

ization and subordination" or to "create an alternative space from which to function . . ." (34). The second chapter, "Inside and Outside the Whale", analyzes the ideological trajectory of the IE political novel of the 80's and 90's by offering different readings of two important writers, George Orwell and Salman Rushdie.

The third chapter, "The Caste of the Indian English Novel" lays bare, as Makarand himself says, the "pseudosociology" of the IE novel. He also examines how and with what politico-cultural inputs the IE novel depicts caste. He also makes a caste-profile of the leading IE novelists and suggests that the IE novel, under various liberal influences, is de-brahmanising itself. The next chapter, "Anglo-Indian as Indo-Anglian: Ideology, Politics and Cross-Cultural Representation" is about "writing versus being written". Makarand's argument is that in the "fictional territory that is India, the Indo-Anglians have gradually edged out the Anglo-Indians—a proposition which is in keeping with the process of decolonization. This essay also addresses the issue of the authentic representation of

a culture. Is there a real India? It is more useful to highlight the unreal images of India in the IE novel, which, as Makarand tells us, exhibits the two syndromes, the NRI and the RNI (resident non-Indians). Thus, he critiques the textual politics of such writers as Rohinton Mistry, Firdaus Kanga, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal.

All in all, Makarand Paranjape's book, as I presume, is provocative enough to elicit sharp reactions from inside and outside the Academy. It really goes to his credit that he has produced a 'poetics' of the Indian English novel to fill in a long-standing critical gap. He has made a significant contribution to the project of constructing an alternative, indigenous literary theory. His book is even more subversively critical and radical in approach than Ganesh Devy's *After Amnesia* (1992). What is even more surprising is the fact that while self-consciously writing a poetics of Indian English novel, Makarand seems to have prepared the first draft of the poetics of the Indian novel—quite unselfconsciously. Isn't Makarand in good company of

Premchand who has this to offer on the meaning of literature:

Literature which does not stimulate our good taste, does not satisfy us morally and spiritually, does not produce in us strength and activity, does not awaken our love of beauty—which does not produce in us genuine determination and real strength to overcome difficulties—is useless for us today. It does not deserve to be called 'literature'. (13)

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## A National Agenda For Education

The book under review *A National agenda for Education* is published by The Mother's Institute of Research, Preet Vihar, Delhi, which is devoted to educational research. In response to the felt need for reforming and revolutionising education in our country this institute had constituted a few working groups under the Chairmanship of Kireet Joshi, compiler of this book. Kireet Joshi is an eminent educationist, having a very bright academic career and a vast experience of varied nature, especially in the field of education. At present he is Honorary president of the Dharam Hinduja International Centre of India Research. He is also Hony. Chairman of the Value Education Centre, the Indian Council of Philosophical Research and of the Auroville Foundation. He is

conversant with the current problems of education and the deficiencies of the present system of education because of his assignments in the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India, and U.G.C. and his close association with Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research as its founder.

Kireet Joshi deserves congratulations and accolades for doing a yeoman's job in bringing out this book, which can serve as a guide for those who are engaged or might be engaged in suggesting ways and means to improve the existing (not very satisfactory), conditions in our schools and colleges.

This book contains selected papers prepared by the working groups referred to above. These papers air the national thinking on the necessary

changes to be brought in the present system of education. The topics discussed in the book are: The National Agenda for Education; Comments on the National Agenda; Objectives of Education and Promotion of Excellence; Primary Education; School Education; Contents of Education for Character Development; Higher Education; Higher Education in Humanities and Social Sciences; and Teacher Education. The appendix dwells on Teaching of Sanskrit. It is a commendable exercise in highlighting the significant aspects of education which need immediate attention of the educationists and the government to make education more beneficial to the educands and thereby improve the tone of the Nation.

From time to time, since the British

rulers introduced a regular system of education in this country, need for a change for the better had always been felt by the governments in power. History of Education in India is replete with various reforms as suggested by different high power Education Commissions before and after Independence. I need not go into the details. The latest is the New Policy of Education 1986, given to the country by the commission constituted by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. After Independence, as we know, several systems and schemes were adopted, implemented and then discarded for the reasons best known to the authorities concerned.

