluster should help build up a proper understanding of the significance of development through mass initiative. Although the provision for funds at various levels of the Government must be exploited in the work of the local groups, one may caution against the phenomenon of dependence on or over-expectation from the official machinery. It would further help if the local groups, through their work and analysis, gradually begin to appreciate the circumstances in which the developmental perceptions respectively of the Government and the people, instead of being complementary, might actually turn out to be in conflict with each other. Indeed, learning through one's own experience and sharpening one's understanding of the social reality is at the core of the spirit of people's science and is also crucial to meaningful development.

GEO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE GROUPS

—evolving a macro-perspective

While the District Convention process is expected to generate a varied tapestry of micro-perspectives, it would be critical to view and modulate these in a wider macro-perspective, with national and even global implications. With the objective of building up such a macro-perspective, we plan to constitute a number of Geo-cultural Perspective Groups which will focus attention on the problems and potential for people's initiative in different geographic and cultural zones of India. Some of the groups instead may focus attention on

some outstanding issues of a region or sub-region, especially those which have already caught the imagination of people's movements.

Each one of these Geo-cultural Perspective Groups, convened by a leader in the specific field of knowledge, would work out its own particular methodology, analytical framework, sources of primary and secondary data and the type of Resource Persons it wishes to involve. The guiding parameter in making these choices would be the need to arrive at a creative understanding of what people can do to improve their life styles and yet maintain a sustainable relationship with their environment. We expect each such group to take about 2 to 3 months to arrive at the first approximation of its recommendations. These recommendations would then be fed into the process of a nation-wide *Manthan* to be taken up at a later stage. Along with the micro-perspectives emerging from the District Conventions, the reports prepared by the Geo-cultural Perspective Groups would help build up the backdrop in which the local developmental action might have to be re-worked and modulated. Little is known about the co-ordinates of such re-working and modulation since *this might well be the first time that such an exercise is being undertaken in the country, though this has long been the ideal of the planning process.* This is what makes our proposal so exciting and challenging.

Let us now attempt to enumerate some of the geographical-cum-cultural zones as well as the developmental issues around which the proposed groups may be constituted (depending upon the availability of leaders and Resource Persons, the list given below would remain a tentative one):

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Western Ghats | • Eastern Ghats |
| • Western Coastal Belt | • Eastern Coastal Belt |
| • Western Himalayan Hills | • Eastern Himalayan Hills |
| • Deserts | • Plateaus |
| • Indo-Gangetic Plain | • Himalayan Terai Belt |

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Central Indian River Valleys | • North-Eastern River Valleys |
| • Aravali Range | • Satpuras / Vindhya |
| • Ravines | • Wetlands |
| • Islands | • Cold Deserts (Ladakh/Spiti) |
| • Drought-prone Zones | • Flood-prone Zones |
| • Mining Areas | • Wastelands |
| • Earthquake-prone Zones | |

The above list broadly covers the entire country. By interweaving the micro-action plans into the macro-perspective of each such region, we hope that an integrated and deeper understanding of MANAR and its implications may emerge and inform the action of the BJGVJ activists.

INSTITUTIONAL FORA

— *viewing transformation from within*

When a society undergoes *Manthan*, it is inconceivable that its institutions and their respective programmes and priorities shall remain unaltered. There is historical experience that when institutions are unable to cope with the new pressures of change, these invariably degenerate. With our poor resources we can ill-afford such a colossal waste. We therefore propose that a conscious intervention be made with the aim of catalysing transformation from within these institutions. No real change can be imposed from without; it has to be a kind of a cultural revolution from within. It has to be an act of faith and concern, primarily by those who work for the institution in question. The role of the people's science activists, within or without, is to participate in such a process and help it to seek a meaningful direction. Once the internal transformation process sets in, it would be best to trust the genius of the people in the institution and let them soak the new rising spirit of *Manthan* around them.

We are proposing below some structures which offer scope for interaction between *those within the institution and those outside who are affected by its activities*. These structures may also be viewed as platforms for experimentation and possible intervention. The following is merely an illustrative list:

- A Science Corner (*Vigyan Kona*) in every Primary School.
- A Science Club (*Vigyan Club*) in every Middle School.
- A People's Science Campus (*Jan Vigyan Parisar*) in every High School (10+2 stage), which will workout ideas on the interface of science and society, including application of science for development.
- A 'People's Science for National Re-construction' group in every College / University (*Nav Nirman ke liye Jan Vigyan*). This is envisaged as a forum which will, to begin with, undertake to document information on physical and cultural resources of a region, prepare inventories and chalk out work plans and also identify people who are willing to participate in developmental action. The focus of the forum, however, shall be on interaction with the academic and research functions of the College / University with the objective of relating these with the social realities of the region. Eventually this should lead to a fundamental transformation of outlook, i.e. the structure, content and even the transaction of curriculum, courses, examinations and the research programmes. Certain stark questions staring in our face can not be escaped any longer. What is the very purpose of higher education in the Indian context? Can our Colleges or Universities find any role for themselves in setting the future agenda of development of the region of their location? Would concern for the society invariably remain a marginalised function for the NSS, NCC and the Adult Education Unit? Or, can we be bold enough to think in terms of making such concerns the guiding theme of academic and research functions of higher education? In attempting to answer such questions, the forum shall also begin to find answers to questions being raised today regarding

the growing irrelevance, cynicism and lack of direction in our College and University campuses.

- 'From Research to People's Science' (*Shodh se Jan Vigyan*) is envisaged as a forum in our research laboratories or field sub-stations. Each such forum may review the research perspective in which the laboratory needed to re-work its priorities and formulate the direction of research afresh.

- 'Development Through People's Science' (*Jan Vigyan se Vikas*) would be a forum of official and non-official development agencies, including the local industrial and agricultural organisations. This forum may review not only the policy frame and its implementation, but also look into the question of creative solutions to people's problems through participation of development-related institutions.

- 'People's Science for Industries', 'People's Science for Health' and 'People's Science for Agriculture' are viewed as fora at various levels ranging from individual industries / health centres / hospitals / agricultural extension agencies to pace-setting or policy-making bodies at the State or the national level, such as the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Indian Medical Association, Agricultural Prices Commission, the Planning Commission, Parliamentary Committees, the National Technology Missions, and so on.

- 'People's Science and Culture', and 'People's Science and Media' could be effective fora for transforming the dominant perspective in which cultural bodies and media operate, often in alienation from the oppressed sections of the society. As before, these fora would range from the *kasbai* Journalists' Associations and community cultural groups to Radio and TV agencies, Editors' Guild, National School of Drama, the Censor Board and such like.

Clearly, only those fora would emerge that would be within the scope of intellectual and cultural capabilities of the interacting people's science body, be it a village-based people's science / MANAR Group, the DOCs/SOCs or NOC.



It needs to be appreciated that the attempt to form a forum with a small or a large institutional structure may be viewed as just an initiation of a different approach to involve people in what influences their own lives. While the objective in this endeavour is certainly to bring about concrete changes, what is of greater significance from a people's science point of view is that some people would atleast dare to think afresh and help unleash creative forces in our society.



THE MANTHAN ABHIYAN

Extending and enriching transformation

During the past several months, we have experienced an active phase of *Manthan*. More than 100 mobilisational meetings and District, Zonal and State Conventions, alongwith a spectrum of interspersed national or regional thematic workshops, have been organised in various parts of the country. Indications of a beginning of understanding MANAR, though at present only in an embryonic form, are already available. With this, BJGVJ enters the next phase of *Manthan*. We now propose to carry out an intensive *Manthan Abhiyan* which would comprise of the following components:

- (i) *Manthan Sammelan* : A 5-day long National Convention of SOCs, DOCs, LOCs and other people's science groups shall be organised in the latter half of May 1994. At this Convention, the micro-level experiences in developmental action by district-level and local BJGVJ groups shall be shared and analysed in the context of macro-level geo-cultural perspectives. This should help us in building up a deeper and integrated understanding of social reality and its linkage with MANAR.
- (ii) *Manthan Yatra* : The evolving *Manthan* perceptions and work plans shall be shared with the people in general through a series of *Manthan Yatras* at Zonal level, State-level, regional level and ultimately at national level. The basic methodology in this endeavour shall be to establish a genuine dialogue between BJGVJ workers and citizens. The *Manthan Yatra* would be characteristically different from the Jatha in the sense that it

shall not depend upon one-way communication from the people's science activists to the people. Instead, it would use and evolve strategies for a **two-way learning process** through which the social reality and people's innate wisdom shall enrich the MANAR programmes.

(iii) *Deepening the Manthan Process* : The three-pronged *Manthan* process, already initiated in the earlier phase, shall now be extended and enriched further. The experience of organising District Conventions so far can at best be termed preliminary. The potential of viewing our micro-level action in the wider geo-cultural perspective is only now beginning to unfold. The implications of constituting Institutional Fora are yet to be understood. The possibility of transforming Fora into powerful instruments of social intervention seems to be yet too remote to be considered. All of these *Manthan* processes shall be given further content and, hopefully, a clearer direction too through a series of workshops, orientation and training camps, documentation and systematic analysis and debates, thereby *continuously evolving and redefining the process itself*.

(iv) *Formulating Manthan Projects* : The three-pronged *Manthan* process outlined above (pages 25-36) is expected to lead to specific developmental action plans or projects. These *Manthan* projects shall reflect the perceptions and aspirations of the communities which are going to participate in their designing as well as implementation, unlike the typical Governmental or even the majority of the voluntary projects which lack people's genuine participation. The acid test of the *Manthan* process shall be in its ability to re-define the meaning of developmental projects in this special sense. The questions of source of funds for such projects and appropriate implementing mechanisms shall have to be dealt with in light of the emerging MANAR spirit.

The process of giving shape to the *Manthan Abhiyan* has already begun and would be elaborated further during and after the forthcoming *Manthan Sammelan* in May 1994.

