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KALAM

The Revolutionary Students' Voice

- The Saffroning of a Non-existent Education
- Grooming Students for The Rashtra
- Communalism and education



Cartoon Page



*Of course, I've doubled and trebled the prices!
The minister himself has said that price hike is
absolutely necessary for growth!*



*Has the economy gone that bad? He took away the coins,
maybe, thinking I offered them to him!*



*Stop grumbling about the prices. Look at the
brighter side. Our foreign trade has increased.
The GNP has gone up. The foreign reserves
have jumped to \$27 billion...*



*I'm really sorry for them, you know. When I was living
above the poverty line I too used to get terribly upset and
worried whenever fares were hiked!*

Kalam

The Revolutionary Student:
Voice

**Organ of the All India
Revolutionary Students
Federation (AIRSF)**

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The guerrilla is like a poet

Editorial

Oppose this War of Shame on Iraq! Down with this Imperialist Repeat Offender!!

Yet again Iraq is in the crosshairs of the US war machine. For it has become the stumbling block in the yankee imperialists' burden of making possible a better future for the people of Iraq and middle east! Every now and then, as if not sure of themselves, Clinton along with his shameless ally Blair, make a song and dance for their case as it is for the "best interests" of the world, for the people of the middle east, for the people of Iraq. Still not satisfied, as he had been "working hard to build peace in the middle east and to strengthen... relations with Arab world", that Clinton and his trigger happy cronies had the heart to talk about an early air strike on Iraq before the advent of the month of Ramzan so that Iraq would be left in the valley of peril while the rest of Arab fraternity evoke the premonitions of god in peace.

True, had some observers described the destruction done in by the five week long "Operation Desert Storm" 1990-91 in Iraq by US and its allies as "near apocalyptic", the new one initiated unilaterally by US and Britain, patented as "Operation Desert Fox" has even made the above adjective redundant. While the five week long Persian Gulf War of 1990-91 saw Iraq being rummaged by 88000 tons of bombs, the latest four day long battering of Iraq witnessed more than 500 Tomohawk missiles being fired, more than all and much more deadlier than what was used seven years before.

All along this war of shame Clinton and his entourage were in want of more and more excuses. Belying all those brave talks and brave face put up by the big bully was that fire there; down the belly of the beast.

For the failure to "get rid" of Saddam despite the hype and pomp of a "Desert Storm" had risen like a spectre of overwhelming fear and concern over the bubble of "invincibility" of the big bully, threatening to burst, sending shivers down the spine of the imperialist war machine. And more so with the sight of vying powers like France and Russia trying to reap advantage of the situation and cut into the US domination in the Persian Gulf—something ever digestible to the dictum of Uncle Sam.

This devil of a nightmare was what provoked US ten months ago when it threatened to run over Iraq. But then little could Uncle Sam restrain to rest in peace for those long ten months that this renewed aggression befalling Iraq was no more a surprise but a pointer to the slippery slope of an ever increasing lawless world that is ahead of us.

While it brought once again to the fore how weak and meek is the UN which has to be with this method of madness of the US imperialist bulldog it also tore to shreds the facade of this multilateralism of UN to reveal its vulgar face of that of the meeting point of the representatives of ruling classes around the world to share their interests, solicited by the godfather—the US.

What the US would strive to hide is the fact that control of Gulf oil is key to its super power status. What has made the "Desert Fox" different from its early avatar "Desert Storm" is while a mute consensus was there for the latter, the former has evoked outright condemnation from Russia and China along with a guarded disapproval from France and a call from the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) to stop the air strikes and lift the sanctions. It's significant to note that US itself gets only a minor portion of its oil from this region—but for the European and Japanese powers as well as many other countries depend on this oil to run their economies. And what the US wants to hide more is its moves against Iraq are about defending and expanding US imperialist interests by beating and humiliating the government and people of an oppressed country. They are about control of oil and world domination of which the people of Iraq have become repeat victims.

It is precisely to camouflage its predatory power politics that US feeds its people with sustained media and government vilification of Saddam Hussain along with tabloid style

warnings of the so called threat of Iraqi chemical and biological weapons.

To understand this politics of vilification is to unravel the real story behind the US relationship with Saddam Hussain. The Hussain regime like any other US backed third world governments was dearer to Washington. Hussain's dream of emerging as a regional power blossomed under the US patronage as a pro-US Shah regime (another of those dictators) in Iran collapsed. Sensing an untoward shift in the fortunes of imperialist interests, the western powers instigated Saddam into a bloody war with Iran which saw over a million Iraqi and Iranian people perishing. While using the Iraqi people as cannon fodder the western powers saw it in their interests to foment this bloody war. This it was US and its NATO ally Germany which helped Saddam develop the nerve gas which he then used in 1988 against the Kurdish town of Halabja inside Iraq and also against Iranian troops. But then all was well and good as Iraq happened to be the at the right side of the US. The Reagan administration had then professed: "There is nothing in International law that prohibits that".

But as and when Iraq's urge to expand its regional power started stepping on the toes of the US imperialists, "their man" in Persian Gulf turned overnight "the madman". The Hussain regime thus became the nemesis of world peace; and the logic of "Desert Storm", the classic case of the systematic decimation of an Iraqi army fostered and trained by these big powers. The outcome of the Gulf war of 1991 was the killing of over 200000 Iraqi people. And what more? Crying hoarse of Iraq's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction, the crime that US did/ is doing with the same on the Iraqi people was/is less different.

The vilification campaign while on the one hand enables US to hide its own hypocrisy, on the other adds teeth to its case for a renewed aggression on Iraq. So when all the tall talk about the lurking danger in the Iraqi despots' owning weapons of mass destruction unfolds, when the sermons on the lethality of chemical and biological weapons go unabated, what is being hidden behind the smokescreen is that the carrier of the largest pile of weapons of mass destruction is none other than US. What is being hidden is the embarrassing truth that no one in history has used weapons of mass destruction as often and as recklessly as the US—from chemical weapons in World War I,

to the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to the massive napalming and defoliation of Vietnam due to chemical poisons like Agent Orange—that the US ruling class and military are the world's no. 1 serial killers. For over 50 years the US had been holding the world hostage with its huge nuclear arsenal—and still does.

A Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) to update the use of nuclear weapons was signed by Clinton last year. As per the New York Times (12/8/97), "the US will continue to maintain nuclear weapons as the cornerstone of nations strategic defense". And further "reserves the right to be the first to use nuclear arms during a conflict..." As part of this updating process, reports International Herald Tribune, 24/12/98, the US government has decided to purchase future supplies of tritium, a radioactive gas that is a key element in nuclear warheads, from a Tennessee Valley Authority plant whose prime function is to generate electricity for homes and businesses. To use a commercial reactor—the cost of the program of which is of the tune of \$ 400 million over 15 years—for military nuclear purposes is in gross violation of the longstanding US nonproliferation policy. It should be noted that it was the same policy that the US was forcing recently on North Korea, India and Iraq.

When Larry Wayne Harris, a former member of a white Supremacist Aryan Nation (a la our own VHP, Bajrang Dal, RSS), was arrested in Las Vegas allegedly for carrying military grade anthrax in a foam beer cooler, US media as well as the government machinery spearheaded by none other than the defence secretary William Cohen sprang up to set the hype. As part of the US campaign of dubbing Iraq as possessing chemical and biological weapons, Cohen was soon to accuse Iraq of developing biological weapons using anthrax. The fact remains that there is no clear evidence to prove that the Iraqi military currently has a significant amount of chemical weapons. On the contrary, it is a well documented fact that the US has over 1000 tons of chemical weapons in its own military kitty—enough to steal the lives of countless millions.

Moreover, the case of Harris tells us something significant, that how easy it is to create germ weapons in simple laboratories and how impossible it is to prevent it by bombing a country back to the stone age. What is more significant here is, that imperialism inherently riddled with hypocrisy, begets the same wherever it goes and

wherever it thrives. And it is the necessity of the US ruling class to conjure up coloured imaginations to promote hysteria and war.

Of late, the most persistent accusation making the rounds—and that which culminated in the four day bombing—was the non-compliance of Iraq with the directives of the UNSCOM, the UN special commission to enforce the sanctions. That how vicious and vindictive are the sanctions against Iraq is telling from a report carried in the New York Times (1/4/98). The report cited the US blockade of the delivery of a certain shipment supposedly carrying dangerous material to Iraq. That the consignment consisted of whole-cream powdered milk for children would leave one aghast with dismay and disbelief! The US claimed that the powdered milk could have "laboratory use"—that it could be part of an alleged biological weapons program of the Iraqi government. The Times further added: "This was only one of many purchases relief officials support that will not reach Iraq because of Washington's intervention."

How oppressive, how humiliating, and hence dehumanising are these sanctions for the entire people of Iraq is made evident in no uncertain terms by this report. It won't be an exaggeration to call this sanctions a genocide on the innocent people of Iraq. The brutal US war machine had left a trail of mass destruction in 1991, reducing to rubble water treatment plants, sewage systems, milk powder producing factories etc. The sanctions denied the purchase of chlorine gas much needed for water treatment. Neither the sanctions permitted to import the essential equipments nor did the Iraqi government had the wherewithal to repair the sewage system which was destroyed totally. That this rape committed through 'Operation Desert Fox' was on a defenceless Iraqi people already left to starve and perish reveals the monstrosity of the crime. Just ten months before the latest four day bombing of Iraq, the UN statistics showed over 1.2 million people, including 7,50,000 children under the age of 5, dying due to shortage of food and medicine. Since last December, the figure of children dying of diarrhoea, pleurisy and malnutrition has been touching over the 5000 mark each month! The

words of Gulf War veteran Eric Gustafson, now a fierce anti-war campaigner sums up the real situation: "And the sanctions are a legacy that Iraq will have to suffer with for countless generations. Infact, the youngest generation will be permanently stunted and disabled... It's by far one of greater crimes against humanity in the latter part of this century... that is denied by the US government... so people continue to die from biological diseases. And to me that truly is biological warfare..."

The UN package of oil for food, medicine and other essentials is a further humiliation of Iraq. The Iraqi government have no say over the food and supplies bought through the sale of its oil. The UN further insists that funds may only be used to rebuild electrical grids in parts of Iraq that are outside government control.

Since the end of Gulf war in 1991, the UN inspection teams (all dominated by officials from US and Britain) have been snooping around everywhere, from government offices to factories. Video cameras were set up to directly monitor activity, at over 100 sites around the country. Over this are the "no fly zones" imposed by the US and Britain in northern and southern Iraq to prevent flights by Iraqi aircrafts in those areas—a further trampling on the sovereign status of the nation of Iraq. Notwithstanding all this bandobust is the hue and cry over Iraq's unwillingness to comply with the UN team. Any sensible mind would find it ludicrous and outrageous that the US demands the right to inspect Iraq's presidential compounds while the US media and military openly speculate about how to assassinate Iraq's leader in his bunkers. That the Iraqi refusal to relent to such bullying is perfectly understandable and reasonable. And it is this refusal on the part of Iraq which has been used as an alibi to further attack her. One may be tempted to think loudly at this juncture, about the possible response of the US government to a demand that it open up the White House and the Pentagon to an international inspection team.

As has been pointed out before, it is the wanton need of this blood sucking imperialist monsters to feed the US masses with war hysteria

and xenophobia, at the same time brutalising and dehumanising millions and millions around the world through its brazen aggression. While more and more news is trickling down about the ominous portents of Gulf war Syndrome—to which many a US marine was victim of with some loosening their fertility while others bearing children with birth defects—it would be worth profiling the state of the US society today.