The conditions prevailing in the system of education are far from satisfactory, notwithstanding all the new and old reforms. The Mother's Institute of Research has done well in making a sincere and effective effort to highlight the crucial problems, the shortcomings, and flaws in the prevailing education system. An attempt has been made by writers to pinpoint various aspects of education which need educationists' deliberations for chalking out a special programme to improve and revolutionise the existing system of education.

The first paper in this publication is entitled "A National Agenda for Education." In this paper the writer laments that our education system is suffering from longstanding negligence and maladies which require drastic steps to bring about radical and revolutionary changes. National Agenda for education must be conceived and implemented to enable the youth to grow freely and boldly, imbibing in themselves the rich heritage of the past and cultivating the unfailing power of character and vision to build a bright future. It should aim at inculcating the values enshrined in the Indian Constitution like secularism, unity of people, work culture, etc. which are necessary for peace and growth of the nation.

This chapter gives broad outlines of the proposed Agenda. Under the head "Basic Foundation of the Agenda", the author stresses the need for the following.

### 1. Character Development

To meet the crisis of character in the country it is necessary to change the objectives, contents and methods of education. All aspects of child's personality—physical, intellectual, aesthetical, moral, and spiritual—need to be emphasised.

### 2. Total Literacy, Universalisation of Elementary Education

As promised in the constitution, this aspect needs adoption of all effective methods to provide access to all children for primary schooling. Progress should be monitored at block, district, state and national levels maintaining proper data of Primary Education expenditure, gender-wise enrolment, attendance rates, drop out rates, student-teacher ratio, teaching aids, assessment of student's achievement, teacher's status, etc.

### 3. National System of Education

National education must be developed in accordance with its own objectives and contents of education. Teachers, parents and the students must have legitimate opportunity to shape the educational policy with the help of dedicated educationists. The State should, however, give highest priority to education and allocate resources appropriate for this priority.

### 4. Reforms of Curricula and Examination System

Reforms of curricula and examination system must be instituted in the light of the innovative experiments initiated by the great nationalist leaders. We should be guided by the progressive ideas being experimented upon in different parts of the world under the inspiration of the goals to establish learning society, life-long education, learning to learn, learning to do, learning to practise, learning to care, learning to be, and learning to become.

### 5. Sovereignty of the Child and the Youth

It is central to learning that society and people should resist all activities which are likely to adversely affect the

harmonious and integral value-oriented development of children and youths.

## II. Three Immediate Reforms

### 1. Pre-School Education

The education of pre-school age children is recommended to be essential to make the universal elementary education possible. The significance of early childhood in the later development of attitudes and personality, has come to be testified by modern psycho-physiology and close observation. Any formal learning is to be avoided. Children should be encouraged on lines of creative joy and healthy psychological development. The State must provide adequate funds to develop kindergartens, bulwarks, anganwaris, etc. on a large scale.

### 2. Reduction of Load of Books

Immediate steps are needed to remedy the load of curriculum and books on the tender minds of children

### 3. Care and Education of the Girl Child:

Care and education of the girl child is of primary importance to make every woman in our country well equipped to make her best contribution in the integral development of the nation. The State government should provide adequate infrastructure, facilities and incentives to ensure that all the girls from pre-school age to fourteen years are sent to schools and are not allowed to drop out. They should further be encouraged for higher levels of schooling, collegiate and university education. Awareness and social pressure must be applied to persuade parents to send their girls to school.

## III. Basic Thrust of the Agenda

### Character Development: Overarching Principle

The writers have done well by directing the attention of the educationists and education reformers to a very important aspect of education, i.e. character development. It is aptly proposed that all programmes of education should

vibrate with an inspiring force to provide value-orientation to skills, temperament and personality so as to strengthen courage and wisdom, harmony and unity, honesty and sincerity, perspicacity and efficiency, responsibility and accountability. Great values emphasised in the Constitution of India—Rights and Duties – should form the basic ground, and curriculum should be so designed as to concretely relate these values to the pursuit of humanistic studies, science, technology, art and craft.