INSTRUMENTALITIES

Delegating roles, making things work

We already have functioning bodies such as the DOCs, SOCs and the NOC. In the north-east, we also have a Regional Organising Council (ROC) for the seven States in the region. With the growing significance of geo-cultural perspective in the MANAR discourse, more such ROCs have become imperative. The ROCs yet to be constituted need not be defined by the State boundaries. Instead, these may view regions in terms of common geo-cultural features, viz. Western and Eastern Ghats, Coastal Belt, Western and Eastern Himalayas etc. (see the illustrative list on pages 31-32) Such a view not only supports the MANAR perspective on decentralised and disaggregated planning, but would also give a dynamic meaning to the role of ROCs.

The Jathas led to the formation of thousands of LOCs which need to be revitalised as viable people's science groups. Action is long overdue on enabling the LOCs to take lead in building up the *Manthan* process at the level of villages / village clusters / *bastis* / *mohallas* / tribal hamlets. The LOCs, being the key functioning units, would require some kind of minimal infrastructure and resources from indigenous as well as 'external' sources. We envisage that each LOC can in turn organise a variety of people's bodies in order to propel action. The following are some illustrations of the possibilities that exist, the exact choice being guided by local perceptions and priorities:

- a) a *Gram Vigyan Kendra* for providing a platform for discourse and developmental action;

- b) a *Mahila Paryavaran Vahini* for taking up the issues of water, fuel and fodder in the context of diminishing forest rights and vanishing common property resources in villages; the *Vahini*, by harnessing people's innate energies and genius, may work towards creative solutions of these problems; and
- c) a *Yuva Udyog Vahini* for dealing with the problems relating to unemployment and underemployment among the youth; the *Vahini* may undertake documentation of local resources and a review of the land use patterns and thereby build up action plans for alternative production and land use for generating fresh employment locally.

Aided by such bodies or creative local variants of the same, the LOCs would be in a position to organise MANAR programmes as envisaged by District Conventions and as per the growing perspective of the ongoing *Manthan Abhiyan*. The LOCs and their various bodies may also take initiative in constituting local Institutional Fora in schools, health centres, forest depots, Panchayats, Block or Taluka (Tahsil) Offices etc.

The DOCs shall have the following role:

- i) Identifying, motivating and organising local people's science / MANAR groups, i.e. LOCs;
- ii) Providing necessary orientation and training inputs for the continuing growth of LOCs;
- iii) Preparing and / or procuring relevant software, information and documentation to support the work of LOCs;
- iv) Establishing links with the District authorities and mobilising the necessary support therefrom in order to facilitate the task of LOCs;
- v) Constituting Institutional Fora at the District level with institutions / agencies concerned with education, health, forest, agriculture, rural development etc.; special emphasis may be given for interacting with Colleges, Hospitals, Banks, Courts, Co-operatives, DRDA, Writers' or Journalists' Associations and voluntary organisations operating from the District headquarters; and
- vi) Maintaining a basic common thread in terms of program-

matic content, with the objective of creating an ambience of a common broad direction among the LOCs.

The SOC's have a leadership role which places upon them a critical responsibility for consciously building up their motivational, mobilisational and training capabilities. The SOC's are expected to dynamically reach out and build up meaningful fraternal linkages with voluntary organisations, social action groups, people's movements and professional bodies all over the State. The SOC's shall also be primarily responsible for constituting Institutional Fora with State-level official bodies / agencies, Universities, Boards of Education, State Councils of Science & Technology, research laboratories and State-level chapters of national organisations such as Indian Medical Association, Chambers of Commerce and Industries, Associations of medical representatives, school or college teachers, Trade Unions etc. *A key role of SOC's lies in building up a team of highly talented Resource Persons in various fields of social action. These Resource Persons should be in a position to respond to the special requirements of the DOC's and LOC's in terms of technical knowledge and skills, motivational inputs and, above all, conceptual clarity.* **Naturally, a majority of such Resource Persons, at least in the beginning, shall have to be drawn from outside the fold of BJGVJ and herein lies the challenge of winning the confidence of such persons of exceptional qualities.**

The role of NOC includes national co-ordination, building up a consensus of common direction, and strengthening the capabilities of SOC's / DOC's. The NOC shall strive to create a team of leaders from the broad field of people's movements, social and developmental action and the spectrum of research-cum-academic bodies. These leaders would be expected to assist SOC's / DOC's in gaining conceptual clarity, technical and organisational skills and mobilisational capabilities. The NOC shall also be responsible for constituting Institutional Fora at the national level and organising thematic workshops and orientation / training camps for providing impetus to MANAR.

ORIENTATION, TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS

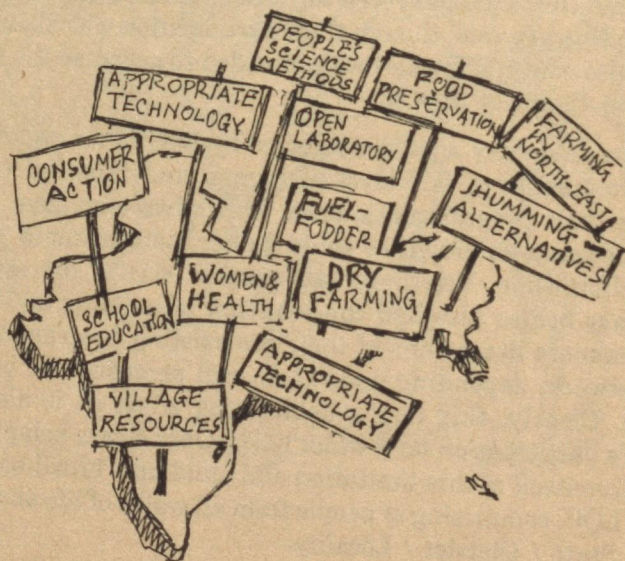
Seeding ideas and skills

Orientation and Training Camps and issue-based or thematic Workshops are crucial inputs in the *Manthan* process for the purpose of seeding ideas and skills. It is hoped that the District-level and local BJGVJ activists, equipped with conceptual understanding and technical knowledge, would be in a position to exercise their option and evolve developmental action suitable to the local milieu. In a way, the ideas and skills seeded through such camps and workshops shall act as nuclei around which local action would crystallize. Instead of giving centralised directives and formulations, we have opted for this style of encouraging disaggregated and plural action, in consonance with MANAR's spirit of decentralised functioning. We list below some themes and issues to illustrate the emerging concerns of BJGVJ in which seeding of ideas and skills is considered to be critical:

- i) Women and Health Systems
- ii) Universalisation of Elementary Education and People's Initiative
- iii) Watershed Planning and its Social Management
- iv) Natural and Man-made Disasters
- v) Social Control of Water, Forest and Land
- vi) Sustainable Model for Agriculture in Rain-fed Areas

- vii) Appropriate Technology and its Socio-political Significance
- viii) Development and People's Alternatives
- ix) Economic Policies and Potential for People's Response
- x) Role of Philosophy of Science and Scientific Method in People's Science Movement.

A number of camps and workshops were organised at the initiative of NOC during the past six months. What is, however, of far greater significance is the spin-off effect this initiative had on the SOCs/DOCs which offered to organise such activities reflecting their regional or zonal concerns, though falling within the broad areas listed above. The workshops on 'Alternatives to Jhumming', 'Agricultural Programmes for the North-eastern Region', 'Consumer Awareness and Movement', 'Food Preservation and Related Skills', 'Flood-Prone Zones', 'Development of Hill Tribes', 'Women and Health Systems' and 'Management of Fuel and Fodder Resources' are some of the examples of such concerns that can be cited (see pages 17-18 for details). The process has only begun and, as the *Manthan Abhiyan* moves ahead, these regional and zonal concerns shall not only find more frequent expression but would also more truly reflect social reality.



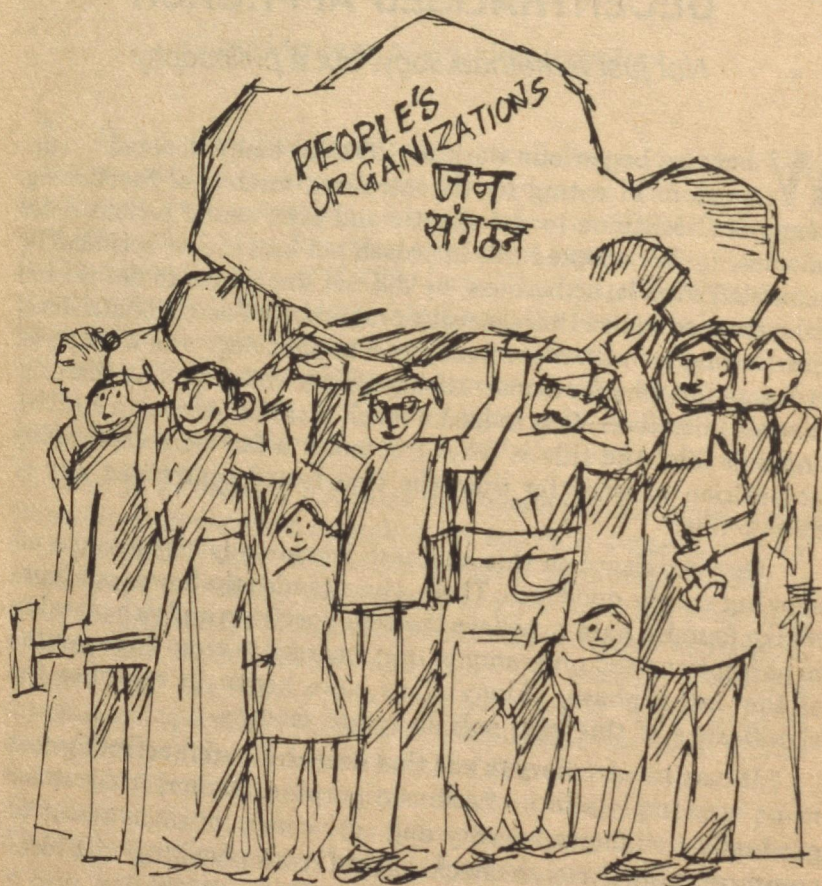
VOLUNTARY AGENCIES AND PEOPLE'S BODIES

Towards broad-based participation

The NOC was constituted in September 1991 as a result of coming together of about 100-odd voluntary bodies and / or State Councils of Science & Technology, engaged in the field of health, education, environment, appropriate technology, communication, promotion of scientific temper and such like. BJGVJ naturally, therefore, depended on these bodies in organising its SOC's and DOC's (bodies receiving foreign funds were excluded from playing this key role, though their participation was allowed). This trend also continued when we proceeded to organise the Local Organising Councils (LOCs).