The latest exclusive of Amnesty International on the state of human rights in the US is a scathing indictment of the criminalisation of that society. The report points out about overflowing prisons, of 1.7 million prisoners, one of the highest rates of incarceration in the world with death penalty being used more and more frequently. Of the 75000 women in prison today, mostly because of drug use, drug abuse and drug trafficking—a case that has quadrupled since 1980—most of them are sexually and physically abused by the guards as well as the medical staff. In the words of Pierre Sane, the secretary general of Amnesty, “what I found shocking is women being shackled when they are in labour... They are shackled when they are pregnant, they are shackled when they are taken to the hospital, they are shackled to their beds when they are giving birth...”. While police brutality is on the rise from coast to coast Pierre Sane's observation is quite revealing: “... these human rights violations are taking place in a context in which the governments' propaganda is the propaganda of war: its' a war against crime, its' a war on drugs, its' a war against illegal immigrants, its' a war against terrorism. And in a situation of war, we tend to dehumanise the enemy. We tend to first of all profile the enemy and then to dehumanise the enemy. And in the process human rights become a casualty. It is clear that the profile of the enemy in the war against drugs and the war against crime is the Young Black Male. And in the war against illegal immigrants its' the Hispanic or the Mexican. And in the war against terrorism it is the Arab—the Arab-American or Arab abroad”.

Last March when the tensions in the Persian Gulf were at flash point, the US government approved \$ 1.3 billion to cover the cost of extra

military deployment there. This is additional to the hundreds of millions of dollars the US spends each year to keep up its regular military presence in the Gulf. That this huge military force is arrayed against a relatively small army of a Third World Country—a military so battered and weakened that it can't stand on its feet—proves beyond doubt that the US forces in the Gulf are just a part of US imperialisms' global military interventions.

It is the same old imperialist monster that had supported and supplied the Indonesian military to crush over 100000 Timorese in their invasion of East Timor in 1975. It is the same old blood sucker which supports and supplies the Israeli nuclear war machine to repeatedly expand its territory through war and constantly conduct air raids and strikes outside its borders. It is the same system that has put an entire population of Iraq under peril and criminalised an entire generation of youth in the US. It is the same oppressor which has stolen the skies over much of Iraq by imposing “no fly zones” and denied land to the peasants of Mexico through NAFTA. It is the same set of oppressors which accrues enormous profit by running sweat shops in Indonesia and make fortunes out of the Middle east oil by keeping it cheap through fleecing millions of Arab people. This is an unjust war for the entire masses of the world and hence should be opposed tooth and nail.

Often official Washington and its media have made it a point to project Saddam as a neurotic, a psychopath. The point is not to contest the veracity of this scorn but to look at it with less dismay than it is in the case of a “popular president”, of the “civilised world”, who would not mind to go back to Arkansas in the midst of his 1992 campaign to sign the death warrant for Ricky Ray Rector who was totally mentally impaired.

The story of Ricky Ray Rector goes like this. Mentally impaired, he was restrained on a four point metal board for 12 weeks! After Clinton sanctioned Rickys' death sentence, while being taken from his cell to be executed, having no idea as to what was going on, given his mental condition, he left his dessert and said, “I'll finish it later” ■

The Saffroning of a non-existent education

Uma Chakravarti

The recent furore over the education minister's attempt to insidiously introduce a proposal to make the singing of the Saraswati Vandana, which was also to be sung at the beginning of the state education minister's conference in October 1998, mandatory in all schools, and also making the study of sanskrit compulsory for all students from class five upwards, along with the introduction of the Veda and the Upanishads to all students, has only made visible something that the RSS and the BJP have been doing for at least a decade, if not more, in a variety of ways. Unfortunately neither our press, nor the liberal-secular sections of our people, have noticed what has been going on right under their very noses. In fact from March this year the UP government had already abandoned the singing of sare jahan se accha, hindustan hamara in favour of vande mataram, accompanied by the bowing before the statue of Saraswati in its schools (Communalism Combat, October, 1998, p.27). Further, Mr Chitiangla's proposals to 'Indianise,' 'nationalise,' and 'spiritualise,' our educational curricula, emanating from the Sangh combine's 'academic' wing called Vidya Bharati, have already been implemented in thousands of schools set up by anyone with a bit of money because a school is among the surest investments that can be made today, since the demand for education is so high and the state has been retreating from this sector—that is if it was there at all in the first place. On a visit to Khurja, a pros-

perous town in western UP, which experienced severe rioting in which more than a hundred people died during the 'Rath Yatra' of Advani in 1990 which we were there to investigate, we found a number of Vidya Mandirs or Saraswati Mandirs run by hard core RSS businessmen who both made money and disseminated hindutva ideology right from the nursery classes onwards. What Mr Chitiangla was proposing for the whole nation, and which he must have already extended to 3,300 schools run by him in the tribal areas, which were as yet functioning outside the kind of brahmanical high culture which is regarded by the 'Sangh Toli', or Sangh combine (parivar is too benign a term for the combine, with its component of goons who rely on street power and beating people up, rather than dialogue, to impose their point of view on the rest of the people who are not already converted to their way of thinking) as crucial to their definition of hindutva, so that all diversity must be necessarily homogenised and a single ideology followed by all, whether you are in the north-east, in Bastar, in Punjab or in Kashmir. This is a point the learned judges of the Supreme Court were bound to miss in their definition of hindutva since they did not even notice the hate-filled anti-minority content of the Shiv Sena and BJP brand of hindutva, the only kind of hindutva we all experience today.

There have also been a number of other signals on the 'cultural' front—the only front the Sangh combine wishes, and

can, address given the fact that they are definitely not interested in either social welfare issues or poverty eradication measures. In Delhi, where the BJP has been in power for the last five years, street names have been drastically changed, or street names have been newly created where these were part of existing highways. Every small functionary of the BJP, some who would not even be known outside their little constituency, such as some obscure individual called 'Professor' Ramnath Vij, has a road named after him. The cruellest joke of all is that a stretch of the ring road which was called Mahatma Gandhi Road now has a special section called Hegdewar Marg, celebrating the ideological founder of the mentality that created the assassins of Gandhi. This is evidence both for a cultural onslaught and an erasure of historical events of something as recent as the forcible silencing of Gandhi by the hindu fundamentalists.

Earlier, the Sangh combine through the BJP, when it was in power in Madhya Pradesh last, closed down the school programme of the Ekalavya because of the secular democratic content of its school curricula and textbooks; the focus of the Ekalavya is on explanation of social phenomena not on obscurantism and hindu religious chauvinism. It had tried to deal with caste and religion in innovative ways linking it to social formations and issues of power and dominance. Fortunately, the BJP got voted out of power on the very secular and mundane issue of corruption, before the school programme of the Ekalavya could actually be withdrawn. Simultaneously, a figure like Bhagat Singh is being appropriated by the Sangh combine even though he was not only a socialist, but also unashamedly secular, and

decisively atheist. The last piece that Bhagat Singh wrote before he was hanged was the famous piece titled Why I Am An Atheist, but with the special felicity with which the Sangh combine rewrites history, erasing what is inconvenient for them and inserting what is convenient for them, Bhagat Singh has now been hinduised and converted into a militant hindu patriot who gave up his life in the cause of Hindu Rashtra. A secular, socialist, scientific approach is precisely the mentality that the Sangh combine must destroy—hence the double moves on Ekalavya on the one hand and Bhagat Singh on the other.

The visibility of the Sangh combine's 'educational' agenda through the recent controversy should not however blind us to a process of homogenisation and hinduisation, and the privileging of the dominant brahmanical culture in independent India: take something as routine now in all our institutions which many of us are familiar with—all functions begin with the lighting of an ornate brass lamp; no one really knows what it signifies except that it defines 'Indianness' (in my college it required a five minute homily from the chief guest, Kapila Vatsayan, that doyneness of 'Indian' culture, to the unsuspecting student who had been asked to stand by with a candle to facilitate the process of lighting the lamp; the five wicks of the lamp were meant to signify the five 'indriyas,' or senses, our deracinated student was told); the recourse to ethnicity, even as we rapidly globalise and our elites westernise, perhaps to notionally retain 'Indian' values while paving the way for new forms of imperial control and the consequent loss of autonomy as a nation, has led to certain standard cultural practices. Every secular institution's understanding of aes-

thetics is, again, drawn from: high culture so decorations invariably mean rangoli, or alpans; it will never be the designs painted by the Santhals of Bihar and Bengal, or the Warlis of Maharashtra. All the songs sung at national festivals are mostly in hindi or occasionally hindustani, always focussing on the nation as territory and a homogenised set of people, to obsessively mark the theme of unity: It would be sacrilege to suggest that we could sing the songs of IPTA, or Gaddar, dwelling on themes of poverty, exploitation, or struggles for a just society, on the occasion of our national festivals even if it is merely to mildly remind ourselves that patriotism could be about concern for *all* our people, as Jotiba Phule put it, not just a few among them.

It is also useful to remind ourselves that if we are witnessing hardcore hindu nationalism, as defined by the Sangh combine, and repulsive expressions of cultural fascism, we have had a large body of upper caste hindus, a kind of bhadralok at the national level, who have been defining Indianness entirely in terms of upper caste hindu culture, right from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, and it is this that has made it possible today for the Sangh combine to blatantly state that opposition to the Saraswati vandana is equivalent to being un-Indian, and an act of treason, since that would be at variance with their slogan of 'one nation, one people and one culture' (Times Of India, 17.12.98, p. 9). This background is also necessary to recall because it was at the same time that a certain kind of history began to be written which erased and highlighted periods and figures to advance the agenda of a militant hindu nationalism by a substantial section of this class, a point

which feminist scholars have written about since it is primarily women who have been required to carry the burden of the images produced by hindu nationalist historians. Today's hindutva type history consciously erases Meerabai's critique of feudal and patriarchal family structures by her refusal to become a sati, as expressed in her songs, and privileges Padmini, turning her into a virtual goddess, because she can be used as an iconic figure standing for the hindu woman's unique capacity to defend her chastity, and used instrumentally, through a recourse to a constructed history, to incite hindu men to attack muslim men today. It is because our saffron rulers do not believe in history, in the sense of economic, social and political contexts, and the larger structures in which events and people are located, that the writing of history is so important to the hindutvavadis—all history has to be systematically dyed in saffron. This accounts for the packing of the ICHR with closet and open hindutvavadis, and throwing in a few others to legitimise the transformation. Indeed, at the moment, all our autonomous academic institutions are being systematically taken over by purging them of even faintly liberal scholars, which means that even when the government falls, sooner or later, saffron 'intellectuals' will still be ideologically manipulating institutions and determining the direction of research. And although this is not the first time that the state has imposed its brand of history and culture, spearheading the process of homogenisation so that the students of Ladakh or the North-east have been expected to use the same textbooks written by the Gangetic valley ideologues even though it had no bearing on their lives, as happened during the Congress

regime, at least there was both external and internal pressure to make it secular. The saffron agenda is to retain the process of homogenisation, but to communalise the means by which the homogenisation is to be achieved, through its reliance on religion and religious symbols, as well as the use of governmental diktats to coerce the minorities into complying with their fatwas.

A reading of nineteenth century history indicates that the Sangh combine has used earlier strands of militant hindu nationalism to expand the arena of consent for their special brand of hindutva, but that it has also inserted special elements into their project of 'one nation, one culture, one people'. Apart from the insistence that all government schools begin their day with an invocation to Saraswati, sanskrit is to be made compulsory for all students. Now this is ironical indeed; as a language it was associated with hierarchies of caste and gender. Traditionally, only brahmanas had access to it as a language since it was supposedly associated with divinity. Women and shudras were banned from all knowledge which was composed in sanskrit, and was handed down by word of mouth in a highly controlled manner, being the sole monopoly of a small literati comprising brahmana men. Even classical sanskrit, in which the great dramas of Kalidasa and others was written, differentiated between the speech of upper caste men, especially brahmanas and kings, and the speech of women of the upper castes, including the queen, and also the lower castes who had access only to prakrit. Now, suddenly, sanskrit is to be thrust down the throats of everyone, regardless of which part of the country, or social strata one may belong to. Seen along with

the systematic killing of urdu, and even of hindustani, while consciously crafting hindi in a highly sanskritised terminology; the political motivations of this agenda and its lineages are quite clear: these moves are designed to mount a cultural onslaught on the religious minorities, and the regions which are outside the cultural hegemony of the Gangetic valley, for example the North-east.