Education for character development is relevant not only at school level, but is also equally significant at higher levels.

#### IV. Reiteration of Objectives of Education

The three perennial objectives of education are:

(i) Education should aim at encouraging every individual to know himself/herself and to relate with the world as effectively and as harmoniously as possible;

(ii) Education should transmit the cumulative results of the valuable cultural heritage to the growing generations so as to enable them to carry it forward and build the paths of a greater future; and

(iii) Education should encourage a judicial acceleration of human progress.

Other objectives relevant to our times are suggested as under:

—*Integral Development Of Personality:* Total education for the total human personality not only by the latest trends of holistic thought but also to unite science with humanism.

—*Environment Care:* Improvement in the quality of life can be possible by emphasising harmony between human beings and Nature.

—*Science And Technology:* The present civilisation being science-based, it is imperative to promote the importance of scientific knowledge and technology.

—*Science And Values:* Education should provide a special emphasis

on relation between science and values.

—*International Understanding And Peace:* Education for international understanding and peace has come to be acknowledged as a very important aim of UNESCO. As such education should provide for understanding and respect for all peoples, their cultures, civilisations, values and ways of life. Education implies commitment to the idea and practice of the One Human Family.

—Infuse in the children the spirit of nationalism and secularism

Under items V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X and XI, the writer has included the Role of (i) the Teacher, (ii) the Students, (iii) the Parents, (iv) the Educational Administrator, (v) Art in Education (vi) Physical Education, and (vii) National Spirit of Discipline.

All the above mentioned items need special emphasis because of their significant role in moulding the character and personality of the educand.

#### XII. Contents of Education

To enhance "Quality Education" which promotes excellence amongst students, both individually and collectively, the writer suggests the following aspects of contents of education.

—*What everyone needs to know:* Everyone needs to know the mystery and excellence of the human body and how to harmonise demands of rationality, morality and aesthetic refinement. One also needs to learn to practice power of concentration and noble science and art of living. To be a good student or a teacher one needs to learn how to grow into higher and deeper reaches of psychic and spiritual being.

—*Vocational Education:* Vocational education is considered an essential part of character development. It develops personality through the acquisition of skills. Vocational education needs to be redesigned

to make it possible for every student to have at least two years' training suitable to a chosen vocation prior to any terminal point. It is also suggested that these courses should be developed right up to the post-graduate and research levels.

—*Holistic Vision:* Study of subjects in isolation should be discouraged. A holistic view of knowledge has to be kept in view in formulating curricula and syllabi.

—*Need to Update and Prune Curricula:* On account of explosion of knowledge and information it is essential to update the contents of various subjects of study. Outdated contents need pruning. It should be done through a national body of eminent experts in different subjects.

—*Value Education:* It is suggested that while framing curricula value education should receive utmost importance. A National Academy for Value Education need to be set up to concentrate on research, training and publishing teaching-learning material on subjects relating to value education.

—*Indian Culture:* It is rightly recommended that national education should be able to project a true and inspiring account and message of Indian culture. It is to be given top priority to safeguard our children from blindly imitating foreign culture. But it requires adopting a rational attitude. We may reject alien influences with discretion. We have to assimilate, with right discrimination all that is good and beneficial for ourselves and the world.

—*Need to make Studies interesting and understandable:* It is regretted that the books and learning material prescribed for studies are uninteresting and beyond comprehension of even the teachers. The entire system of textbook production needs a serious thinking. Capable and experienced experts should be engaged to meet this problem. Books should be simple,

interesting, written in easily comprehensible language, and with the local background.

—*Linguistic Competence*: The writer points out that with our present language policy, our cultural identity cannot be retained. Therefore our curricula have to be so designed that our students should be able to appreciate original resources of our culture by studying ancient languages like Sanskrit and Tamil, and medieval languages like Persian and Arabic. This would mean stirring hornet's nest. I feel, the wise, old Three Language Formula is the best.