The voluntary agencies selected by BJGVJ for organisational role commanded a fair level of human and financial resources, besides their programmatic base. This advantage gave BJGVJ a headstart and its activities could gather momentum in a surprisingly short time. Yet there was another side of the coin. These voluntary bodies also had the tendency of building up the SOC / DOC as mere extensions of their pre-existing programmatic base and network, depending upon their own personnel for organising Jathas. Clearly, this had a debilitating effect as it discouraged people's participation on a wider basis. Only a rare voluntary body could free itself of this limitation and build up a broad-based SOC / DOC / LOC, comprising of people from all walks of life and all parts of the State / District / Locality.

It may be useful at this juncture to review our position with regard to this matter. We have before us examples of several SOCs/DOCs / LOCs having a representative and broad-based character wherein multi-dimensional experiences, perceptions and skills were brought together. We only wish to suggest here that the future reorganisation and restructuring of SOCs / DOCs / LOCs may keep this consideration in mind. It would of course be a step of courage and vision if an existing BJGVJ body reorganises itself along these lines and opens its doors for wider participation.



SIGNIFICANCE OF DECENTRALISED APPROACH

Not just a methodology, but a philosophy

When we began our work in 1991-92, many doubted our wisdom in opting for decentralised method of functioning. Many still continue to be skeptic and even sound serious notes of warning. We adopted this approach not because we accidentally stumbled over it, or because we did not know how to design and execute a centralised bureaucratic programme. For us, decentralised functioning is much more than just a methodology or a work style. It is a philosophy for democratising society and providing space for diverse initiatives. It is indeed a much more humane and creative order of life. And this is why it becomes a far more challenging proposition to work for than the time-tested centralised way of functioning.

Our insistence on this approach has already begun to pay off slow but steady dividends. Those who attended the Sewagram Sammelan found it hard to believe the wide spectrum and rich plurality in perceptions and programmes that emerged in mere three months of the Jatha phase. Many of us have begun to recognise the significance of this gain only in recent months.

It may be necessary to add that decentralised functioning does in no way imply a lack of common purpose. Rather, it allows for gradually building up clarity and a sense of commitment to common goals through checking and cross-checking with local and plural experiences followed by their integration into a beautiful whole.

PARALLELING AND NETWORKING

Shedding fear of working together

Like decentralised functioning, paralleling and networking are additional philosophical dimensions as well as instrumentalities for democratising society. A senior BJGVJ colleague once observed, "**Let us function in such a manner that no one is able to see the role of BJGVJ in building up MANAR. Only our imprints would be left behind, and that too barely visible ones !**" This observation has deep implications for organisational ego-centric behaviour which frequently comes in the way of working together. We often end up fighting more with each other than against forces that obstruct people's initiative and social change.

How do we evolve a structure that would provide ample scope for multiple autonomy and parallel, yet mutually supportive, creative processes? What would be the design of social organisation in which people do not feel constrained and yet have the possibility of fertilising each other's ideas, complementing each other's strengths, kindling each other's dreams and above all, working towards a common goal? We have yet to discover ways in which parallel thoughts and operations would ultimately criss-cross, bend a little towards each other and have a sense of overall integration and a common direction. We have to learn to overcome suspicion of paralleling, fear of losing our identity in networking or of our power diluting in decentralisation. We have lived too long with such queer notions that wisdom is rare and must be supplied centrally from somewhere. This kind of 'unlearning' is crucial in MANAR.

We are, therefore, making a conscious effort to network and take up programmes in collaboration with other like-minded groups and organisations. To be sure, our steps towards this goal have been small and unsure. As instances of this approach, we cite the following examples:

- The following organisations became BJGVJ's partners and provided the nuclei around which the SOCs evolved and functioned: Science For Society, Bihar; Science Communicators Forum, West Bengal; Kerala Association for Non-Formal Education and Development (KANFED); Directorates of Public Instruction, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram (Science Promotion Wing); Bharat Scouts & Guides, Sikkim; All Goa Science Teachers Association; Andhra Pradesh Academy of Science; Gujarat Science Academy; Centre of Science for Villages, Wardha, Maharashtra; Rural Technology Division of Regional Research Laboratory, Jammu.

- The respective Councils (or Departments) of Science & Technology in Assam, Himachal Pradesh, U.P., Tripura, Punjab, Haryana, and Lakshadweep either co-ordinated or supported our programmes.

- Some of the member-organisations of the All India People's Science Network (AIPSN) shouldered the full responsibility of organising the Jatha during 1992-93 in their respective States. These included Haryana Vigyan Manch, Tamil Nadu Science Forum, Madhya Pradesh Vigyan Sabha and Karnataka Rajya Vijnana Parishat. Other AIPSN member-organisations which participated in the Jatha of 1992-93 in varying degrees included the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Orissa; Paschim Bengal Bigyan Manch; Jana Vigyan Vedica, Andhra Pradesh and Arogya Dakshata Mandal (in the Pune zone in Maharashtra).

- Critical infrastructural support is being provided by North-Eastern Hill University, Meghalaya & Nagaland; University of Manipur, Imphal; Ramakrishna Ashram, Arunachal Pradesh; Kolikata Koibarta Samity, Calcutta; Vikram Sarabhai Community Science Centre, Ahmedabad; Science Centre, Gwalior; Nehru Yuva Kendras of the Jammu Region; Science College of Patna University; Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore.

- A large number of voluntary organisations have become BJGVJ's partners at the District-level and helped build-up the DOCs in their respective Districts.

- Reports indicate that the Jatha of 1992-93 received enthusiastic support from numerous Gram Panchayats. However, we have yet to find ways of transforming this co-operation into a long-term working arrangement so that we would be acceptable as partners in developmental programmes of Gram Panchayats. The significance of this partnership needs to be appreciated in the context of the new *Panchayati Raj Act*.

- Many of our SOC and DOCs have co-operated with and strengthened the ongoing literacy programmes of the National Literacy Mission.

- About fifty Nehru Yuva Kendras have worked with us during the Jatha phase, thereby providing us links with a large number of youth groups.

- Several of our SOC and DOC teams have played a key role in building up the National Children's Science Congress organised by NCSTC-Network last year. As this collaboration continues during the current year, we are becoming conscious of the steady gains our SOC's / DOCs have made through this interaction in terms of improved skills and understanding of working at the school level.

- In February 1994, BJGVJ participated in the Children's Camp at Allahabad, organised by the *Rashtriya Seva Dal*, a voluntary organisation dedicated to inculcating the spirit of secularism, equity and patriotism among children and youth. Hundreds of children sent by about fifty DOCs from all over the country worked with a large number of voluntary institutions, women's groups and people's science bodies to contribute dozens of low-cost activities relating to education, scientific temper, environmental consciousness, appropriate technology, pollution control, consumer awareness, non-conventional energy sources and cultural action for social change.

- An intensive collaboration with the school teachers of the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP) and the District Institutes of Education & Training (DIET) of Ujjain and Indore, with support from the Department of Education of Govt. of Madhya Pradesh, made it possible for BJGVJ to concretise the concept of 'Open Laboratory' (*Khuli Prayogshala*) for children's camps. A presentation of 'Open Laboratory' at the Allahabad camp of *Rashtriya Seva Dal* became a major attraction for thousands of local children and adults alike.

We hope to build upon the Allahabad-experience and present

'Open Laboratory' as not merely a liberating ambience for children's camps, but also as a fundamental statement on how our schools and curricula need to be re-organised. The involvement of school teachers and educational activists from programmes such as the HSTP in this endeavour shall be crucial.

• Several of our recently held Workshops became possible only because of collaboration with institutions / voluntary groups of proven capability in the concerned field. The following examples may be cited :

— Two **Appropriate Technology** Workshops in collaboration with respectively the Centre for Rural Development & Technology of the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi and the Department of Civil Engineering, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh;

— The Workshop on **Universalisation of Elementary Education** in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Education, Pune;

— The Workshop on **Women and Health Systems** in collaboration with the *Vasavya Mahila Mandali* and *Nasthik Kendram* of Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh and Medico Friend Circle's Women & Health Cell;

— The **Consumer Awareness Workshop** in collaboration with the Consumer Protection Association of Himmatnager, Gujarat;

— The Workshop on **Common Property Resources and People's Needs** at Bangalore and the related Cycle Jatha co-sponsored with FAVORD-Karnataka and Samaj Parivartana Samudaya, Dharwad; and

— The Workshop on **Philosophical, Methodological and Cultural Aspects of People Science Movement** in collaboration with the *Jana Vigyan Samiti* of Kanpur, U.P.

• BJGVJ is supporting the initiative of *Purvanchal Jan Vigyan Prasar Samiti*, a newly emerged network of people's science groups of Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal, in the field of science education at elementary school level.

• By the time the National *Manthan* Convention is organised in May 1994, we hope to have forged many more fraternal linkages with several other significant people's movements and social action groups.