Apart from the political motivations of these moves what will the singing of the Saraswati vandana, or the learning of sanskrit do for our people? And why should there even be talk of sanskrit when we do not even have learning in the mother tongue! There is not even the smallest acknowledgement from the Sangh combine and its sarkar that the levels of illiteracy in our country at present are shameful as they are worse than many other third world countries despite our nuclear bomb and the supposed 'greatness' of our scientists; as for food, shelter and healthcare—they are not even slogans for the great 'patriots' of the Sangh variety. And will the learning of sanskrit, with its emphasis on rote learning, give our people access to an explanatory system so that they can understand why they are where they are, and who the people responsible for their existential conditions are? That was the focus of Jotiba Phule's schools for the non-brahmanas and women as far back as the middle of the nineteenth century—something our great patriots do not even know, because the only history they have read is the history written by upper caste hindu men, who have already systematically erased the nineteenth century critiques of hindu culture emanating from those who have experienced caste and gender op-

pressions. It is the power to explain and to understand that is the basis of knowledge as Phule recognised, and that was what he termed the third eye, the *traittiya ratna*—the one with which one could see through the ideological manipulation of knowledge along a particular direction, which naturally the upper castes wished to retain in their hands. It was access to a kind of learning that could strip away the falsities of the hegemonic knowledge of the brahmanas that led fourteen year old Muktabal, a Mang girl in Phule's school, to make a searing indictment of the caste system, its relationship to differential material access, and the role of political power in history in subjugating the dalits (she refers to the Peshwai as a time when the rulers played bat-ball with the heads of the dalits). Are the saffronists interested in imparting the power to explain? Or is it to thwart all possibilities of explanation that they wish every student to get entangled in learning the mechanics of sanskrit grammar, such that they will kill all capacity for independent thinking, while simultaneously coercing all the minorities to submit to their will, that the Sangh ideologues have put forward their agenda? (Among the other proposals that did not get to being known were proposals to have regular orientation programmes for all teachers on Indianisation; we know who will conduct these courses as Tanika Sarkar has pointed out in *The Hindu* of November 24, 1998; and since women constitute one of the key components of socialising the next generation along certain lines, they are to be given obligatory moral instruction and home-keeping courses!) What is of significance is that the moves made by the Sangh combine within the country are being paralleled by

moves outside the country; A few years ago the infamous Hinduja's gave a large sum of money to the Columbia University in New York to introduce a chair for Vedic studies (which the University did create despite strong opposition from sections of their own faculty); their political motivations are quite clear: after all if they had money to spare and wanted to create an interest in India why did they not consider the setting up of a chair in the name of Ambedkar, and specifically for dalit studies? Since Ambedkar had been a student at Columbia University and it was there that he worked out his preliminary conceptualisation of caste, it would have been a fitting tribute to India, and to Indian studies. India is not just the Vedas and the brahmana men who kept it going. Even if it was too much for us to expect that the Hinduja's could have created an Ambedkar chair, they could, at least, have created a chair for Buddhist studies, since that would have been close to Ambedkar's heart. Of course such a move would have been anathema to the hindutvavadis, for whom Buddhism is merely a part of Hinduism as Advani claimed in Sarnath, on November 6, 1998 (*Frontline*, December 4, 1998), thus erasing the political and ethical statement made by Ambedkar through the mass conversion of dalits in 1956 as he declared publicly to all Indians that he may have been born a hindu but he would not die as one.

What is also noteworthy is that the attempt to introduce a decisively saffron educational agenda has been accompanied by a series of attacks on christians—in churches, in residences of the nuns including their being subjected to rape, and more particularly in schools and colleges,

all over the country. The regularity and precision with which they have been executed clearly indicate that these are intended to intimidate the christian community in general, but that is not all: they are also intended to terrorise the christians because next to the government schooling system, which is getting more and more non-functional everywhere, it is the missionaries who have kept education going not only in urban areas but in many of our tribal areas. This is precisely the sector in which Mr. Chitiangla has begun to operate in a big way in order to hinduise the tribals and homogenise them into a larger hindu constituency without which the hindutvavadis cannot claim to speak on behalf of all hindus, since there are large areas where brahminical high culture does not exist. The strategy of the Sangh combine is to unleash both a physical and cultural assault—through their goons on the one hand, and their hinduisation programme on the other—on the minorities simultaneously to terrorise them into submission. In this context, the justification of the rape of christian nuns, by the VHP secretary, B.L.Sharma, as an expression of patriotic anger of hindu youth against 'anti-national' forces (Communalism Combat, October, 1998, p. 30) is outrageous as it seeks to define patriotism entirely in terms of vengeance, specifically male sexual aggression.

What should the agenda of the democratic and progressive sections of our people be to the saffroning of education? There is no doubt that we must strongly resist the entry of religion into the secular space of government schooling. We also need to expand the initiatives of institutions like the Ekalavya into more schools so that we not only demand education for all but also pro-

vide the direction of the educational content which must contain the capacity to explain social reality for it to be meaningful. There is no point to education unless we can produce more Muktabais. Muktabai would have noticed that the mandatory singing of hymns to Saraswati might well be a way of deflecting attention to the fact that according to a statement of the Home Minister in Parliament 96% of the reported sexual assaults on women are on women belonging to the scheduled castes and tribes, the very section to which Muktabai belonged. Mere literacy being pushed by international agencies, aided by our own elites, or singing hymns to Saraswati, will kill the possibility of the birth of more Muktabais. That is precisely why the Sangh combine has focussed so narrowly on sanskrit, the Vedas and Upanishads (which will certainly not explain social reality but rather will mystify it), and home-keeping courses for girls. Perhaps we need to set up and run our own schools like Phule did. Revolutionaries in India need to address this area and not leave it for the hindutvavadis to use for their hegemonic purposes. Why hasn't the left entered the sector of schooling more decisively? A revolutionary agenda cannot be restricted to certain sectors alone, leaving others in the hands of religious and cultural fascists. Surely there has to be class struggle on all fronts? ■

Read and subscribe!

Chhatra Fauj

Organ of Revolutionary Students
Federation (RSF),
West Bengal

Hindu Fascist Assault on Education

—Sandeep Singh Bajell

The HRD (Human Resource Development) minister Mr. M.M. Joshi, made an abortive attempt to pass the RSS inspired agenda on education at the conference of state education ministers and secretaries on October 22. It created a big furor leading to a protest walkout by the non BJP ministers. Faced with strong opposition, Joshi was compelled to retreat and five points out of the 13th page annexure had to be dropped. The scheduled speech by RSS sympathiser, P.D. Chitlangia was cancelled and the controversial invocation of Saraswati Vandana was substituted by the national on them. The attempted move for the saffronisation of education sparked off a debate in academic circles, the intelligentsia and among a section of the people about the role of state in imparting education with pro-hindu bias running contrary to our secular ideals.

One of the recommendations made by the group of 'experts' in the conference was to 'Indianise, nationalise and 'spiritualise' the curriculum from the primary to the higher level. Joshi 'claimed' the recommendation was needed to 'cleanse' the present 'alien' Macaulay education system and infuse it with the 'essentials of Indian culture'. But a question needs to be raised here. How is the present agenda different from that of Macaulay? The British imperialists had sponsored an education, highly centralised and urban under the aegis of Macaulay alongwith the introduction of English, to prepare a class of people who could be "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste". Macaulayism destroyed people's capacity to enhance their productive skills, self-confidence and self-development. Joshi's insistence on the RSS brand of 'moral and spiritual' education can in no way reclaim the above, while at the same time discouraging the values of humanism scientific enquiry and rational thought in general. When the saffronites call the present education system 'alien', they distort the very concept of what we mean by our 'own'. What they want instead is to transport the humanity back to

antiquity, as if to reclaim the 'glorious past', the value system of which mirrored the level of development the productive forces had assumed at that time. In their 'own' home grown philosophy society is a single whole devoid of any classes or class struggle subsuming the essence of hindutva and hence concepts like secularism, social justice and democracy find no place, while the minority religions like Islam, Christianity are disregarded and debunked as foreign imports.

Taking cue from the supreme court pronouncement that 'Hinduism is a way of life', the draft recommended compulsory incorporation of Vedas and Upanishads in the curriculum from primary to higher level courses. And since 'Sanskrit is the mother of all languages' it was argued to make it compulsory from class III to X. In a class ridden society like ours where religion and caste still hold a vice like grip any imposition of majoritarian religious ideas by the state will further intensify the contradictions among the people. Of course, it goes without saying that it was a well thought out tactic to subsume the minority view point under the majority in order to emphasise upon the cultural superiority of the former. It also goes without saying that the imposition of the majority hindu cultural symbols in India is a much felt need of the comprador ruling class here who are terror stricken by the intensifying contradictions among the various nationalities, castes, religions in the complex mosaic of India. That these contradictions are getting explosive day by day with the increasing onslaught of globalisation and liberalisation made easy through the nexus between imperialism and the comprador-feudal ruling class. Thus it is natural that Hindu cultural symbols become 'national' or 'Indian' and BJP pronounces that the study of Vedas-Upanishads and singing of Saraswati Vandana commands a universal appeal for all Indian irrespective of their inclinations. Joshi's predilection in reviving an 'elitist' language can be understood along the same line. Viewing

from a historical perspective, language originated in the course of the social labour of human beings. A language which fails to respond and adjust itself to the changing socio-economic conditions no longer remains in everyday use. Sanskrit had been a medium of philosophical discourse of Hindu mythology. Its role as a means of communication was restricted to the priestly class. Language when patronised and imposed by the state, in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual society, becomes an instrument of hegemony.

Another obnoxious recommendation mooted in the draft was the amendment of Article 30 of the constitution. This article guarantees the minorities the right to "establish and administer educational institution of their choice". Thus in short, these proposed amendments are an attack on the rights of the minorities to preserve their own identity, culture and beliefs.

Whether a woman trans in space or becomes a scientist, her place is reserved in the kitchen. This was what the draft recommendation seemed to suggest by incorporating a 'home keeping' course at higher level for girls. That this 'special' course spews male patriarchal chauvinism point which treats woman as a docile, house bound creature, keeping the 'honour' of the family and of the society is anybody's guess.

Indoctrination of young minds in order to perpetuate their ideological agenda has always been placed high in the scheme of things of the communal fascist RSS. One effective way could be through the control over the content of the education syllabii that could serve as a means of moulding an individual in a particular direction. Little wonder, being a hard core RSS preacher and cadre he is, Joshi tried to restructure the educational syllabii as expounded by Vidya Bharati. Under the garb of 'indianising', 'nationalising' and 'spiritualising' the hindu facists actually seek to promote upper caste hindu values and culture.

Today the crisis in education mirror the crisis prevailing in our society. Therefore any profound change in education could only be possible through a fundamental radical change in the system. ■

Story

Three Fishes

Vijay

"Lacchmi oh Lacchmi ... why you are not responding" Mallayya the fisherman shouted with enthusiasm.

"What man! Why you are shouting so loudly... as if some....disaster has happened".

"Nice fish, lovely fish Lacchmi... I caught three please Add garam masala, and fry it".

"You must be talking through your hat! I have been telling you for the past one week, there is no salt in the house no chilli powder. So from where can I get Garam masala (ginger mix)?"

"Okay, ya, atleast fry it in oil".