### XIII Methods of Education

—*Need for Innovative Methods*: I personally do not agree with the writer that methodology of education has not received much attention since long. I as a teacher of methodology for a long period, know that many methods have been initiated by foreign educators and philosophers and also by some national leaders and scholars. But for unknown reasons even the best-trying methods like the Basic System of Education which were introduced with a great fanfare were discarded after some time. Now let the educationists sit again and suggest some new methodologies.

—*Child-Centred Education*: The education methods should be suited to the child's age, interests, and environment. They should allow the maximum involvement of the child and use T.V. and Audio-Visual Aids.

Following elements are recommended for the innovative and dynamic methods of education:

- a) Child's total involvement in the process of learning.
- b) Child should be treated with sympathy and understanding.
- c) A great emphasis should be laid on learning to learn, learning by doing, and learning by practising.

d) Self-study project work, group discussions, community work, library-oriented education, activities of adventure, manual labour, etc. should be emphasised.

—*Need for New Learning Material*: New Learning Material, appropriate to these dynamic methods of education will have to be prepared.

### XIV Counselling Services

Our students need to be provided mature and wise counsel to help them in respect of their studies, development of their faculties, availability of opportunities and various choices open to them for suitable vocations, professions and careers and information regarding possible placement. Parents also need guidance in meeting the problems of their children connected with freedom, discipline, adolescence, etc. Schools may employ qualified counsellors. Experts in various fields and employment exchange officers may be invited to address and interact with the students and teachers.

### XV Problems of Drug Addiction and AIDS

The menace of the use of drugs among teenagers and youth needs a strong handling. Even the scourge of AIDS is spreading in the country. It is therefore, necessary to adopt effective measures to create awareness among the students about the misery caused by them.

### XVI Examination System

—Change in the present system of examination is strongly recommended, as it is regarded mindless memorisation. Some even suggest that examination system as such should be abolished because of its many shortcomings. But experience has shown that examinations or tests cannot be done away with. They are very necessary because they serve many purposes. What is needed is the change in the

nature of tests, frequency of tests, purpose of tests and development of proper attitudes regarding tests among students and teachers. Tests should be for guidance of teachers and students.

—*Right Use of Tests*: Main uses of tests are listed as (a) stimulation; (b) providing opportunities to the students to think clearly and to formulate ideas adequately; (c) achieving precision, exactness and mastery of details; (d) arriving at a global view of the subjects or works in question; (e) self-evaluation; and (f) gaining self confidence.

If tests are woven into the learning process, the nature and frequency of the tests will depend upon the above-mentioned purposes.

Continuous evaluation is recommended to make the tests more useful and to reduce the burden of examinations.

—*Tests for Character Development*: If tests are necessary to evaluate academic progress and ability, these are equally essential to evaluate students in respect of essential qualities of character such as truthfulness, sincerity, cheerfulness, benevolence, right judgement, courage, self-sacrifice, self-confidence, obedience, gratitude, respect, responsibility, cooperation, harmony, etc. In respect of physical education activities, along with physical fitness, children can be assessed in the development of valuable qualities of team spirit, sportsmanship and discipline.

—*Tests and Teachers*: Of course, teachers have to play a major role in conducting these tests with a great sense of responsibility to achieve the desired aims of these tests.

—*Entrance Tests*: Recently introduced Entrance Tests for different courses are regarded as a necessary evil. They cause a huge financial burden on the parents and harassment to students

because of their rapid succession within a short time and at different places (of the examining bodies). These have become necessary because the major examinations have come under disrepute and also because of unequal standard of tests and evaluation.

—*National Testing service*: To meet these difficulties and to maintain a uniform standard, tests by the "National Testing Service" have been suggested for admission and placement in employment. These should be open to all who want to take the tests irrespective of whether they have a particular degree or not.