THE PROJECT AND ITS FINANCE

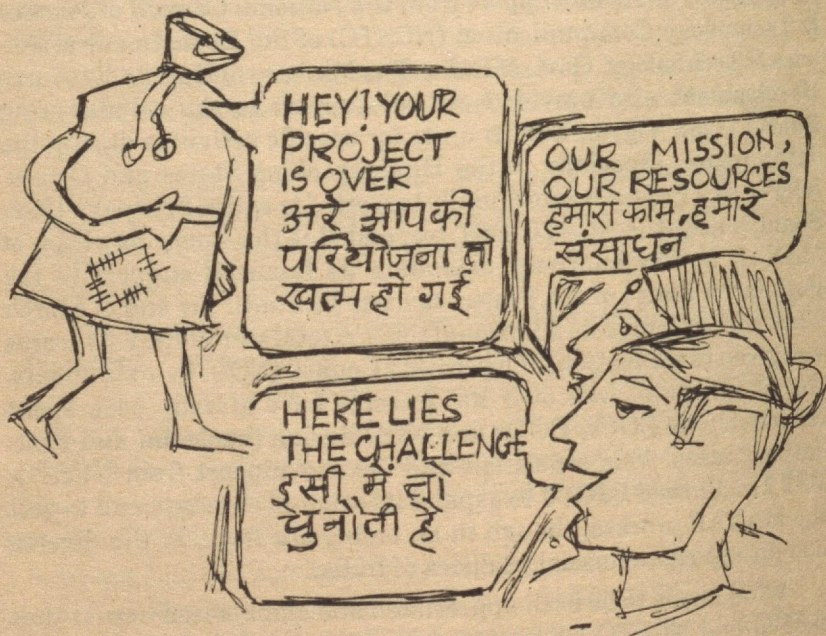
Responsiveness despite constraints

Bharat Jan Gyan Vigyan Jatha (BJGVJ) started as a *project* with a mandate for organising Jatha from October 1992 to February 1993. However, from its very inception, it worked with a *mission* of evolving into a self-sustaining, open-ended and long-term people's science movement dedicated to the task of resurgence, reconstruction and rejuvenation in the Indian society. BJGVJ received its catalytic financial support from the National Council of Science & Technology Communication (NCSTC) of the Department of Science & Technology, Govt. of India. The Ministry of Human Resource Development also provided critical support to the collaborating Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti units for specific activities during the Jatha phase, especially in the Hindi-speaking States and Orissa. BJGVJ as a Project was originally targetted to end in February 1993. Significantly, the NCSTC-DST responded to the emerging vision of MANAR by imaginatively extending its financial support to the Post-Jatha Phase of the Project *twice* to last until the end of March 1994, with of course no additional costs. A total sum of Rs. 2.54 crores was given to the National Organising Council (NOC) in instalments. Out of this sum, well over Rs. 2 crores have already been spent collectively by SOCs, DOCs and NOC during the Jatha and Post-Jatha Phases. This consistent and flexible support from NCSTC-DST has allowed BJGVJ to expand its original mandate and to root the MANAR process, though in an embryonic form, in the diverse and disaggregated social realities of India.

What needs to be both appreciated and emphasised here is that BJGVJ and NCSTC-DST have shared a mutual understanding of

great import, as far as the role of Government funding in such a Project is concerned. The NCSTC-DST funding has invariably formed only a part of the total cost of BJGVJ. Almost 75% of the Project cost was contributed in cash, kind or services by the people and voluntary institutions we worked with. This understanding with NCSTC-DST has contributed in a fundamental sense to keeping the voluntary spirit alive in BJGVJ. This has also enriched the critical ferment we began with. It is this ferment which enables BJGVJ today to even dare to think in terms of evolving into MANAR.

Recently, we approached NCSTC-DST once again with request for extension until the end of May 1994 in order to allow us time for organising the National Manthan Convention and presenting a 'Report To The Nation'. The balance funds with us would be adequate for covering the cost of these proposed events as well as for the 'winding up activities', viz. settling of accounts with NCSTC-DST, report writing and documentation. While the NCSTC-funded Project may be over soon, the BJGVJ activists are deeply conscious of the fact that the mission, the dream of MANAR, is far from over.



WHAT HAPPENS AFTERWARDS?

The mission continues to inspire

The process of coming to terms with the reality has already begun. The NCSTC support can not continue for ever in its present form and at the present scale. We have to explore alternatives increasingly self-reliant and people-oriented ways. What kind of Government funding and in what proportion is desirable and what are the limits beyond which the Government support may even begin to constrain and distort genuine participation by people? The question of funding is intricately inter-twined with other questions which follow:

- What is an appropriate organisational structure that would allow democratic participation in decision making and encourage broad-based involvement of all sections of society?
- How do we strengthen the process of 'unlearning' of obscurantist, heirarchical and compartmentalised ('cubicalised') modes of thinking and acting? What creative measures can we adopt for promoting scientific temper, harmonious social behaviour and inter-disciplinary functioning?
- What are the parameters that define sustainable development? How is this issue related with the critical need of exploring an alternative life style that is rooted in indigenous socio-cultural conditions and, at the same time, allows India to be 'modern' in its own, rather than in borrowed, terms?
- What role can BJGVJ have in initiating transformation from

the prevailing consumerist, disparity-causing and unsustainable paradigm of development to one which is humane, non-violent and environment-friendly? That is, towards a truly *Swadeshi* alternative in Gandhian terms?

A representative group of BJGVJ activists met in Hyderabad in the first week of April 1994 to debate these and other such questions. From this in-depth interaction emerged the 'Hyderabad Statement' on the **future organisational form, content and process** of 'BJGVJ-MANAR'. Whatever path we opt for carrying the MANAR process forward, it must somehow reflect at least a concern for struggling with the issues raised above. The discourse on the future path is expected to be democratically crystalised during the *Manthan* Convention in May 1994 into a '**Manthan Declaration**.' Following the Convention, as the work goes ahead, the process of giving content to the MANAR dream shall be shaped by the dialectics between this discourse and the emergent social action. In other words, in the long run, the quality of the MANAR process shall continue to define and chisel MANAR itself.

For this audacious task, we need to evolve a mindset that is not fragmented into cubicles, that has the courage to resist the onslaught of obscurantist ideas and that is throbbing with an urge to redefine the world around us. Only with such a revolutionary mindset and in deep humility can we begin to move towards MANAR, i.e. towards a genuine engagement with the people of INDIA!

It is difficult to say what is impossible, for the dream of yesterday is the hope of today and the reality of tomorrow.

— Robert Goddard
Rocket pioneer in the twenties

AN ATTEMPT AT UNDERSTANDING MANAR

- i) It reflects the common perception of a community regarding what is its priority of development and also how prepared it is to exercise the available options.
- ii) The community perception is translated into developmental action through the collective will of the members of the community, with the people's science activist playing a critical catalytic and supportive role.
- iii) The developmental action is rooted in the local or regional context — geographic, socio-economic, political and cultural — and is conscious of the need for a sustainable relationship with the natural resources.
- iv) A genuine two-way learning process, with the activist learning at least as much as the community, continuously informs and enriches the developmental action.
- v) A scientific approach in analysing the direction of development as well as in undertaking mid-course corrections permeates the entire exercise.
- vi) The underlying thrust is to build up people's alternatives in development which would eventually begin to feed into the formulation of nation's policies.
- vii) While acting, the community strives to ensure democratic functioning, equity and justice, and also a sense of open-endedness.
- viii) The programmatic design shows a commitment to restructure society such that the process of marginalising women, *dalits* and tribals is steadily reversed.
- ix) A systematic attempt to integrate the location-specific developmental action with the macro-perspective of a geo-cultural region provides the continuing basis for re-modelling of the original design from time to time.
- x) Paralleling and networking with other similar processes, viz. people's movements, voluntary groups, governmental programmes or individual initiatives, is a central concern of MANAR.

"The real miracle is neither to walk on
water nor in thin air but to walk on
earth "

—Thich Nhat Hanh
Vietnamese Buddhist Monk

Redefining Good Life

While considering alternatives in development, the question of an alternative life style that would be in resonance with the concept of sustainable development, can not be avoided. We must learn to assess the state of Indian society in terms of measures of our own. Every Indian recognises that there are aspects of our life and society which are precious. Deep civilisational values permeate our society, which are not necessarily negated by the fact that we are poor and, in consumerist terms, do not rate very high in relation to the rest of the world. For instance, there are meaningful relationships in our family and community life whose disappearance would leave us even poorer. While there is no need to eulogise poverty and extreme deprivation, the fact remains that smiles of children, celebration of festivals with friends and relations, the feeling of belonging to family and community and the sense of oneness with things living and non-living, are neither measurable in terms of per capita consumption nor proportional to the Gross National Product. Time has now come to be bold and redefine good life in our own terms. Unless we do this, we would be in danger of being trapped in the race of trying to 'catch up', losing in the process what is precious in our society. We do not necessarily need to relive the experience of the industrialised countries and be in a state of conflict with environment and oneself. The task of redefining good life is a continuous and conscious process, something integral to MANAR.

**Towards an
engagement with the
people of India**

- from Kutch to Kohima
- from Ladakh to Lakshadweep



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*Lokshala Programme
for
Universalisation of Elementary Education*

The Nauri Declaration
May 31, 1995

Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha
and
Maulana Azad Centre for Elementary and Social Education
Department of Education, University of Delhi
in association with
Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage

Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha, 86-A, DDA Flats,
Saray Kalekhan-II, Nizamuddin East, New Delhi-110013

BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

"That does not finish the picture. We have the education of this future state. I say without fear of my figures being challenged successfully, that today India is more illiterate than it was fifty or a hundred years ago, and so is Burma, because the British administrators, when they came to India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out. They scratched the soil and began to look at the root, and left the root like that, and the beautiful tree perished. The village schools were not good enough for the British administrator, so he came out with his programme. Every school must have so much paraphernalia, building, and so forth. Well, there were no such schools at all. There are statistics left by a British administrator which show that, in places where they have carried out a survey, ancient schools have gone by the board, because there was no recognition for these schools, and the schools established after the European pattern were too expensive for the people, and therefore they could not possibly overtake the thing. I defy anybody to fulfil a programme of compulsory primary education of these masses inside of a century. This very poor country of mine is ill able to sustain such an expensive method of education. Our State would revive the old village schoolmaster and dot every village with a school both for boys and girls."

- Mahatma Gandhi

at Chatham House, London, October 20, 1931

BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

This document was prepared during the National Orientation Workshop for preparing regional leadership for the LOKSHALA Programme for Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) organised jointly by Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha and Department of Education, University of Delhi in association with Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, held at the Dr. Y.S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Nauni (HP) from May 23-31, 1995. This was in preparation to undertaking a nationwide UEE process, initially beginning in 12 zones across the country. As a part of this 7 regional workshops are planned in 7 important locales of the country with a view to mobilising, building-up and strengthening regional teams for UEE.