"What man! What are you talking. Do you think a saltless house has oil. It has been four days since the children have touched food."

"Stop your stories! Atleast grill the fish in hot coal"

"What man! From where can I get coal, where is the fire wood in the house?"

"What kind of a woman are you, you have excuses for not cooking, I am a stupid fellow. That's why unnecessarily I caught these poor fishes. Let me leave them in the water. Atleast let them survive"

Saying this Mallayya, walked towards the little water pond. He took out the lively three fishes and threw them in to water.

As soon as the fishes fell in to the water the fishes shouted "Zindabad Zindabad"

Mallayya opened his mouth in surprise.

Among the three fishes. One fish shouted "Vajpayee Zindabad"!

The other one shouted "Yashwant Sinha Zindabad"!

And the third "Chandrababu Zindabad! (Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh-Translator)"

Then Mallayya questioned

"What is this you devils, you faithless fishes I gave you life and you are praising, some strangers... Vajpayee, Yashwant Sinha, Chandrababu Zindabad"

Then the fish answered

"O silly man! Because they are Governing You don't have any thing to eat at home, otherwise by now you would have eaten us up" ■

Grooming Students for The 'Rashtra'

-a critical evaluation of the Sangh Parivar Education.

"If 15 Karsevaks demolish the Babri Masjid in 300 days, how many Karsevaks will it take to demolish the masjid in 1 days?" This is no joke, nor is it a punchline. It is one of the questions which was to be introduced in a mathematics textbook for primary school students in Madhya Pradesh in 1993 part of the RSS grand manoeuvre to stretch its Hindutva ideology to the young and innocent minds of the state.

This subversion of the education system by the RSS, had the backing of the then BJP state Government, when it was in power in M.P. To give education a saffron colour, textbooks from the nursery to the post graduate level were rewritten with a Hindu emphasis. It is even important to note that the government had even granted the Vidya Bharati-an RSS run organisation to conduct parallel board exams for students of standards V and VIII. Till now, these exams were conducted by the education department.

Opposition to this move came from a rather 'weak' alliance of the Congress, CPI and J.D. who under a common banner of the 'Sampradayik Sadhbhawana Manch,' decided to fight the monopoly of the state's educational institutions, by the RSS. But the Janta Dal was not far behind the RSS/BJP in proving its own exploits. 'Mitti Ke Gaurav' is a chapter in the prose textbooks of class VIII students in government schools in Bihar. The Chapter deals with the life sketch of Laloo Prasad Yadav, his rising to the post of Chief Minister, etc. His achievements are shown as a 'motivating' factor for all school going children. This only goes to prove the cheap publicity gimmick of the Laloo Prasad Yadav Govt. in Bihar. Thus the farcical confrontation of the opposition parties only helped consolidate the position of the RSS controlled Schools, With around 1600 Vidya Bharti Schools catering to 1.95 lakh students in the state alone the RSS run institution enjoys a monopoly to steer students' minds in the 'right' direction. Infact the organization's

Hindutva learnings are revealed in its official brochure: "Our goal is to develop a national education system which can create a generation loyal to Hindutva and to the nation". In this way, the Vidya Bharatis succeed in polluting young minds with communal propaganda.

Even though the Govt. insists that the rewritten history will only be correcting a 'distorted' history, its main aim is to propagate the RSS/BJP/ Bajrang Dal's ideology. Infact the State University Grants Commission has justified the introduction of a new book *Bharat Ki Sanskritik Virasat* (Cultural Heritage of India) by claiming that it 'projects the past glory of India.' "Indian culture is the best in the world. The ancient period of Indian society was a period of *vedas* and *puranas*. *Guna* (character) and *karma* (deed) based *varna* system was the ideal of this society....women had equal rights..... emphasis on 'spiritualism'.... Indian society in this period was seen as the 'golden era'. In contrast, medieval period saw the downfall of Indian society. With the Rajput kingdoms, a dark age was set in ... *varna* system was replaced by caste system... ur.touchability made its presence felt"....

Let's analyse these 'preachings'. To start with, the picture that they give of the Vedic period is totally false. The textbook shows that *varna* is not based on birth but on *guna* (character) and *karma* (deed). And what is their source? Lord Krishna and the Bhagawad Gita! What the textbooks don't explain is the caste-based division of society into four varnas wherein the shudras were discriminated worst than animals; where women were considered as outcasts; where shudras were denied education; melting lead was poured in their ears for listening to the *Vedas*.... the atrocities are endless. The textbooks also ignore the development of civilization during the medieval period which they call the 'dark age'. They refuse to acknowledge the growth of science, art, culture, rise of Bhakti movement, etc.

This only goes to show the Sangh Parivar's main intention in replacing history with biases, prejudices and mythology- in order to establish a 'Hindu Rashtra'.

Infact, the U.P. texts say Aryans were the original inhabitants of India. The M;P. text goes even further in saying that the 'aryans were the founders of Indian civilization.... Aryan is a pure superior race...' However Romila Thapar in her article condemning the BJP reinterpretation of history, says that, "the term 'Aryan' is merely in reference to a language. It is not a race. The Aryan race was merely an invention of the European imagination. There is no such thing as a 'pure' race for people have constantly been intermingling giving rise to civilisations."

However some historians like Bipan Chandra agree otherwise. In his article "Historians of modern India and Communalism", he says that a communal historical approach has been the main factor for the rise of communalism in India. The glorification of the 'ancient past' propagated myths like the 'Aryans are a superior race,....' 'Aryans are the original inhabitants' etc. All this did not encourage people to accept the historical weaknesses of their past society; rather it encouraged them to glorify the fact that they had once been great.

The textbooks also take an extremely partisan view of the past and portray Rana Pratap Singh, Shivaji as heroes who fought for liberating Hindus from Muslim tyranny. They show that Mir Baqui, an official of the Mughal emperor, Babar, demolished the temple and built the Babri Masjid over it. Thus, the textbooks take a very narrow view of history that all principal actors in history are motivated by their religion. Basically, the whole aim of the textbooks is to typecast Muslims as foreigners in order to forward the Parivar's narrow political ideologies. Indian history is an amalgamation of varied cultures. Can Hindu ideas be promoted in the minds of all children? One cannot glorify the pre-Islamic period and at the same time deface the other. Historically speaking, both Hindus & Muslims have used their respective religious symbols against the British for mass mobilization. For example

Tilak used the Ganesh Festival.... which has today become a permanent feature. Similarly, Gandhi used the Khilafat Movement to gain support of the Muslims. But many BJP members have criticized the glorification of the Khilafat Movement, saying that it generated 'more poison than *amrit*'.

The rewritten history by the Sangh Parivar is based only on selective material so that it proves its presupposed theory. Some of the changes incorporated are:- The freedom movement is given a new twist. The new history of the country formulated by the RSS describes the outstanding role of its founder in the freedom struggle; the respective BJP-RSS governments have made it compulsory for all text books of high-school and intermediate to carry Bankim Chandra's 'Vande Mataram' with Hindi translation; a historical poem 'Haldighati' will now project Aurangzeb as a villain and Hindu kings like Rana Pratap, Shivaji as true patriots and heroes; a chapter on Marx will be removed from class V texts; new texts will include biographies of RSS leaders like Deendayal Upadhyaya and Hedgewar; courses on freedom struggle will be incorporated extensively the writings of the Hindutva hero, V.D. Savarkar; in UP schools Sanskrit would be made compulsory till Standard XII.

The introduction of Vedic Maths has been explained by the BJP/RSS as a move to appraise the students of the glorious traditions of mathematics in India which has actually been derived from the *vedas*. Mathematicians say that this 'vedic maths' is merely a set of formulas/*sutras* in high speed maths developed by Jagadguru Shankaracharya Swami Bharitiji. The BJP move has infact stirred fresh controversy that began some 25 years ago, with the publication of vedic maths by Shankaracharya. It contained 16 formulae, derived from sutras, for quick solving of problems in arithmetic. BJP is pushing the same argument for justifying its introduction today. The existence of Vedic Maths in 6200 Secondary U.P. Schools in the 9th and 10th standards, explained by the Sangh Parivar as attacking the 'Doon School culture' This move also enjoyed the support of the Kothari Commission which made a

similar recommendation. Vedic Maths would thus push Indian students 1000 years backward and succeed in making them dumb and mindless in thought.

Thus, by holding a partisan or narrow view of history, the BJP-RSS has developed its own interpretation of history, tailored for their own political ends. Infact, the obsession of the RSS with history is not new. Since 1960's they have been reinterpreting history when it's activist and leader Moropant Pingle floated the '*Ithihas Sankalan Samiti* and later formed the '*Ithihas Punerlekhan Samiti* for rewriting history. Infact the Mythic Society of Bangalore alongwith the above Samitis organized a workshop on the 'Aryan problem,' which was attended by RSS activists and intellectuals. A two-part book was also released to prove the RSS history that Vedic Aryans and Harappans are the same people. But it is not only with respect to the reinterpretation of history texts that the BJP-RSS have a calculated move. They have also made enroads into the 'teaching faculty.' Bharatiya Shikshak Mandal, a pro-RSS teacher's organisation would undertake rewriting of history texts in the BJP-ruled states. On the other hand, opposition to the Sangh Parivar was led by local U.P. teachers who strongly protested against what they termed 'politicization of education.' Many of them were not consulted in the formulation of these changes. Many teachers don't even know the fundamentals of Vedic Maths and the way it is taught. Even the All India Milli Council protested against the altering of syllabus of various courses which, according to them, displays Nazi ideology racial chauvinism.

Not surprisingly, with pressure building up from all quarters, the then HRD Minister Arjun Singh was forced to order an enquiry. Like all other enquires, it got gradually embroiled in red-tapism. The respective BJP governments justified their action of reinterpreting books as a move to 'update' them! Behind this facade, they gave a push to the Vidya Bharati, by converting it into a parallel examination board--to prepare its own syllabus, set its own question papers. This was done by relaxing the provision of the M.P. Education Code 1973. This fresh impetus saw the rise of

Vidya Bharati Schools from 1200 to 1600, most of which are situated in rural areas. Fees being merely Re. 1 for each student per year, many poor students are attracted to it. For this purpose, a sum of Rs. 6 crore was also diverted by the state education department. Many opposition parties though having criticised the move of the Vidya Bharati's as a conspiracy by the RSS to infiltrate education have proved to be bosom companions of the Sangh Parivar. Infact, 90% of the Vidya Bharati Schools were recognized during the Congress (I) Government rule in the state. This shady alliance of the opposition with the communal forces is also extended to the local industrialists. For example, in 1992, a liquor company's advertisement was detected on the cover of the class II Hindi Maths Book in Bhopal!

The liquor company which had top connections with state BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member, Kailash Sarang, was given the order to publish the 1.5 lakh textbooks by the state education department in violation of the provisions of such an order. The book was later removed out of circulation due to the fierce criticism on the liquor ad.

Besides, the Sangh Parivar is also keen in promoting a number of its affiliated organisations. The BJP government has given a 6 lakh grant to the Ujjain-based *Ithihas Sanshodhak Mandal* to rewrite history from a Hindu viewpoint. Apart from this, it has promoted the setting up of the Chitrakoot Rural University in Satna district with Nanaji Deshmukh as Chancellor which will function of the lines of the ancient Takshila and Nalanda.

The Jnana Prabhodhini School in Pune, another of the Sangh's affiliated institution, nurtures the young intelligent minds for the Hindu Rashtra. Majority of the students are upper-caste hindus who can very conveniently make it to the 'gifted' grade. They are made to worship a giant-size map of 'Akhanda Bharat' with an 'Om' suspended over it, to enable them to concentrate. Some dalit students who have been associated with the school, have criticized it claiming that they are led to believe that Hindu culture is superior to all other cultures. In this way schools like the Prabhodhini,

Vidya Bharati etc. succeed in effectively brain-washing students into following the hir du culture.