## XVII. Higher Education and Research

Higher Education and Research have been considered as important as Primary and Secondary education. It is emphasised that higher education has a decisive place of its own. Without higher education, and that too, of a very high quality we shall suffer from unemployed graduates, incompetent teachers and second or third rate professionals. To expand the frontiers of knowledge research can be nourished in our institutions of higher education. As meaningful higher education is very expensive, government should make adequate provision for the same. Private sector should be encouraged to promote and cater to higher education. However, it should not be allowed to be commercialised by the private bodies. Reforms suggested for system of education in general are also meant for Higher Education.

The 2nd Chapter "On National Agenda For Education" contains the highlights of the very significant items for consideration of the Ministry of Human Resource Development to bring about the necessary improvements in the present system of education. Here again the message of the Agenda, to place the child and the youth at the centre stage, is stressed. Quoting the instructive parable of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore of suffocating the parrot to death under the weight of

learning material in an attempt to train it, it is emphasised that the child has to be aided but not to be stuffed; given the atmosphere of fresh air but not imprisoned. The Agenda rightly emphasises the goal of universalisation of elementary education and the importance of the girl child.

The Agenda also proposed setting up of a National Commission for Education which could act as People's Commission and which could create and sustain a national system of education instead of a variety of State Systems of Education.

The 3rd chapter dilates on "Objectives of Education and Promotion of Excellence". The writer avers that pursuit of excellence depends upon three factors, namely (i) Cultivation of will among all to work within their own limitations and to surpass them; (ii) Progressive understanding of the principles underlying the process of self-exceeding; and (iii) Clearer perception of and commitment to the higher goals of individual and collective welfare. It is, indeed, a happy sign that we have awakened after a long slumber of indifference and educationists are being invited to provide the inputs of thoughts and guidelines in order to bring about much needed changes in the system of education.

It is stated that Jaques Delor's Report (1996) submitted to UNESCO for the XXI Century "Learning, The Treasure Within", gives a refined analysis of learning to be. The report alludes to "Four Pillars of Education" namely, learning to know; learning to do; learning to live together; and learning to be. These pillars elucidate a broad and encompassing view of learning that would go beyond any instrumental view of education; it emphasises "the development of the complete person", in short, learning to be. These pillars, if understood properly and implemented boldly, can promote excellence at all levels of education. 'To be' is to be excellent and perfect. Learning to learn requires power of concentration. It also implies learning to do, i.e. learning by practising. 'Learning to know' means acquiring knowledge or awareness of facts and their inter-relationship. It is

connected with learning to venture. 'Learning to live together' enables one to discover the spirit of mutuality and solidarity, i.e. team spirit. 'Learning to do' aims at learning to produce and create through the development of skills and technology.

In chapters 4-9 the author has given in detail what is to be stressed in respect of the objectives and problems and what is essential to be done in case of Primary Education, School Education, Education for Character Development, Higher Education, Higher Education in Humanities and Science, and Teacher Education. This is in a way reiteration of what is given in chapter 1. The recommendations made in this chapter call for special attention and deliberations by the National Commission, if appointed, to recast the plan of education to suit the present conditions.

With regard to the contents of the chapter on "Education for Character Development" I may point out that the recommendations made are quite noteworthy and worth implementation. The writer has taken pains to draw the syllabus for different school and college classes to inculcate moral virtues among the educand and to make education value-oriented.

I do not, however, agree with the writer recommending in these courses for study the extracts from the holy scriptures of different religions. These sacred texts contain heterogeneous elements with conflicting ideologies. It is better and wiser to avoid controversies. Moreover some of them allude to superstitious causes of certain facts and phenomena in contradiction with what the students learn in science classes. In this era of scientific development we need to create in them scientific temper. Today in schools we explain to the students the phenomena by referring to the facts which are interlinked as cause and effect. For example, the creation of this world, with four kingdoms, namely inanimate, vegetable, animal, and human. These have come into existence as a result of the evolutionary process brought about by the fundamental laws of Nature. Our very existence depends upon them. So we have to develop

healthy relations with them by cultivating the virtues of inter-relationship, gratitude, service and respect for the rights of all these.