The workshop was the result of a process wherein the LOKSHALA Programme was endorsed in a series of meetings among the activists of Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha organised on 1-2 March 1995 at Delhi and 3-4 March 1995 at Itarsi. The selection process involved seeking responses to a specially designed screening mechanism from well over 500 organisations/individuals and of the 150 responses so received, 60 were selected. The participants represented the States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Pondicherry.

This Nauni Declaration reflects the alternative vision of elementary education during the intense deliberations and interactions of the Workshop. It calls for decentralised, disaggregated and diversified approach for UEE, in consonance with the geo-cultural diversity and plurality of our country. The Declaration also builds up a vision of a people's movement committed to evolving a system of education that would be deeply rooted in the Indian reality, draw inspiration from indigenous and community efforts and, at the same time promote a global outlook. We trust that the serious and sincere efforts put in by the participants of the Workshop in giving shape to their aspirations will prove to be inspiring. Hoping that you will be with us in this common endeavour of realising our dream of achieving UEE-BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!

- Nauni Declaration Committee
National Orientation Workshop
LOKSHALA Programme

May 31, 1995
Nauni, Distt. Solan, Himachal Pradesh

The Nauni Declaration

1. We, the participants of the LOKSHALA PROGRAMME for Universalisation of Elementary Education, who have gathered from different parts of India to take part in the National Orientation Workshop jointly organised by Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha and Maulana Azad Centre for Elementary and Social Education, Department of Education, University of Delhi, with the support of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage at Dr. Y.S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Nauni, Himachal Pradesh, from May 22 to 31, 1995, hereby reaffirm our commitment to the **Inalienable right of ALL children to education**. We dedicate ourselves collectively to work for ensuring education of equal quality to children from all segments of society.
2. We derive our inspiration from the legacy of the freedom movement and the vision of minimum eight years of basic and socially relevant education (Nai Taleem) as envisaged by the Wardha Conference held in 1937 under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Zakir Hussain. This promise, subsequently enshrined in Article 45 of the Constitution of India, continued to remind us of the pending national agenda and the State's obligation to the children of India.
3. We take note of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar's call to the *dalits* to 'awaken, organise and seek education' which reflected people's rising urge for education as a powerful means for gaining equity and social justice.
4. We wish to assert that the Article 45 of the Constitution does not limit State's obligation to merely elementary education instead it refers to all children upto 14 years of age and not just those who enter class I at the age of six years. Accordingly, the scope of Article 45 must urgently be expanded to include pre-primary education for children in the age group of 3-6 years.
5. We give a call to the nation's conscience to enlarge the scope of Article 45 to explicitly include education of the disabled

children as part of State's obligation.

6. We must take responsibility to enable two-thirds of the nation's girls and half of its children, who continue to be outside the educational system, to acquire meaningful elementary education. This crucial national task may require major structural and inter-sectoral adjustments calling for transformation of the social character of schools and other educational institutions.
7. We believe that resources for universalising elementary education can and should be harnessed from **within the national economy** as an essential means for redistribution of social justice in favour of the weaker and marginalised sections of society.
8. We shall work towards ensuring that the concept of holistic education for unfolding the full potential of the child is not allowed to be diluted, substituted or displaced by mere literacy skills, as has been the emerging trend in recent years. Nor should non-formal education be allowed to divert our attention from regular formal school education or to become its poor substitute.
9. We do not regard education as a means for converting the child into a 'national resource', an 'input' into the national economy or a 'useful product'. Instead the schools need to be transformed into **community-managed social institutions** (rather than being viewed as State-controlled prescriptions) **where children first understand the world they live in**, then participate in it and eventually intervene to redefine it.
10. We are convinced that the formal school ought to be at the centre-stage of all major strategies for moving towards the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education. The voluntary and community organisation must act to effectively intervene in the formal school system with the aim of empowering it to acquire the social and educational attributes necessary for **'reaching out'** to all segments of society in a given locality.

11. We resolve to work towards the establishment of a Common School System for both urban and rural areas by promoting the concept of neighbourhood schools, as proposed by the Kothari Commission nearly three decades ago. By striving to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process in all the neighbourhood schools, we shall aim to make the parallel school system, whether in the private or government sector, superfluous.
12. We are convinced that the kind of education which our schools impart lacks relevance to social needs of the majority of the children. **This cannot, and must not be, universalised.**
13. Inspired by the fundamental principles of Gandhian view of education, we shall undertake to interweave productive work and social action into the learning process and into the various disciplines of knowledge with the aim of promoting an egalitarian value system and enabling children to be engaged in meaningful vocations in their lives.
14. We reaffirm our special commitment to the education of girls. To achieve this, we will actively strive for elimination of gender discrimination from all dimensions of social life. We strongly oppose girls being viewed in education as ready receptors and transmitters of demographic messages or as mere proficient wage earners who lack participation in the decision-making process. What is needed is an education that will enable women to transform their role in society.
15. We further believe that the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education cannot be achieved without linking the primary school with an effective programme of Early Childhood Care and Education, especially pre-primary education.
16. We underline that plurality, geo-cultural diversity and the widespread phenomenon of regional disparities constitute some of the significant characteristics of the Indian reality. These factors defy the logic of centralisation, standardisation and uniformity that has tended to dominate all aspects of educational discourse in India for long. We will, therefore, explore and

establish a decentralised, disaggregated and location-specific approach to planning and management in education.

17. We shall strive for unburdening the child from the load of the school bag, both for making education **child-centred and joyful** and for ensuring that neither the physical nor the comprehension load is used to marginalise the underprivileged children.
18. We believe that Universalisation of Elementary Education shall not be possible until and unless children gain the rights to **begin** their education in their mother-tongue even if it is different from the official or dominant language of the area. This facility can be judiciously combined with provision for switching over to the dominant or link language at a latter stage of primary education.
19. We see an urgent need to critically examine the present curriculum and its textbooks and work for eliminating gender bias and community-specific stereotypes based on caste, religion, ethnicity or region. We recognise the need to reconstruct the textbook perceptions of history and socio-cultural development from the standpoint of various peoples of India and not from that of an imaginary mainstream.
20. We believe that schools should have flexible hours and locations so that they can **'reach out'** to those children who do not find it possible to attend schools due to domestic or other compulsions. An **'open entry and exit'** policy in the formal school system will enable the out-of-school children to participate in the educational process whenever they can.
21. We are convinced that the socio-economic and cultural factors like increasing unemployment, persistence of child labour, bad health conditions, depleting common property resources, widespread consumerist culture and rising atrocities on women adversely influence levels of enrolment and dropout, and need to be dealt with urgently, both within and outside the school sector.

22. We are determined to work for re-establishing the pivotal role of the teacher in the classrooms and her/his status in society, rather than making her/him a mere cog in the wheel in the vast educational machinery. This shall be achieved partly by maximising teachers' participation in designing curriculum, developing textbooks, preparing learning materials and innovating teaching-learning methods best suited to the needs of her/his classroom. This educational agenda should not be allowed to be hijacked by academicians or experts placed in State or Central headquarters. Yet, the latter's role as partners in this process needs to be redefined.
23. We envisage that the LOKSHALA vision can become a reality through a dynamic and interactive process involving the people viz. community organisations, school teachers, social activists and Panchayati Raj bodies on one hand and administrators, policy makers and academicians from colleges and universities and other institutions of higher learning, on the other.
24. We emphasise that the people, literate or otherwise, living in a particular village/basti have a primary role to play in transformation of the local school from an alienated to a universally acceptable institution and in its continued management. The State must accept this role and support it as its continuing Constitutional obligation.
25. **We commit ourselves to launch a people's movement to realise the LOKSHALA vision. As a first step, we undertake to direct action and thereby generate a nation-wide debate on the various issues which link elementary education with the reconstruction of a truly participative, secular and just society in India and around the world, with particular concern for the societies of our South Asian neighbours.**

We are determined to work for the abolishing the present role of the teacher in the classroom and her/his status in society, rather than making her/him a mere cog in the wheel in the vast educational machinery. This shall be achieved partly by maintaining teachers' participation in designing curriculum, developing textbooks, preparing learning materials, and innovating teaching-learning methods best suited to the needs of the classroom. This educational agenda should not be allowed to be hijacked by academicians or experts placed in State or Central institutions, as the latter's role as partners in this process needs to be retained.

We envisage that the LOKSHAL A vision can become a reality through a dynamic and interactive process involving the people.

“Elementary Education by the State” is altogether objectionable.....the state has need on the contrary of a very stern education by the people.

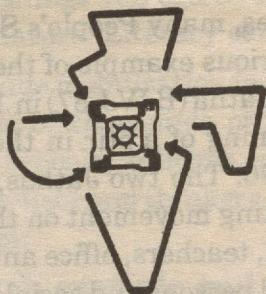
- Karl Marx

We emphasize that the people, literate or otherwise, living in a particular village should have a primary role to play in the evolution of the local school from an extension of a university acceptable institution and in its continued management. The State must accept this role and support it as its continuing Constitutional obligation. The door has yet to be opened.

We commit ourselves to launch a people's movement to realize the LOKSHAL A vision. As a first step, we undertake to effect actions which generate a nation-wide debate on the various issues which link elementary education with the reconstruction of a truly participative, secular and just society in this vast and diverse world with particular concern for the exigencies of our South Asian region.

For the first time in our history, we have a chance to re-examine our educational system and to re-define its role in society. We are determined to work for the abolishing the present role of the teacher in the classroom and her/his status in society, rather than making her/him a mere cog in the wheel in the vast educational machinery. This shall be achieved partly by maintaining teachers' participation in designing curriculum, developing textbooks, preparing learning materials, and innovating teaching-learning methods best suited to the needs of the classroom. This educational agenda should not be allowed to be hijacked by academicians or experts placed in State or Central institutions, as the latter's role as partners in this process needs to be retained.