Learning has thus acquired a saffron hue in B.P.-ruled states. Political manoeuvres and the exploitation of religion, has made increasing inroads into the corridors of educational institutions. By creating a false sense of nationalism, pitting one religion against another, the BJP-RSS-Bajrang Dal etc. diverts our attention from identifying the real issue and fighting against them. It's main aim is in fact to reinforce issues of feudalism, superstition, caste biases and male chauvinism through an education which in moral, taste and intellect is fascistic.

Only a scientific analysis of our historical conditions would enable people to understand the present situation and confront it. By holding the leaders of a specific community as defaulters and exploiters cannot be by any logic justified. Even though the society was ruled by both Hindu and Muslim rulers, the various evils like caste system, exploitation of land by landlords remained intact. A so-called independence-- a compromise of the British with the ruling classes, only strengthened the exploitative relations in rural India. Semi feudalism and neo-colonialism facilitating the loot and plunder needs to be resisted even more strongly today. And any distortion or reinterpretation of history will confuse the young Indian minds and succeed in diverting attention from the real burning issues confronting society. All attempts of the Sangh Parivar to 'saffronise' education needs to be crushed by the progressive peoples' movements in their struggle for a secular, democratic egalitarian society.■

Letters

Dear Comrade,

The booklet, Mao on Education brought out by AIRSF, we feel, suffer from a serious drawback that it does not have a preface trying to locate the views of Mao in their social and historical context. Perhaps, it is binding on us, as Marxists, to locate ideas as being/having been produced by human beings in response to cer-

tain material conditions.

In the booklet mentioned above, Mao (in January 1964) is quoted as saying: "We shouldn't read too many books. We should read Marxist books, but not too many of them either. It will be enough to read a dozen or so. If we read too many, we can move towards our opposites, become book-worms, dogmatists, revisionists." (p. 13) Again, "If you read too many books, they petrify your mind in the end." (Ibid).

One reasons why Mao could have said as such might be that China had a very long feudal tradition and does not seem to have had any renaissance as in the west and so books that did not petrify the mind could have been few in number. It is said, Chinese youth, in those days, used to read more of literature. And modern, progressive Chinese literature, as you know, had its beginning with Lu Hsun, etal who were contemporaries of Mao himself. And there was hardly any foreign language that the Chinese people knew.

Even the context in which Marxism was to be applied in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial China was entirely different from that of the advanced capitalist Western Europe during the time of Marx or the imperialist Russia during the time of Lenin. Therefore reading Marxist classics without understanding the context in which they were written, could have led to dogmatism and revisionism. Common sense becomes the best teacher in such circumstance; and that is what Mao mostly relied on.

Of course, becoming bookish is by no means desirable and there is hardly any dispute at that. What use is knowledge not oriented towards practice?

Perhaps, you will agree, that at present general awareness and ideological depth among our student cadres and even leaders is relatively low. We must, therefore, encourage proper study from a dialectical materialist perspective. We hope things do not turn to the worse with *Mao on Education*. Ideas taken out of context could cause more harm from the good intended.

—Gilbert Sebastian & Saroj Giri

We accept the criticism. We also agree that when the ideas are taken out of context, there is every chance of misunderstanding and misinterpretation. In the future publications we will take the criticism into consideration. We expect this type of criticism from comrades to enrich our publications-----AIRSF

Education and Communal Politics

-Dr.W.C.Deb

[This is an excerpt from the book titled, "Menace of Hindu Fascism" written by Dr.W.C.Deb. We are reproducing the chapter titled "Education and communal politics" because it is a case study of Bengal's educational scenario during the British period in which education played a major role in relegating Muslims to the back seat and became advantageous for Hindus. This provides some basis in understanding the communalisation of education in the early times of development of education in India.- Editor]

In 1844, it was expressly declared that preference would be given in government appointments to candidates with knowledge of English. The declaration put an end to all doubts about the utility of English education, particularly so far as interior of Bengal is concerned. The change of court language from Persian to English in 1837 came as something of a shock to the Persian knowing community, particularly the Muslims. Hindus were also affected. Dewan Kartick Chandra Roy wrote : "The sorrow were also at that news was akin to that feeling when one is deprived of a cherished treasure, accumulated through hard labour, or loses a son capable of earning money. The Hindu 'Bhadralok's from among whom all the subordinate officials had long been drawn, recovered from the initial shock to adopt one foreign language for another. That the Hindus showed more adaptability than Muslims in this respect is a very significant fact of social history.

By 1850, English schools had been established in different district head quarters. In the neighbourhood of Calcutta, the landlords, specially those of Taki, Janai, Burdwan and Andul, had been instrumental in opening of English schools.

While the spread of English education in rural Bengal was almost spontaneous, social opposition was altogether absent. A

spirit of rivalry and competition between the three upper castes-Brahmins, Vaisyas and Kayasthas, to a considerable extent account for the educational dynamism of the Bengali gentry.

The Bengal gentry or 'Bhadralok' belonged generally to these higher caste Hindus. They could have been landlords, superior Zamindars, or petty Talukdars but never actual cultivators. Their economic condition varied from affluence to indigence. Possession of some landed property was an important feature of gentry, but not everywhere. The bearing of landed property on English education, though quite important, was not absolute. Probably English education made greater impact on professional rather than the landed class of the gentry.

The richer land owning classes, however, played a vital role in the growth of education in Bengal in so far as they diverted a large part of their charitable expenditure to the foundation of English schools. The motive that guided such benevolence was often expectation of recognition by Government leading to conferment of a title-Rai Saheb or Rai-Bahadur.

The university degree had become the accepted object of ambition, the passport of distinction in public service and

in the learned professions of 1,589 students who obtained arts degree in the University of Calcutta between 1857 and 1882; in 1882, 526 had entered the public services, 581 the legal profession and 12 had become doctors. Most of the medical men had, however, proceeded direct to medical degree without taking arts degree. The 470 who remained were, no doubt, largely employed as teachers in the colleges and high schools. These were the modes of life most esteemed by the Bengali gentry. *Bengal was in many respects the backwoods of Indian Islam.* The strength of the indigenous pull on Bengali Muslims following mainly from their peculiar racial and linguistic composition tended to distinguish them from the rest of the Muslim community in India. Yet, the hold of Islamic learning, though confined within a smaller section of the community than in Bihar or the Western province (U.P.) was far from insignificant. In some rural and semirural tracts in Hoogly, Howrah and Burdwan, Islamic learning reached a sufficiently high standard. The question of Muslim backwardness in education was applicable specially to Bengal with its vast Muslim population, concentrated mainly in the northern and eastern districts.

The Hunter Commission of 1882 considered the depressed condition of Bengali Muslims to be one of the main causes of their educational backwardness. A very large number of Muslims became impoverished by the substitution of English for Persian. Not several branches of the executive service, the old system of education was also rendered useless, spelling disaster for many. The best families supplied "moonshine" and "moulvis" not only to their co-religionists but also to the *Hindus, who since the 16th century, had taken to Persian education.* Those sources of income suddenly dried up and few trades

likewise fell into disuse, for instance, extensive copying of manuscripts, paper manufacture (one very important centre was Pandva, in Hoogly), painting etc. The poverty of the better class Muslims was rendered more bitter by the consciousness of former opulence. There was no demand for the old education and poverty forces the people to turn from intellectual work to manual labour. The sentiments of the 'respectable' but impoverished Muslims found expression in a petition of the Muslim inhabitants of Sylhet to one of the judges of the Sadar Dewani Adalat. Referring to their distress following the abolition of Persian as the court language, the petitioners wrote in 1854: "Among Mussalmans... the more respectable members of the community have lived to see themselves reduced and degraded while low and mean people with a smattering of English and Bengali, acquired in those schools, have risen above them, and became men of some note... That this is extremely degrading and humiliating is a fact too well known to require any proof... nor can perhaps a better example of the humiliation be adduced than the acrimonious conduct of and the rancorous feelings entertained by Europeans of honourable birth and high ambitions towards an East Indian of low parentage, hoping to be raised above them."

The generally depressed condition of the Ashraf community combined with the smallness of the community itself, placed as it was by the side of vast Muslim peasant population, may account, in a large measure for Muslim backwardness in respect of new education. Yet this backwardness could not have been so appalling but for certain subjective factors.

Prominent among the ideas which sway the common Muslim in the conviction that nothing will compensate him for the loss

of conscious membership of the great Muslim community of the world. This is true for Ashrafs, not for rural Muslims. The upper class Muslims of Dacca had an emphatic aversion to the Bengali language.

The attachment to Islamic learning created serious language problem for the Bengali Muslims. The natural language of the great majority of Bengali Muslims was Bengali. The orthodox section looked upon the modern system of education harmful and irreligious and they put their boys under old and obsolete mode of education. So far as 19th century is concerned, *English education remained almost completely associated with the Hindu gentry of Bengal.*

The 1901 census Report highlights the backwardness of Muslims in employment in top Government jobs.

Post	Total No.	Muslims
High Court Judge	3	1
District and Sessions Judge	10	2
Subjudge	62	1
Munsiff	343	18
Provincial Judge	3	-
Additional Judge	7	-
Deputy Magistrate & Collector	529	76
High Court Lawyer	215	11

Muslim Education in Bengal in 1883-1884:

Institution	Total Students	No. of Muslim Students
Lower Primary School	1,097,116	348,286 (31.7%)
Higher Primary School	99,476	14,897 (14.9%)
Middle Vernacular School	62,209	8,252 (13.2%)
Middle English School	46,445	5,756 (12.3%)
High English School	53,991	5,186 (9.6%)
Art School	2,426	132 (4.6%)

It is worthwhile to remember that in 1881, Bengal meant Bengal Presidency and the percentages of Hindu and Muslim population were 65.4 and 31.2 respectively. The corresponding all-India percentages were 74 and 19.7. The total population in

India was 241,860,492.

The education system as well as Bengali literature in Bengal developed under the leadership of Bengali Hindus. In consequence, Hindu heritage influenced both educational systems and Bengali literature. In those days, nationalism became synonymous with Hindu revivalism. As a result, Bengali Muslims tended to take shelter under the umbrella of pan-Islamism. This complicated the education. They found the *entire education department monopolised by the Hindus.* This was regarded as an obstacle to advancement of Muslims in education.

As early as 1872, the Bengal Government wrote that *Bengali Muslims do not want to acquire education through 'Panditi' Bengali language influenced by Sanskrit.* It was also pointed out that the causes of Muslim backwardness in education were poverty, language and their demand for religious education. The absence of any Muslim representative in the Board of Education was held to be an important cause. In 1915, the Government instituted a Committee to enquire into the problem of education for the Muslim population. That Committee did not recommend any separate system of education for Muslims. However, there was the recommendation for adequate number of Muslim representatives in the Boards of High and Middle school and in Government schools. 15% of seats were reserved for Muslim students. The High Schools must have provision for teaching Arabic, Persian and Urdu (for studying Koran).

The Calcutta University Commission of 1917-19 also considered the problem of education for the Muslim community. The Muslim members placed the following complaints before the Commission.

1. It is difficult for Muslims to learn the Sanskritised Bengali that is patronised

by the University.

2. University recommended text books are not suited to education of Muslims, because they are full of Hindu religion and Hindu heritage. The content of these books create adverse reaction in Muslim mind.
3. The custom of writing the names of the candidates on the answer papers in the University examinations is detrimental to the Muslims.
4. Among the 895 examiners appointed by the University, apart from those for Arabic and Persian, the number of Muslims was 9 only.

Obviously, the Muslims demanded due share in the governance of education. By that time they became conscious about the need and advantages of education. Since then began the common system of primary education under the supervision of the Government at the centre. It is significant that in the stage of primary education, the percentage of Muslim students was 56. Muslim resentment against Hindu domination in the field of education was getting more and more intense. Hindus were neither willing to give up their authority nor accept the Muslim viewpoint.