We have also to remind ourselves of the duty laid down by our Constitution under Part IV A that every citizen of India has to develop Scientific Temper, Humanism and the Spirit of Enquiry so as to help in building a Socialist, Democratic and Secular Society.

The feeling of unity is attempted by saying that all religions teach the same ethics and that God is one, but with different names. But it is disappointing to note that all exercises, common prayers, Sarv Dharm Sammellans, etc. have miserably failed to foster inter-religious harmony to bring National Integration. So Secularism is the only solution of the problems of national integration as well as to check communal conflicts. Secularism does not

mean lack of religious attitude. It is defined as equal respect for all faiths and cultivation of religious tolerance and harmony.

A secular institution is required to be committed to humanistic ethics and humanistic religion. I know some secular institutions where moral education consists in developing among students feelings of gratitude, respect, affection and serviceableness to parents, brothers and sisters, community, country, mankind, the innocent animals and birds, flora and fauna and natural objects of beauty in the world. Songs and prayers in these schools aim at the cultivation of sweetness and understanding in all relationships. These are free from any theology whatsoever. Hence these can be adopted by the followers of all faiths. The prayer is to evoke and strengthen our better self. The prayer songs are dedicated to refining

our relations with all the four Kingdoms.

I conclude that Value Education for Secular Society should consist of cultivating in children Scientific Temper and humanistic values, both at person-to-person level and at institutional level.

Appendix emphasises the need of encouraging the teaching of Sanskrit as recommended by the National Level Committee. I feel that we should not recommend the inclusion of Sanskrit in the Curriculum as a compulsory subject. But we can make an effort to recommend it as a useful language for the study of our rich heritage.

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## The Cartesian Mind: Reflections on Language and Music

### DESCARTES' NEW MIND

Genuine inquiries seem to have disappeared from the academic philosophical scene. The space is almost occupied by dogmatic preaching under the thick cloud of obscurantism. A genuine attempt at a fruitful, though controversial, inquiry is as refreshing as a good shower after a prolonged drought. *The Cartesian Mind: Reflections on Language and Music* by Prof. Nirmalangshu Mukherjee is an exploration first and reflection later. In this sense, it is an extremely refreshing monograph. Moreover, any thorough inquiry into the nature and function of language is intrinsically a self-exploration. The Indian thinkers of the classical era had rightly realised the importance of language study. Consequently, the study of language assumed the greatest significance in the ancient intellectual tradition. We find Bhartrhari expressing the view in his *Magnum Opus, Vakyapadrya*: "In the

world this [grammar] is the first rung of the ladder towards moksa:

*Yathārthajātayah sarvah śabdakṛtini-  
bandhanāh /  
Tathaiiva loke vidyānam esa vidyā  
parāyanam//*

15//1//

Or,

It (grammar) is the straight Royal Road for those desirous of (reaching) the goal:

*Idamādyam padasthānam siddhi-  
sopanaparvanam/  
Iyam sa moksamananamjihma rāja-  
paddhatih//*

16//1//

It is quite true that the discussion on language in the West has taken a self-exploratory turn only after Chomsky. Earlier, though grammar used to be an essential component of academic learning in the Greeko-Roman tradition, it was greatly motivated by the pedagogic in-

terest - how to teach the silver tongue (the language of the colonisers) to the barbarians (the colonised). In this regard, if one finds the study of language as a means to explore the self (atman = at + vana, literally meaning that which moves, or grows and which is not an entity imprisoned in a body but an ever-growing enterprise), then it is a welcome exercise even if the inspiration comes from the West in the form of Chomsky.

Coming back to *The Cartesian Mind*, the book is divided into four chapters, mostly for the sake of convenience. Otherwise it is quite apparent that there is a continuous attempt to reach towards the concluding remarks, which are at the very beginning stated: "Various things, mentioned above, seem to fall in place at once. The computational system, under further abstraction, extends to other domains of discrete infinity, The 'perfection' of this (general) computational system leads to its 'biological isolation' and, hence, to the Cartesian

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