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Mass Action for National Regeneration (MANAR)

with

BHARAT JAN GYAN VIGYAN JATHA

*The biggest Science - For - People
adventure ever undertaken,
anywhere in the world*

**Self Reliant, Scientific mass initiative
by the people of India,
on**

**Health, Water, Environment, Appropriate Technology
Superstitions & Scientific Thinking, Literacy**

**NATIONAL ORGANISING COUNCIL
12/3, Sarvapriya Vihar
New Delhi-110016 Phone : (011) 657532**

Catalysed by National Council for Science & Technology Communication

Time has now come. There is a hidden vibrance in the country; large number of voluntary agencies, many People's Science Movements, came into being inspired by the glorious example of the Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad. We had the Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (BJVJ-87) in 1987, the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Jatha (BGVJ) in 1990 and the beginning of a stir in the form of Mass Action for National Regeneration (MANAR) in 1990. The two Jathas, helped to create the ground swell which is leading to an accelerating movement on the literacy front. There is a growing feeling, that all of us—students, teachers, office and factory workers, farmers, traders, scientists, technologists, retired persons and social workers, indeed everyone—must at the least take a sabbatical every now and then during which we fully engage with society—a sabbatical of a few hours a day, one day a week, several months a year, one or more years after every five, or something which becomes a part of our lives.

No one has to tell us that we are a people with a great past, or that in spite of various handicaps we have achieved a great deal during the last four decades. It is easy to point to the fact that our food production has more than tripled. That starting from a situation when even paper clips, chalk sticks and pencils were imported, we make most of what we need within the country. We make most of our drugs and pharmaceuticals, our fans and electric motors, our plastics and petrochemicals, our satellites and nuclear power plants, T.V. sets and telephones, bicycles and motorcars—and lot of other things.

We proudly talk of our democracy, our freedoms, our judiciary, educational institutions and research laboratories. We quote all the things we have said about self-reliance, non-alignment, and our championship of freedom for all countries and peace in the world. Very few peoples have had luminous ancestors like Gandhi.

AND YET

- ★ **60% of our women are illiterate**
- ★ **45% of our people don't have safe drinking water**
- ★ **90% of our people are without proper sanitation facilities**
- ★ **49% of our people are below poverty line.**

In absolute terms more Indians suffer from the above four deprivations than citizens of any other country.

In addition, our land is losing its green cover, our soils are being lost to the sea, our rivers are full of sewage, in addition to chemical pollutants, and population still grows at 2.2% per year.

One gets a feeling that in respect of some of the above basic problems, the country is caught up in tinkering. Many things can be done through systematic tinkering; changes of policies, alteration of emphasis, improvement of efficiency, support of excellence. But there is a class of problems which must be solved fast, or they get worse,

with every passing year. There are things you can do in five years, but not in twenty! All the above problems are of this nature. Literacy certainly. Also scientific literacy.

BJGVJ is becoming a nation-wide mobilisation leading to MANAR as its ultimate goal. With the involvement of tens of thousands of individuals, from hundreds of voluntary agencies, thousands of schools, colleges, and research laboratories and universities, workers and farmers, artists and thinkers, young people and old, BJGVJ and resultant MANAR will attempt:

- ★ to help generate, through example and communication, conviction that our basic problems can be solved through a self-reliant, humane and scientific approach—and only through such an approach.
- ★ to directly address, and alleviate, through deep intellectual and physical involvement, some of the basic problems of water, nutrition, health, environment and literacy.
- ★ to savour, and to project, the cultural richness of this country and the developing urge of a people now ready to move on their own feet, through the content and processes of a massive multimedia adventure.
- ★ to help transform the attitudes as also the content of knowledge and awareness of our people, including the educated elite, through study and their total involvement with the deep reality of Indian existence.

FOR WHOM

- ★ For those of us whom our macro-development plans have left behind.
- ★ For all those who participate, to develop a better sense of belonging, for sharing of knowledge and understanding; for modulating the knowledge of those who think they know; for making our knowledge more fertile; for creating an empathy with our own present and possible futures.
- ★ For combating a sense of cynicism amongst the young, giving them an avenue to seek fulfillment and to contribute.
- ★ For focussing the energies and passions of millions of our people on our real problems, sidelining many of the peripheral issues that often sub-divide us.

In short, for all of us, **for INDIA.**

SCOPE AND ORGANISATION

BJGVJ will touch the largest number of habitations in the history of Jathas. This will involve 50,000 Local Organising Councils in as many locations, 500 District Organising Councils, one for each district and State Organising Councils for all the States and Union Territories of India. A National Organising Council, 28 State Organising Councils, about 350 District Organising Councils, and over 20,000 Local Organising Councils have already been set up. Taking the penumbra effect of these

intensive activities, it is expected that about 200,000 locations would be involved, perhaps a third of our population.

The software for communication, which is central to a Jatha activity, would be prepared by states and districts, with some at the centre. Local idiom would be used and local folk artists and communicators would be involved. In addition to communication activities related to people's science, self-reliance and understanding of the environment, it is expected that participants will physically and intellectually engage with the problems of locations where they work. The attempt would be to leave a better physical infrastructure and skills, in addition to an organisational structure for continual involvement in all the locations which the Jatha intimately touches.

A large number of voluntary agencies in people's science field are already a part of this effort and are represented on the National Organising Council and the State & District Organising Councils. It is hoped that many others would join in, because everyone is invited to be a partner in this movement, to make it their programme.

Schools, colleges and universities are invited to make BJGVJ & MANAR as a part of their programme. Students, teachers and office employees are all invited. So are the social and physical scientists and engineers in various national and state agencies. Retired teachers, workers and defence personnel are all welcome to participate in this adventure. Also part time workers, house-wives, women's organisations, trade unions and kisan sabhas. The objectives have a meaning for all of us.

Preparatory phase:	Oct. 1991-Aug. 14, 1992
Pre-Jatha activities:	August 15, 1992-October 1, 1992
Main-Jatha activities:	October 2, 1992-Nov. 21, 1992
Post-Jatha activities:	Nov. 22, 1992-Feb. 28, 1993
and to continue thereafter as MANAR.	

STUDY, ANALYSIS AND DATA:

Attempts should be made, at all levels of organisation, to understand the profile and ways of handling various problems this activity is supposed to address. Empty enthusiasm is not enough. Lot of data, information, and some wisdom, exist at the Local, District, State and Centre levels. As we prepare for the **JATHA** and resulting **MANAR**, we will need access to available data and to interact with various people. Most of those who have intimately involved themselves in issues of our concern will be requested to join the movement in some capacity or the other. A close liaison will be established with the National Missions in the areas of our thrust. Hopefully, while working in the field, we will also collect information and data, with perhaps a more human face than usual, which will support our work and supplement what exists. This would need orientation and training activities. Also this is how the spirit of science might best be communicated and operationalised.

SPECIFIC THEMES

BJGVJ has chosen a few broad themes for its emphasis and action. The main message of all the activities would be community action and self-reliance. Also, in all our interaction the central role of literacy, including scientific literacy would be kept in view. The six broad themes would be :

1. *Health - Nutrition, Sanitation, Hygiene*
2. *Water - Drinking water, for agriculture*
3. *Environment*
4. *Superstitions and scientific thinking*
5. *Technology for people - Appropriate technology for home / local industry / agriculture*
6. *Literacy*

The areas & levels of emphasis will be decided by the states and districts in line with their local problems, issues or needs.

What you can and should do, being an interested organization/institution/individual:

This massive and exciting adventure to change the face of our motherland needs the total participation of all of you—whoever you are, where ever you are.

There are villages, village clusters, slums, small towns and large cities around the place where you live and work. Get to know the people who live there, live and learn with them. Through personal knowledge or through data which you can obtain, identify their key problems, their important needs and the major constraints which affect people's lives and well-being. And then choose one or more locations or an area, depending upon your understanding and abilities and your rapport with the people who live there.

Get in touch with us at the District or state organising council, with as much information as you can about the areas you have selected and the thrust you plan to give as a part of this exciting mission for self-reliance and national regeneration. We will help you to the extent of our capabilities and be with you through all your struggles and achievements. In this mission we are all together.

Information you need to provide for the places you select for Jatha Locations:

1. Name of place, contact persons, mailing address
2. Names of nearby places with contact persons.
3. Map of the area showing all selected locations
4. Geography and terrain, literacy rate, health statistics, land and water status, local skills and resources, reach of TV/Radio/News papers, modes of transport, forms of energy used, occupations and income levels, nearest hospital, school, college, university, research institution, krishi vigyan kendra, development project etc.
5. Possibilities of generating resources cash/kind/voluntary services.
6. Peoples receptivity and affordability to buying Science Resource Material (Software)—books, games, toys, and kits, posters, slide sets etc.
7. Kind of activities, their number and duration that you envisage.
8. Some basic, but grass root surveys that you will like to undertake.
9. Other agencies, govt. departments, individuals working in the area in similar lines.

This is a gigantic voluntary effort to reach out to and transform the lives of nearly a third of our people—and in the process get transformed ourselves.

There have been several earlier efforts to "do something positive", but in a vast country like India—the sheer magnitude of problems tends to drown them out. Hence the attempted scale of BJGVJ-92. We'll reach and arouse nearly 25 crores of people in 500 districts spread over all our States and Union Territories, form and activate nearly 50,000 people's science groups, train over 60,000 grass-root science workers and hopefully start a silent revolution to awaken people's initiative and action in the country.