Azizul Haq, the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University also complained about the influence of Sanskrit on Bengali language, abundance of Sanskrit words and the contents of text books.

On 21 August, 1940, Fazlul Haque, Chief Minister as well as minister of Education introduced 'Bengal Secondary Education Bill', 1940. He wanted to have Shyama Prasad Mukherji, Harendranath Choudhury, Pramatha Nath Banerji and Kiran Shankar Roy in the Select Committee but they all refused to join. *The introduction of this Bill caused an unprecedented*

communal agitation in Bengal. In the Assembly, Muslims were majority but in the University, Hindus were majority. As a result, communal rift was unavoidable. The Muslims believed that Calcutta University was nothing but a Hindu organisation. When one Hindu MLA (educationist also) said: "The upper class Hindus organised these schools with their blood", retort came from another Muslim MLA: "At the expense of Bengal's poor peasants." Hindu member was a well known landlord. The speeches of Hindu MLA were intended to assert that they would nullify the bill at any cost. Kiran Shankar Roy claimed: "Out of the current 1400 schools, 1200 were established by the Hindus; and of 300,000 students only 80,000 were Muslims."

Abul Hashim gave an example of Hindu communalism and nationalism from a text book recommended by the Hare School. The Book was Abanindra Nath Tagore's 'Raj Kahini'. The quotation was, "by that time, Amir Omraha of the Sultan left behind their 'lungi's, darhi (beard) and along with their wives and the chicken-cages abandoned the town during the night and fled towards Ajmir. In the morning Prithviraj captured Toda."

Even Bengali scientist Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy commented about the bill: "Apart from 50 Government schools and slightly less than 150 Christian Missionary schools, all the secondary schools of the province are built by the Hindus and are conducted by the Hindus... Is it a matter of surprise that the system that obstructs the progress in education and even offends the basis of their culture, is not acceptable to the Hindus?" He was not ready to accord any importance to the complaints of Muslims in regard to the domination of Hindus over Calcutta University and penetration of Hindu culture in education. ■

Class and Caste in the Classroom

Aruna Roy and Nikhil Dey

Since the education system spends vast quantities of time debating syllabi and course content, it is necessary to examine the results of all these deliberations. What are the values being promoted for the vast numbers of rural youth, many of whom are first-generation learners? What role are they going to play in their society after undergoing years of formal education?

The attitudes being promoted through the educational system can be dramatically illustrated by the English Course Reader. English is seen as important for two reasons. First, it is seen as a language of the rulers, past and present. Therefore those who learn English want to imbibe the cultural values of the ruling classes. Second, it opens up job opportunities. Comprehension levels are low, which makes it necessary to use simplistic language and statements. The language is consequently more indicative of genuine attitudes.

R.P. Bhatnagar who has compiled the textbook in English (Course Reader) for the 11th and 12th classes, Rajasthan Board, has thought it a matter of pride to mention that it will foster both linguistic and cultural values of the students. He states:

Section A is it, intended to instil confidence in the students and therefore contains relatively easier textual material, well within the reach of an average student, both linguistically and culturally.

The first lesson is called "Picnic Cancelled". Surely 'picnic' is a concept which is both urban and associated with a class which enjoys leisure and sharply divides work from enjoyment. The lesson

begins with a description of the Sharmas and the Bhatias. Mrs. Sharma is watering the garden—yet another urban symbol of feudal or modern wealth. There are no gardens in rural areas. Even the rural rich do not have gardens. While teaching this lesson to some students who lived in the neighbourhood, it became clear that the concept of a garden was totally alien to them. For those who have not travelled far it is difficult even to visualise it.

When Mrs Sharma informs her husband about the intended picnic, he promptly says, "In that case I'll get the gardener to water the trees."

It is alien enough to have a garden, but the concept of the gardener is totally urban and upper-class. Land in rural areas is used for productive purposes. This garden has chairs and tables, which are again symbols of the urban rich.

Mr Sharma shows some concern for their belongings when he says:

We had better remove the chairs and the table from the garden in case it rains.

However, Mrs Sharma has adopted the Western model of throwing out the old when she replies:

The chairs are broken and old. I would rather let them stay here.

She fortunately cares about the table. But the necessity of servants for any manual work is immediately revealed.

The table must certainly be removed. It's too heavy for us. I'll get the servant to help us remove it.

Literate rural youth of course can at best aspire only to be in a Class IV Government job, or work as guards and

peons in similar private-sector jobs!

As if the lesson were not enough to mould attitudes, the exercises at the end of the lesson are used to comprehensively drive home the point. In his short note to the students at the beginning of the book Mr Bhatnagar says:

The manner of equipping the student for the various demands life will make on them is revealed in exercises at the end of lesson one on structures and usage.

It is worth reproducing the whole section.

Structures and Usage

1. To get someone to do something

- a. I shall get the gardener to water the trees.*
- b. I shall get the servant to help us remove the table.*
- c. I got some villagers to push the car.*
- d. Did you get a dhobi to wash the linen?*
- e. She does not like to get anyone to help her finish her homework.*
- f. Will you get the tailor to make me a dress?*

While 'a' and 'b' only re-emphasise ideas in the lesson, 'c' shows us exactly what our educators think villagers should be doing. Obviously something constructive like pushing other people's cars!

However, in 'd' it seems there is something to learn from the village after all. The usefulness of the categories of caste, even to urban people, is revealed when we are told exactly what we must get dhobies to do. In 'e' we finally have someone who doesn't want help. The urban, upper-class parent reveals the ultimate dream of a child who will finish her own homework! In 'f' we are back to dependencies, this time on the tailor.

The author explains:

In all the sentences given above the verb 'get' has been used as a causative, i.e. to express the fact that one person or

thing causes another person or thing to perform some action.

The description of the causative verb 'make' reveals the true nature of these relationships.

Make denotes the use of force or pressure, either physical or social: She made the servant clean the floor. (Emphasis in the original)

The whole picture is revealed in an exercise in tabular form:

1. Make as many sentences as possible using the following table:

Subject	Verb	(Pro)noun	to-infinitive etc
The boy		the servant	to wash the veranda
The girl		the young boy	to lift the heavy box
Mohan	got		to ride ten miles
My father		the old man	to push the truck
They			to keep the stray dogs away

Looking at the exercise one wonders what combinations are being encouraged. In the pronoun section, the servant will obviously have to perform all the tasks. The young boy, depending on what his class background is, may have to do everything except lift the heavy box. But for the old man, unless we want to teach children to be patently cruel, his task must obviously be "to keep the stray dogs away." An interesting task for a society which prides itself on its respect to the aged!!

Thankfully the first lesson ends soon after, but unfortunately the book does not. Lesson Seven called "Too many Mishaps," tells us how we must rise on the social ladder.

The author relaxes with an "uncomplaining" supply of hot tea, on a winter evening, when his friend Sharad informs him that their new Director is arriving by train at eight p.m. Naturally, he

cannot do without the servant.

I called Govind, my new servant and asked him to take my scooter out in the porch. I began dressing myself.

Mercifully he did not ask the servant to dress him! However, the servant, poor chap, can do not right:

At quarter to eight Govind came running and told me that the scooter had a flat tyre. I felt greatly disturbed. Had he informed me of it soon after I had asked him to take out the scooter, I would have gone to the station on my bicycle and still reached there in time to receive the Director. Now it was too late to do it.

He even complains to his friend Sharad of the low intelligence level of the servant:

When I reached the platform I found Sharad pacing up and down in front of the railway bookstall. I told him how I got late because of the foolishness of my servant. Sharad was sorry to learn that I had to ride a bicycle all the way from my house to the station. Had he suspected such a mishap, he would have brought me to the station on his motor-cycle.

Cycling to the station is seen as a calamity. Many children who come to school and read this chapter walk miles. Even cycles are mainly owned by the rural middle-class.

However, the Director, as we are to see, is much higher in the official hierarchy. He travels in great style:

The train steamed into the station at thirty-three minutes past eight. We walked up to the air-conditioned coach. The only passenger to come out of it was our Director.

But the ultimate lesson on how to succeed lies in the presentation of the bouquet, when Sharad steals the thunder.

Sharad had brought a bouquet which he presented to the boss and thus got all his attention. Had I been not in hurry, I too would have bought one on the way to the station.

The author recognises Sharad's cleverness and bemoans the fact that he too should have had the time buy a bouquet. When Sharad drives off with the Director, the author feels

Lonely and neglected. Had I brought my scooter, things would have been different, I said to myself.

A lesson in "How to get on with your boss," not a lesson on mishaps at all!

This would read like something out of a farce and make us laugh, if it were not for the deliberateness with which young minds are sought to be conditioned. It is not surprising therefore that there is a low value for rural life in general and manual labour in particular, and aspirations for the life of a 'Babu'.

Andreas Fuglesang has rightly said in *About Understanding-Ideas and Observations on Cross-cultural Communication*:

The formal education system is primarily concerned with instructing the next generation in the techniques and values of the dominant social system, thereby preserving and perpetuating a power structure.

If Sharad is the role-model on whom youth are going to pin their aspirations, then obliviously it shapes a society where boot-licking and social-climbing will be the values inculcated. The lesson reveals a curious combination of a consumer-oriented society with caste hierarchies conveniently accommodated within it. For those in rural areas, especially the poor, it represents the worst of both worlds■

(Courtesy : Mainstream, January 28, 1995)

CAPITAL(ISING) THE SYLLABII

SCHOOLING IN THE TIME OF LIBERALISATION

This is about the indoctrination of young minds---not of the saffron variety, but of unbridled capitalist brainwashing. While the Sangh Parivar aims at saffroning history and hinduising minds, the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Contemporary Studies (RGICS) under the aegis of Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) is attempting to make students pro-market and pro-liberalisation. RGICS, this year started an experiment to change the Economics syllabus advocating capitalist economics. According to Bibek Debroy, the director of RGICS "at school, children are still taught about the old concepts of commanding heights and socialism. This prompted us to introduce modules on the Indian economy with a thrust on economic reforms to bring school children closer to ground realities". Thus RGICS started their first phase of the exercise in Delhi's 20 schools which invariably included some government run schools also. Each school had six sittings in which economists held interactive sessions and explained economic reforms, Public Sector Undertaking disinvestments, rupee devaluation etc. These sessions were targeted at the students of class 9, 10 and 11. In the second phase, debate, essay and Quiz competitions were held on topics like rupee depreciation, foreign direct investments, multi national corporations. RGICS soon followed it by designing a syllabus which can be taken up to any small town in the country.

At the periphery, it may appear like an insignificant attempt by an institute. But in the long run, it will have repercussions on the economic syllabi in the schools. The pro-imperialist economic policies of the government needs a wider propaganda, through which they can brainwash the young in schools in favour of the outlook of how the MNCs can bring fortunes for our country, how devaluation can boost exports, how subsidies are detrimental to development etc. Finally, the students will turn up as staunch sup-

porters of liberalisation. The doorways of the mind will be open to the lure of becoming executives or managers in the MNCs.

After these trials, the institute has taken up the task of reforming the economics text books. Since institutes such as RGICS enjoy support from the government, the expected outcome will be text books of economics turned inside out as gospels of liberalisation to 'liberate' the students from 'evils' like socialism, welfare state etc. Without a conscious effort from the progressive sections in the academia, we cannot stop the onslaught of such reactionary imperialist ideology on education in the coming days.

(Source: *Outlook*, September 21, 1998)

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Oppose the Business School in Hyderabad

The teaching shop of Shylocks

If chief ministers can be compradors, then Chandra Babu Naidu the CM of Andhra Pradesh can only be their king. Without any pretensions (or second thoughts?) he would prefer to be called as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of AP. We too call him so befitting his role as the Comprador Executive Officer of AP. This decade saw a change in the process of lending by World Bank (WB). Instead of giving loans through weak and instable central governments, WB chose to directly lend the state governments. Grabbing this opportunity, Chandrababu proved to be the best comprador of the imperialists. With the flow of WB funds and capital from MNCs in information technology like Microsoft, IBM and Oracle, Hyderabad is being made the haven for MNCs. To accommodate these MNCs, the state government on behalf of L&T (an MNC) has constructed a "High-tech City". Now after furnishing adequate infrastructure, Chandrababu brought another mega-project to Hyderabad, i.e., a Business School of "international standards".

This proposed Business School is a multi-crore project by industrial houses of Ambani, Kamat, Tata etc. meant to train their kith and kin to manage their business. And hence it was quite natural that Chandrababu, who tops the list of best agents of capital (videshi and swadeshi), could get the Business School chucking out his own counterparts from Maharashtra and Karnataka in the race.

But then any tale of accumulation cannot go without its own script of destruction. That will only come to light when we realise that this Business School will stand up brick by brick on the uprooted subsistence of the poor farmers of Lodhi community in Nandkram Guda area in the outskirts of Hyderabad. Two hundred and fifty acres of their land in which they were tilling for the past sixty years was taken over by the gov-

ernment and allotted for the Business School.

The wretched existence of the poor Lodhi farmers will add up to the history of those displaced millions always swept away in the tide of the violent assault of capital craving for profits.

The government propaganda machine says that the business school of "international standards" (read imported) will provide the much wanted facelift to the scenario of teaching and learning in Hyderabad. Another proposal brought in by the COMPRADOR MANAGER of AP is the "Medical City", ostensibly to boost up the health of the people.

That the business school and health city are *of, by and for* the rich need any further explanation. All these violent restructuring of the economy that add fuel to the fire of toil of the masses bring again back the menace of this hi-tech blitz--- which has reduced itself to the level of cancerous growths on the body politic of the society--- that can only be rooted out in the crucible of revolution.■

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Internal Assessment System

Treating The Symptoms Than The Disease

VPS

In lieu with the times of 'modernisation', 'globalisation', 'quality control' and assurance of 'efficiency', the Bombay University is also earnest. Little wonder that the university's introduction of the internal assessment system, ostensibly to improve the efficiency of the student, incites such an impression. The system which initially targets only the first year graduates has evoked mixed reaction among the university fraternity. While some feel that this will make students take exams seriously as there is no way out for them others disagree pointing out that the university is preventing the students from studying. A further comment foresees an increase in the number of dropouts due to failures. It becomes imperative at this juncture to see through this facade of internal assessment, which is yet another attempt to treat the symptoms rather than the disease.

What is the present education system?

In a backward, under-developed country like ours, where the rate of unemployment is very high, where intense competition for a few jobs exist, getting a degree is seen merely as a means to get a job. Education, therefore, becomes job oriented, being seen in terms of jobs. Thus, when the very aims of education have become distorted to such a large extent, it is only natural that priorities too have been turned upside down. Exams are no longer an integral part of the education process, but totally dominate education to the extent, that passing rather than learning becomes synonymous with education. Therefore, for the average student of India, haunted by the spectre of unemployment, his only chance of avoiding it becomes the most important aspect of his education.

Hence with the whole future of the student at

stake, held so vital on that one crucial exam, it is but natural that all other vital aspects of education are treated secondary and incidental. In this sense, exams become a hurdle for getting a degree for a job. Students see as to how they can mechanically do away with it with the least effort.... hence the panic buying of questions' sets, guides, and sometimes even the use of money, at the time of exams. The easiest way is to buy your way through.

The campus atmosphere is vitiated by leaking of question papers (which are sold openly and even circulated in private classes), forging degree certificates, racketeering, threatening of lecturers (some examiners even sell themselves), setting up dummies becoming common maladies so much so that examination and admission times are often described as the "seasons of high corruption". Thus the University encourages, the students oblige.

Yet another problem is the element of subjectivity of the examiner wherein varying standards of evaluation may be applied from individual to individual, and where external factors often play a large role in determining the fate of the student. As in the words of a British educationist "in the determination of marks, the part played by the examiner is greater than that of the performance of the examined.

Exams in fact define a power relation. It's like a war between the student and the teacher. As Mao-Tse-tung has observed: "Exams are like tackling enemies, not people.... they are surprise attacks, full of catch questions and obscure questions". Literally the teacher lies in hiding waiting to ambush the students with as many tough questions as possible, thrust on them at the time of exams. However the response of the students to the method is also revealing. Many students re-

port as to how they invent quotations, ascribe quotes to noted names, add some general knowledge stuff.... all methods used to entice the opponent i.e. the examiner. It is this 'game' which highlights this power relation.

The bitter truth is that, since exams have become important for passing, the ability of the student to assimilate knowledge and utilise it creatively proves meaningless to the mere tact to memorize facts and to recite them by heart thus making education a mechanical process. Hence, neither the teacher nor the student wants to encourage creativity.

That the Indian education system has reduced learning to a relatively drab and fallacious exercise is evident from the observation made by the University Education Commission (1949) which still holds true after 50 years: "An unsound exam system continues to dominate instruction... exams have become the aim and end of education, all instruction is subordinated to them, they kill all initiative in the teacher and student, and are also capricious, invalid, inadequate and tend to corrupt the moral standards of University life."

Internal Assessment is a system of evaluation in which degree college students will be evaluated on the basis of credits, projects, assignments, group discussions etc. According to the University Circular UG/380 of 1997, "there will be two exams this year, 30% marks weightage at the first term-end exam and a 70% marks weightage at the second term-end exam. In case a student fails to get the minimum 20% in the first term-end exam, the student is denied to sit for that paper in the final exam and has to appear in the following years in October. However the rule of ATKT* still holds." Meanwhile, while speaking to the Pro VC, Dr. Naresh Chandra, the Government Education Department's intentions become quite clear to introduce in due course of time an exam every month, and thereby gradually do away with the ATKT system.

Some professors and students hold the opinion that introducing such a system in colleges will help increase students' attendance at lectures,

enable teachers to personally assess students... and hence be much beneficial if implemented. However given the background of job oriented degrees where exams are seen merely as an 'obstacle' to pass and get a degree (which has been explained earlier); where the classroom wears the monotony of an undemocratic atmosphere due to a high student-teacher ratio per class (Eg. first year class-1 teacher for every 110 students). In such situations the teacher will be unintentionally forced to use dictatorial methods to exercise control over the class.

Those particular and immediate effects as is seen in the two months since the Internal Assessment System was implemented can be summarised as follows.

- This system will give more powers to the examiner to determine the fate of students. Since the subjectivity of the examiner becomes prominent under such a system, the examiner can be 'bought' depending upon his/her moral standards. Therefore, many students who have failed the year for want of 1 or 2 marks, may resort to 'corrupt' means at the time of verification of marks. A personal enmity between the teacher and student can even prove disastrous for the student.

- Many students who have failed the exams, will stop attending college lectures thereby the attendance rates in classes registering a fall. This trend is on the rise in most colleges since the results were declared, thereby totally contradicting the intentions of the scheme. A Principal of a suburban college has even gone to the extent of declaring that, "if girls fail, they can get married, and boys can joint their father's business."

One needs to also examine in depth the general long term effects of such a system, which are quite alarming.

- The dropout rate of college students will increase. In India, already out of every 100 students who join school, only 19 reach Std. XII, and only 5 of them join degree colleges. Hence, introduction of such anti-student measures will further worsen the situation. Those students who

work to support themselves and study will be the first affected. Similarly girl students, vernacular medium students and those coming from economically backward sections will also be no exception. Hence introducing the Internal Assessment System, will only succeed in 'filtering' out the needy sections of our society Sections-which need encouragement, not discrimination-thus preserving the elitist nature of education.

Education will soon get reduced to exams with competition as the catchword, devoid of any learning.

Hence, opposing such an Internal Assessment System should be of foremost importance to every discerning mind not merely because it has been informed late to the students but its very logic and operation epitomises the veritable wolf in sheeps' clothing.

Is the Government unaware of all this?

On the contrary it has become a fashion for our education and human resource development ministries to flaunt money (in crores) on National Literacy Mission project and other such white elephants, at the same time slashing the government expenditure on education (India spends less than a mere 3% of the GNP on education). Why these double-standards?

The exploitative state through its anti-people policies ensure that the education it propagate reproduce a system tuned to its class interests bereft of inequalities. Even this lopsided education has become dearer for the majority of the masses. Any radical change in the education system is terror to the ruling classes as it will be detrimental to the interests and prevalence of the obsolete, reactionary, backward feudal interests that chastise our society today.

So it is natural that the ruling classes neither want to change the content of the present education system, nor extend its access, in whatever form it may be, to the vast masses. Only a society which is fundamentally transformed, which has done away with this rat race, with exploitation, with mistreatment, can ensure a scientific and democratic education and hence reclaim the joy of learning. ■

Sajal's Murder SHRC Sniffs at the Police Dog!

More and more information of police brutality in the form of custodial deaths are pouring out of the press. The cases of comrade Varghese and Varkala Vijayan, who had upheld the path of revolutionary politics during the days of Naxalbari in Kerala and who got killed brutally then in the hands of the police and hence been written off as missing cases have now come back to the limelight, to the public memory, after startling revelations from policemen who have become apologetic of their act of accomplice.

In the CPM managed West Bengal, the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) have left short of implicating the senior police officers (SP of Malda) and the police housed in Gazole thana area of Malda district for custodial violence leading to the death of Com. Sajal in the month of December 1997. The commission has severely criticised the inhuman callous attitude of the police in not informing Sajal's parents when he was left in the Malda Sadar hospital unattended with injuries in a semi naked condition on the cold concrete floor at a corner of the hospital for hours while his parents' place was about a kilometre away.

Sajal who was active in revolutionary politics and a member of the Revolutionary Students Association (RSA) was hounded out by CPM goons in association with the murder of Subal Sarkar a known anti-social. After severely beating him, they handed him over to the police where he was tortured again. The police torture was revealed to the commission by Nurul Malahat who was arrested along with Sajal. Moreover after examining the two police witnesses the commission had concluded that it was the police who framed a case on Sajal and two other comrades by asking the villagers to sign a paper on which something was written in English which the villagers did not know.

Poem

Made in University

Minderpal Bhattal

If anyone will
ask me the meaning of these
educational institutions,
then I will reply,
That these are mills and factories,
In where parts of governmental
Machinery are made,

They are smoothened,
They are polished,
They are packed
They are labelled.

And on every bit of machinery
It is inscribed
Made in University
Price rupees one hundred fifty
Local taxes extra

But no one knows why
Whether these factories lack technology
Or these workmen are unskilled

Because when these parts reach the marts
Only five percent get their values evaluated
Others are slotted as unfit
And tossed in the box made for so,

Now any blacksmith can take them along,
Make pans of them,
Fill them with dung
and let the pans feel ashamed.

If you ask for an answer from
The founders of these educational
institutions,
They will reply,

This is the sea where swans pick pearls
This is the land of blossoms
Where roses bloom
Those who tread in these paths

Attain status in society
Life becomes a success story
But will anyone ask them

Where does the value of principles escape,
When someone just holds your nerve
And claims for a hundred
Where does the Article 39 of constitution
vanish.