BHARAT JAN GYAN VIGYAN JATHA

INFORMATION OF STATE ORGANISING COUNCILS

STATE	CHAIRMAN/PRESIDENT	CONVENOR/SECRETARY	ADDRESS	
A & N ISLANDS	Dr. A.K. Bandopadhyay	Mr. S.K. Mitra, Secy.	C/o, Principal, Mohanpura Sr. Secondary School, PO : Marine Jetty, Port Blair, Pin-744101	
ANDHRA PRADESH	Dr. P. Shiva Reddy	Prof. G.S. Sastry, Conv.	C/o AP Academy of Science, Osmania Univ. Campus, V.C. Lodge Road, Hyderabad Pin-500007	
ARUNACHAL PRADESH		Dr. G.C. Yadav	C/o DTE of Public Instruction, Nahr Lagun, Itanagar-791110	
ASSAM	Dr. D.N. Borthakur	Mr. N.K. Das, Secy.	C/o Assam Sc. Tech. & Env. Council, Panchawati, Sithankudi, Guwahati Pin-781003 Tel. 43232	
BIHAR	Dr. Gauri Ganguli	Prof. S.P. Verma, Conv.	C/o Dept. of Chemistry, Science College, Patna University, Patna-800005	
GOA	Mr. Fancisco Sardinha	Mr. S.S. Nagvenkar	C/o All Goa Sc. Teachers Assn. The Progress High School, Panjim-403001	
GUJARAT	Prof. P.C. Vaidya	Mr. S.R. Thakore, Conv.	C/o Gujarat Science Academy, 17, Ashok Nagar, Ahmedabad, Pin-380007 Tel: 412943	
HARYANA	Dr. Ram Prakash	Mr. Praveen Kumar, Secy.	Haryana State Council For SC & Tech. S.C. O-24, Sector-26, Madhya Marg, Chandigarh-160026	
HIMACHAL PRADESH		Dr. Virendar Sharma	C/o. State Council for Sc. Tech. & Environment, Indira Bhavan, Near Oak Over, Shimla, Pin-171001	
JAMMU & KASHMIR	Mr. Ashok Jaitly	Dr. V.K. Gupta, Conv.	Rural Technology Division, Regional Research Lab. Canal Road, Jammu Pin-180001 Tel : 48551	
KARNATAKA	Dr. H. Narasimhaiah	Mr. H.S. Niranjana Aradhya	C/o K.R.V.P., Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore Pin-560012 Tel: 340509	
KERALA	Mr. P.N. Panicker	Mr. K.R. Kurup, Conv.	C/o K.A.N.F.E.D. PB No. 433, Saksharata Bhavan, Tiruvananthapuram Pin-695010 Tel : 65972	
LAKSHADWEEP		Dr. Sayeed Ismail Koya	C/o Dy. Director, Science and Technology, Kavaratty (Via Cochin-682555) Tel: 682555	
MADHYA PRADESH		Mr. Arun Bargava/ Mr. S.R. Azad, Jt. Convs.	M.P.V.S. 255, Zone-2, Maharana Pratap Nagar, Bhopal Pin-462011 Tel : 462011, 557396	
MAHARASHTRA	Dr. Devendra Kumar	Mr. A.V. Joshi, Conv.	C/o Centre of Sc. For Villages, Mragan Sangrahalaya, Wardha Pin-442001 Tel: 3412	
MANIPUR	Mr. E. Yaima Singh	Dr. R.K. Ranjan Singh	N.R.D.M.S. Office, Manipur University, Canchipur, Imphal Pin-795003 Tel: 221429/5	
MEGHALAYA		Sh. Jitesh Khosla	C/o Dept. of Planning (S&T Cell), Secretariat Building, Govt. of Meghalaya, Shillong Pin-793001	
MIZORAM	PU Hranthanga	Mr. Lalchhunlian, Jt. Conv.	Science Promotion Wing, Directorate of School Education, Aizwal, Pin-796012 Mizoram	
NAGALAND		Prof. K.K. Sharma, Conv.	Dept. of Education, C/o N.E. Hill University, Nagaland Campus Kohima, Pin-797001 Tel : 675	
NEW DELHI	Mr. B.L. Sharma	Dr. Sadashiv. Gen. Sec	C/o Dept of Botany, Dayal Singh College, Lodhi Road , New Delhi Pin-110003 Tel: 617819	
ORISSA	Dr. Tapas Kabi	Mr. K.K. Parida, Conv.	A-34 HIG, Baramunda Housing Board Colony, Bhubaneswar Pin-751003 Tel : 468061, 407201	
PUNJAB		Dr. Neelam Gulati	State Council For Sc. & Tech. Civil Secretariat, Govt. of Punjab, Chandigarh, Pin-160022	
PONDICHERRY	Mrs. M.K. Sayee Kumari	Mr. V. Bahavan, Gen. Secy.	III Cross Road, Sithan Kudil, Pondicherry Pin-605013 Tel: 23344	
RAJASTHAN	Mr. Loknathan	Sh. S.K. Jain	C/o O-7, Hospital Road, Jaipur Pin-302001	
TAMIL NADU	Mr. T.V. Venkateswaran	Mr. M. Sivabakalan, Secy.	C/o Tamilnadu Science Forum, 7, Luz Church Road, 2nd Floor, Mylapore, Madras Pin-600004	
TRIPURA	Mr. Azeer Vaidya	Shri T.K. Roy, Conv.	C/o Tripura SCS & T , Ramnagar, Road No. 7, Agartala, West Tripura Pin-799002	
UTTAR PRADESH	Mr. Harish Chandra	Mr. R.S. Bajpai, Secy	C/o Mohan Hotel Char Bagh, Lucknow Pin-226001 Tel : 53397	
WEST BENGAL	PR. Sushil KR. Mukherjee	Mr. Abhijit Bardhan, Secy.	C/o Kolikata Koibarta Samity, 23/1/3 Ramanath Kaviraj Lane, Calcutta, Pin-700012 Tel: 273952	
National Organising Council 12/3, Sarva Priya Vihar, New Delhi-110016; Tel : (011) 657532	<i>Chairman</i> Prof. Yash Pal	<i>Organising Secy's</i> Soumya Dutta R.S. Raghuvanshi	<i>Executive Secy's</i> Dr. P.C. Pant Smt. Asheema Singh Dr. M.M. Singh Dr. K.M.S. Rao Sh. Dipak Dan Sh. S. Gopalakrishna	<i>Members</i> Dr. M.P. Parameswaran Sh. Krishna Kumar Dr. Ashok Jain Sh. S. R. Thakore Dr. Vinod Raina

Come one, come all — young and the old, learned and the not-so-learned, teacher and the taught, rural and the urban, moneyed and the poor. The country needs you all to participate, to get immersed and absorbed in this magnificent dream of a million activists, of all shades and colours.

Share our dream, be one with us.

We have a dream—all of us—of a collective effort. A mass action covering every nook and corner of this great country: its remotest villages and cities, mighty hills and vast planes, green forests and teeming deserts, smallest schools and large universities. We will learn and we will teach. But our dream goes beyond communication. This will be a communion—a communion of the educated and the uneducated, of urbanite and the rural. Indeed a communion of the people with their country—a communion with its richness and poverty, with its culture and diversity, with achievements and problems. Minds of all shades and colours would come together, differences would be understood and made harmless through immersion in the joy and excitement of learning and working together to change the face of this land.

Dreams have wings, and we might even achieve a great deal. But merely being involved in a venture of this kind is a gain for all the participants. At the least they would themselves be transformed. Perhaps time is right for such an engagement and action. This is what has motivated a large number of individuals, organisations, institutions and agencies—from all over the country—who have decided to come together to launch this unprecedented exercise for Mass Action for National Regeneration beginning with BHARAT JAN GYAN VIGYAN JATHA. Let us all work together to give shape to our collective dream and, in the process, transform the destiny of our motherland.

COME ! JOIN US!
MAKE IT HAPPEN!

OBJECTIVES

1. Form groups of 10 to 15 persons in about 50,000 places who have understood and internalized the necessity of MANAR as well as the programmatic perspective of BJGVJ. To begin with they will function as the local organizing committees for BJGVJ.
2. Form in each block/mandal/taluka resource groups of 20 to 30 committed individuals to act as guides to panchayat groups, to train them, and to plan BJGVJ in their areas.
3. Form in each district organizational committees and resource groups to act as guides to block and panchayat level activists. In each district about 100 persons will have to be trained to carry out the various elements of Pre-Jatha activities.
4. Further, in each district, one kalajatha team has to be formed and trained. During October 2-November 22, they will reach out to about 100-120 gram panchayats and give performance conveying the message of literacy, education, science, self reliance, health and environment.
5. Form state level organizing committees and resource groups having a multitude of capabilities within it, like organization building, software creation, training, monitoring, S and T inputs, etc.
6. The state level resource groups of about 50 to 60 persons in each state are expected to spend about 20-25 days together in the form of workshops, camps, courses etc to learn, to plan, to organize and to execute. To begin with, each state should organize a three day workshop to plan the impending BJGVJ in all its aspects.
7. Each state will have to organize a workshop for production of a minimum amount of software.
8. Each state will, further organize training camps both at state and district levels for the effective use of science software, like posters, slides, activity-kits, books etc. for the purpose of interpersonal communication.
9. The BJGVJ should be consciously used to promote:
 - a) formation of groups at gram panchayat level who will understand the use of science and technology for the benefit of common man
 - b) emergence of concrete action programmes/projects in the fields of literacy, elementary education, health, drinking water, sanitation, appropriate technology, etc.

BJGVJ is not conceived as an event, as an ephemeral exercise. It is a consciously planned component of a larger design—namely to make India self reliant and prosperous. This will involve a sustained learning process by all the “leaders would be” in realms of philosophy, development planning and implementation, application of S&T for rural development etc.

BHARAT JAN GYAN VIGYAN JATHA

beckons you all!

*Voluntary Agencies, Institutions, Clubs, Individuals -
come and join this nationwide mass action with science
for national regeneration.*

How you can start working immediately

** For doing survey- you can take one or more of the following:

- (a) **Find out and document** the traditional knowledge, skills, belief and methods in the fields of Health, Environment (particularly related to Land, Air, Trees, Forests, River, Weather, Flood & Drought, etc), water resources etc.
- (b) **Find out and document** the traditional methods of communication used in your area-Folk songs, story-telling, folk-dances, traditional painting, puppetry, and the like. Identify the persons who use these to good effect, often.
- (c) **Undertake a land-use survey** and prepare a land-use Map-taking the Mouza Map as the base. Consult the geography/science teacher in the local/nearby school.
- (d) **Find out and map** the fuel/energy use pattern (for cooking, other house-hold use, village industry, —), availability throughout the year, sources, distance and cost per year.
- (e) **Survey the prevalent superstitions** in your area, whether and how they harm the people, if and how these are used to exploit people,...
- (f) **Find out and list** the locally used tools/implements, and adaptations or improvements in these by local people-giving better results at work. These can be "home-made" water pumps or pump-improvements, improvements in the bullock-cart or the cycle-rickshaw, a better potter's wheel, a better sickle and so on.

PREJATHA ACTIVITIES

1. Holding a series of dialogues at panchayat or village levels
2. Forming interested and informed groups in all proposed jatha locations.
3. Organize poster exhibitions, slide shows, science magic shows, low cost teaching aids, etc.,

POST JATHA ACTIVITIES

1. Basic surveys ** (see page 10) of the village/gram panchayat. The themes of the survey could be the following:
 - i) Literacy and elementary education
 - ii) Traditional methods of communication
 - iii) Land use
 - iv) Energy consumption and sources
 - v) Prevalent superstitions which are used to exploit ignorant people
 - vi) Locally used tools and implements
 - vii) Traditional knowledge and skills etc.
 - viii) People's initiatives to fight natural disasters.

The state resource group can devise appropriate schedules for the survey and train the panchayat level core groups wherever they show interest.

2. Organize competitions among local students/youth in making posters/slogans/rhymes etc., on any or all of the following subjects:
 - i) Science and Technology in the service of the people
 - ii) Scientific thinking—a new culture
 - iii) The world around and above us
 - iv) Health for all—now!
 - v) Literacy for liberation
 - vi) Women of India—learn and advance!
 - vii) Water and water borne diseases
 - viii) Self reliance—or self, community and the nation
 - ix) Our children, our schools
 - x) Clean streets, clean houses, clean body, a healthy society

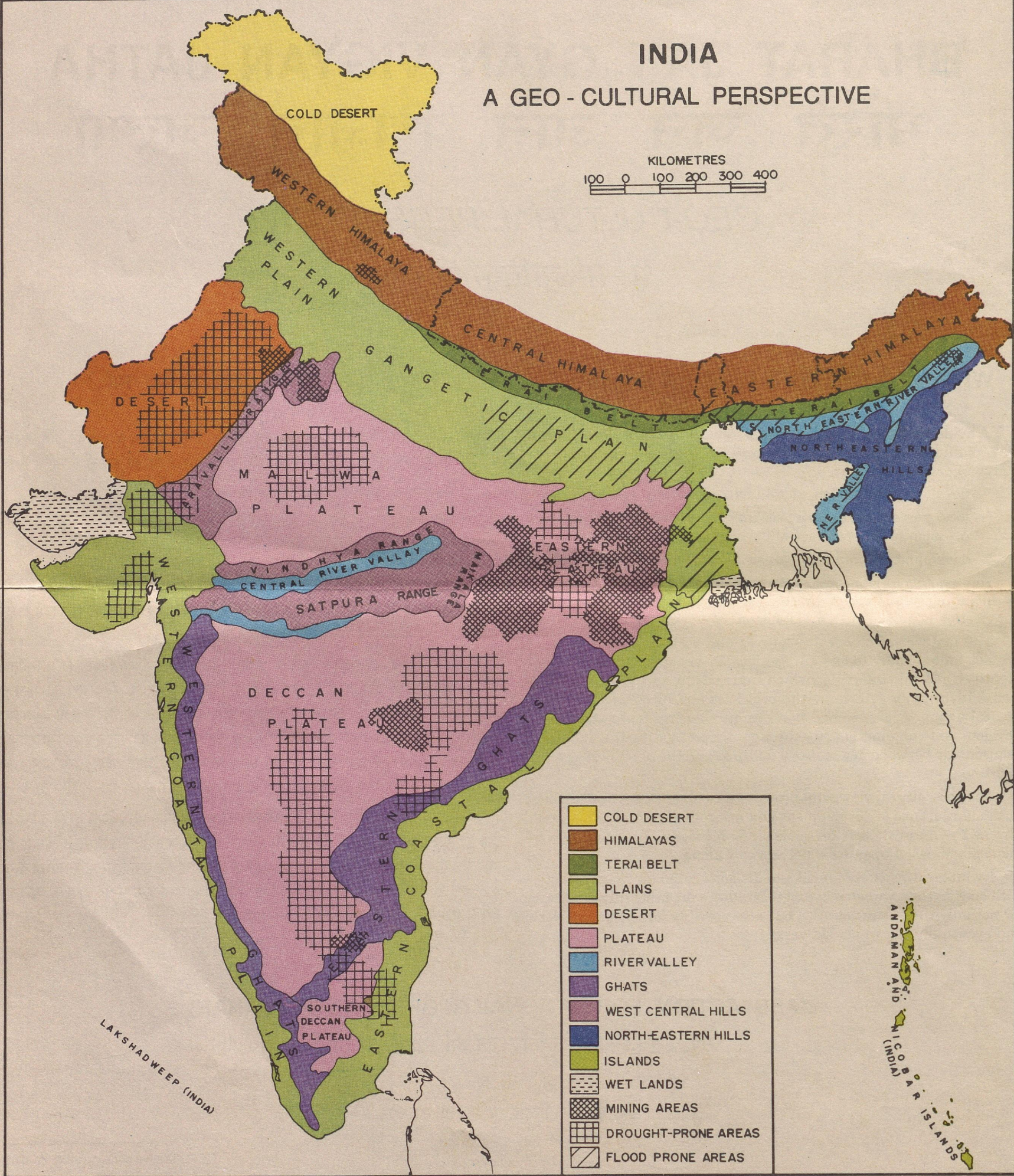
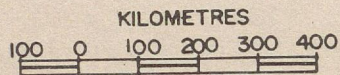
3. Conduct village/gram panchayat/block level competitions for "Best farmer", "Best crafts man", "Best dairy farmer", "Cleanest home", "Most health conscious family", "Most innovative village industry", "Best design of improved agricultural implement" "Most weatherwise villager" etc.,
4. Organize training courses on economically important applications of science and technology, like
 - i) Better agricultural practices
 - ii) Cultivation of new crops like mulberry, rubber, medicinal plants, mushrooms etc.,
 - iii) Bee keeping
 - iv) Soil and water conservation
 - v) Pisciculture
 - vi) Raising seedlings
 - vii) Fuel efficient chulah making
 - viii) Design of handloom textiles
 - ix) Low cost house construction etc.,

Naturally, many of these activities will require substantial technical help from experts. It is the responsibility of the state organizing committees to make available this help wherever people have shown an initiative. In case of necessity, the National Organizing Committee will render all help to the state organizing committees.



INDIA

A GEO - CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE



LAKSHADWEEP (INDIA)

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS (INDIA)

BHARAT JAN GYAN VIGYAN JATHA

भारत जन ज्ञान विज्ञान जत्था

GEO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

भू-सांस्कृतिक परिप्रेक्ष्य

WHY GEO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ?

Why do we talk of Geo-Cultural perspective at all? Would it not suffice if we consider our village, locality or town alone? There is a growing consensus that,

- * developmental action should be a result of people's initiative;
- * local perception, experiences and aspirations must find an expression in programmes of development; and
- * developmental planning must involve people's participation.

However, would it be necessary to enrich the above understanding by including yet another dimension? The question of geo-cultural perspective is indeed such a dimension .

The features of physical resources and socio-cultural conditions are not unique only to one village, locality or town. One can always identify a geo-cultural region which shares many such features. These would invariably determine the priorities and direction of developmental action. A deeper and more comprehensive understanding of development can emerge only through understanding the dialectical relationship between geo-cultural features and the process of development.

The geo-cultural viewpoint provides us with an opportunity to look at the local issues of development in a macro-perspective. This would also be the natural basis for reviewing and modulating our development plans based upon local perceptions alone.

By integrating these plural and disaggregated macro-perspective with one another, we can move on to build up a meaningful perspective for not only the entire country, but also possibly for the entire world and eventually the whole Universe !

भू-सांस्कृतिक परिप्रेक्ष्य की बात क्यों ?

हम भू-सांस्कृतिक परिप्रेक्ष्य की बात क्यों करते हैं? क्या केवल अपने गाँव, बस्ती, या मुहल्ले की बात करके काम नहीं चल सकता? यह तो हम सभी मानते हैं कि

- * विकास का काम जन पहल पर होना चाहिए।
- * विकास के कार्यक्रमों में स्थानीय समुदाय की समझ, अनुभव एवं आकांक्षायें झलकनी चाहिए।
- * विकास के नियोजन में स्थानीय समुदाय की भागीदारी होनी चाहिए।

परन्तु क्या इतना ही काफी होगा या इसमें कोई और आयाम जोड़ना आवश्यक है? भू-सांस्कृतिक परिप्रेक्ष्य का प्रश्न इसी आयाम से जुड़ा हुआ है।

किसी भी गाँव, बस्ती या मुहल्ले के भौतिक संसाधन सामाजिक स्थिति या सांस्कृतिक परिवेश अकेले उसी गाँव, बस्ती या मुहल्ले के नहीं होते। अपितु एक पूरे अंचल को पहचाना जा सकता है जिसके हालात लगभग एक समान होंगे। उस अंचल की विशेषताओं के आधार पर विकास प्रक्रिया की प्राथमिकतायें व दिशा तय की जा सकती है। यदि हम इन विशेषताओं और विकास प्रक्रिया के द्विआत्मक रिश्ते को समझ सके तो हम अपने गाँव, बस्ती या मुहल्ले के स्तर पर एक बेहतर व समन्वित समझ के साथ काम कर सकते हैं।

भू-सांस्कृतिक चिंतन हमें स्थानीय विकास को एक व्यापक परिप्रेक्ष्य में देखने का मौका देता है, अपनी स्थानीय समझ को संशोधित करने की संभावनाओं के प्रति सचेत बनाता है। और जब हम इन विविध और बिखरे हुए व्यापक परिप्रेक्ष्यों को एक दूसरे से समन्वित करते हैं तो हम पूरे देश का ही नहीं, वरन् विश्व का और शायद इसी क्रम में पूरे ब्रह्माण्ड को सही ढंग से जानने व समझने का मार्ग प्रशस्त करते हैं।

MASS ACTION FOR NATIONAL REGENERATION (MANAR)

राष्ट्रीय नव निर्माण के लिए जन अभियान(जन निर्माण)

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