When a rickshaw puller is crushed
By a car driver
Oh! What will they tell

They are living dead
These dumb cocks
Will not call out
These are the fit parts
Of governmental machinery
They are given a jerk
To make them work

Whom are you mocking at,
Writ a while,
You too will become parts,

Get labelled with a hi-fi brand,
But when you'll reach the market,
You will not be sold,
Unfit you are will be told.
And tossed in the box
Made for so

If a blacksmith gets you
He too will suffer a loss
Because when he'll make you a pan
Iron would be less

So you'll be bottomless
He too would repent
And throw you on a garbage heap
You'll become a

*Part of the garbage,
You will end up on road
To be kicked by more.*

*That is why All you unfinished parts,
Break the moulds,
Enter the crucible,*

Become a hammer,

Give a strong blow to the administration,

*Which has made this system
And has given birth
To such set up■*

(Translated from Punjabi by Sweta)

Wag the Dog and Win a Scholarship!

Here is an innovative way of raising resources—in lieu of the ethos of liberalised economy that India is—to cough up remuneration for the research community so that the pursuit of knowledge in higher education may not get hindered for want of cash.

The news is that the Academic Council of the Indira Gandhi Agriculture University at Raipur, Madhya Pradesh, has approved to institute a scholarship in memory of Topsy, the pet dog of an IPS Officer (read lap dog!). The officer who would love to play anonymous (!), true to the love for his pet dog has offered Rs. 30,000/- for the scholarship.

If any one is going cats and dogs about the resource crunch in UGC, in higher education, beware and behold! For a country, stinking of scams, bribes, commissions, pay-offs, tax-evasions and what not, leading to a massive parallel black economy of Rs. 38,000 crore (on par with its foreign debt); for a country which flushes out 30% of its budget (1995 estimate) for defence expenditure in the process building up a highly brutal army and police used against peoples movements; a country who has the infamy of being ranked first in arms imports but 147th in per capita income between 1988 and 1992; which spends less than 1.9% of the budgetary allocation on education and yet has got the nerve to do away with it, to throw it open to private interests; where 45 million children are out of primary schools in 1995; where nearly one third of the children under 16 are forced into child labour; the announcement of such an 'innovative' scholarship eulogising the memory of a pet dog indeed smacks of the morality of those who take the meat from the table and teach contentment and those who speak to the hungry after eating their fill, of wonderful times to come.

But friend, the top dog (pardon, Vice Chancellor) of the University, Dr. S.K. Patil, says that the Topsy Memoria! Scholarship of Rs. 3,000/- will be given every year to the outstanding student in Bachelor of Veterinary Science of the University.

Well, let us not get restive about an academics that has become topsy turvy. Long live, the memories of Topsis and ever be the memories of pet dogs! Glory be to the lap dog and the top dog! Let there be more perks for the lap dogs and top dogs—and scholarships on them too!!



Reports of *Go to Village Campaign*

Our experiences among Haryana women

Sunita

In the Go to Village Campaign last summer, we, the activists of Jagruk Chatra Morcha had divided into 3 teams to go in three directions. One in which I was a member happened to cover ten villages in Yamuna Nagar district. There were two girl students in our team.

During the campaign, we used to reach a new village everyday in the evening and in the night cultural programmes were performed. Our morning in the new villages started with our attempts to interact with the women of the village.

In all the villages women cooperated with us overwhelmingly. Usually an aged woman or a girl used to accompany us when we went door to door to inform about the cultural programmes. Everywhere women and girls used to surround us attentively to what we said. In all the villages except one, women attended the cultural programmes in the night from 9 pm. to 10.30 pm. in good numbers. Still, many women could not make it due to their daily household chores as they complained that we completed our cultural programme quite early.

Majority of the women are confined to the household work. They work for the whole day without any let up. Those who go for work outside have a much more hectic schedule. Apart from the work outside their household work also becomes a burden on them.

The duty of looking after the kids usually of elder children is that of the girl. Usually women don't get work the whole year and moreover they are paid only half of the wages of their male counterparts. The wage rates for women vary from Rs. 25-30 per day.

Most of the girls in these villages are dropouts after 7th or 8th standard. Schools being situated in distant places is one of the major reasons for their dropping out. By talking to the girls, we could make out their feelings. Due to family problems and the social conditions, girls are being discouraged from going to school. For instance, one girl who happens to be in class XII, had to fight for two years to continue her studies, when she was in class X. Only two girls go to college from among the ten villages. In two villages dalit women are sarpanchs. At home though, men decide everything. Purdah system is prevalent.

We visited two industries where mattresses were produced. Only girls work in these factories. For their 11-12 hour work they get between Rs. 35-50 per day. The piece rate for designing a mattress is Rs. 32 per sq. yard and Rs. 28 for the plain ones.

Being girls, we faced some problems. In one village, people took us as professional dancers and one woman hence treated us as unfriendly. But in the night after seeing a cultural programme, the same woman came

(contd. in page



Andhra Pradesh

Agitations of girl students:

At various girls colleges in Tirupati, Anantapur, Mahaboobnagar, Hyderabad & Guntur Pamphlets were distributed welcoming the new students exhorting them to organise themselves against the problems which they confront inside and outside the home, as these problems are interlinked with the larger struggles for a fundamental change in the society.

Hyderabad:- A debate competition on "50 Years of independence - women & students" was organised in various colleges in the month of August. Wall magazines were also put up on the same subject.

In Kothi women's college the Hostel administration had passed new rules such as compulsory remittance of mess charges every month, privatisation of the mess facilities, stoppage of Hostel facility for married girls etc.

Against these anti-student measures, with the help of Mahila Chetana (women's organisation) students formed from among them, a 20 member mess committee in defiance against one which was formed by the Principal, lecturers and wardens. This student committee met the warden, Principal, chief warden and VC and asserted the need for the implementation of their demands which included local problems too.

Consequently the Principal threatened about 150 students and asked them to render apology in letter. Though initially scared, after realising that their struggle was a just one, the students refused to apologize and continued their struggle, asserting that if their problems are not solved they will not relent. Almost all the major demands got solved and new rules were formed to run the mess effectively. Thus students took the responsibility of running the mess including the purchase of the material from the market. Inmates of each room was given the responsibility to run the mess each week on a rotation basis. They also took up the responsibility of fixing the mess bill. Various posters against privatisation were pasted all over the college during the struggle.

TIRUPATI:- On August 1st from 2.30 p.m. onwards the hostel students of Sri Padmavati Mahila Degree college started agitation demanding removal of the warden and Deputy warden, to bring down the mess bill, caution deposit, electricity charges, to install phone facility in the hostel, polite behaviour from the Hostel workers with students and their parents, to increase the visiting hours and to keep the hostel library open throughout the day.

Around 800 students sat on dharna near the college gate. They demanded that the education officer come immediately and solve their problems. But when police came to stop the agitation, students shouted them go back saying there was no need for police, to which the CI and

SI had to agree.

Late at midnight around 2.30 a.m. the DEO came asking to withdraw the agitation. Since the EO was not in town, he took the responsibility of solving their demands. The students then stopped the dharna.

But as there was no written declaration from the DEO, students continued with their struggle the next morning. They avoided taking food in protest.

In each phase of the agitation the college administration tried their best to discourage the struggle with the help of the CI, SI and DEO. But each time the students staunchly resisted by shouting slogans against them. To the repeated requests of the DEO to take food and to lift the agitation, the students braving the hostile weather, responded by insisting that until they are given a written assurance from the DEO they are not going to budge.

At last the DEO had to give in by assuring in writing to immediately solve the problem, with which the students withdrew their agitation. The major demands of removing the warden and deputy warden was done immediately and new people were appointed in their places. Caution deposit money was reduced from Rs 900 to Rs 600, mess bills cut by Rs 100 and phone facility was also made available.

GUNTUR:- Demanding immediate redressal of their problems, students of Aided High Schools and Municipal High Schools of Guntur went on strike on July 9th and 10th. With the guidance of Pragati Mahila Vedika, students of 21 High Schools participated in the strike.

On 9th July, students of all Aided High Schools boycotted their classes and took a demonstration to the collector's office. In the demonstration students raised slogans demanding immediate solution for their problems. They sat on a dharna before the collector's office.

On 10th July, students of all Municipal High Schools boycotted their classes and took

out a rally to the Municipal office. In the rally they shouted slogans demanding immediate fulfillment of vacant posts of teachers, timely issuing of books and scholarships, withdrawal of government's anti-student policies.

As there was no one in the Municipal office, the students blockaded the road for 30 minutes. Later they gave a memorandum to the Municipal manager.

Against the death of a girl student in welfare Hostel

With less facilities, high number of students, the social welfare hostels in Andhrapradesh, ridden with problems, have become death traps for students.

In Guntur, the social welfare girls hostels for SC/ST students lack even the minimum facilities. For 300 students there are only three latrines, while absence of proper drinking facilities have forced students to leave with a single bottle of water from morning to evening. There are no fans in the hostel, no proper food nor any medical facilities etc.

These conditions had proved quite severe on one girl student Ramishetti Kalyani (8) who was a class III, that after taken ill, she died within three days.

Pragati Mahila Vedika, in protest, rallied the students to the hospital. The hostel authorities tried hard to hide the real causes of her death with the connivance of the doctors. Against this callous attitude of the authorities the students blockaded the road on the second day keeping the dead body in state on the road. They took out a rally up to the social welfare office and demanded immediate dismissal of the warden and immediate remedies for their hostel problems. The authorities had no way but to come down and hence transfer the warden. They assured the students with immediate provisions for the problems.

Against closure of welfare Hostels:

In the process of privatisation of education the AP government has put a proposal to

replace social welfare hostels with a limited number of residential schools. Against this proposal an extensive campaign was taken in social welfare hostels by APCMS (the women's organization) in which students participated in large numbers. Pamphlets were distributed opposing the anti-Dalit, anti-tribal, anti-women policies of Chandrababu Naidu. Meetings were also organised in the social welfare hostels in Tirupati, Ongole, Adoni, Hyderabad and Guntur.

In Guntur around 300 students from 13 hostels participated in a rally and raised slogans against the government. Chandrababu Naidu. Meetings were also organised in the social welfare hostels in Tirupati, Ongole, Adoni, Hyderabad and Guntur.

In Guntur around 300 students from 13 hostels participated in a rally and raised slogans against the government.

Haryana

Yamuna Nagar: Students rise against fee hike

The management of MLN college in Yamuna Nagar, effected a fee hike of the order of 25-60%. Jagruk Chatra Morcha (JCM), conducted a signature campaign in the college against this and collected nearly 1000 signatures. On 29th September, these signatures were presented to the Principal and DC along with a memorandum to withdraw the fee hike.

After the October vacations, on 2nd November, a reminder was also submitted for which action was not taken. To take the issue to a higher stage, on 6th November, students of all the colleges in Yamuna Nagar boycotted the classes and went on a token strike. A rally was organised in the town and rasta roko was conducted at the main chowk in which nearly 500 students took part. On the same day, nearly 100 students went to Kurukshetra, took out a rally and met the Vice Chancellor of Kurukshetra University and submitted a memorandum.

As a reaction to this determined agitation of the students, the Principal of MLN college expelled our JCM activist from the hostel. When students demanded the principal to revoke the expulsion of the student from the hostel, he quite autocratically expelled him even from the college. This angered the students and instantly they went on strike. As audacious as he can be, the Principal expelled the same day, another student, also a JCM activist and declared holidays till 17th November anticipating an end to the agitation.

But on 18th November, students went on strike again demanding the revoke of the expulsion of two students and withdrawal of the hike. Nearly 800 students gathered near the Principals' room and raised slogans making the terror tactics of college administration and police futile. As a result, the management had to bow down and accept the demands. This unity of the students of Yamuna Nagar gave a new vigour to the student community of the town. The agitation was led all along by JCM under its banner.

Against indecent film posters:

JCM activists in Yamuna Nagar took out a propaganda against the indecent posters and sex films exhibited in the cinema halls in the town. They went around the town and blackened the indecent posters. Later they met the Divisional Commissioner and submitted a memorandum. After this, pasting of the indecent posters have come to a halt.

Narwana: Students demand fee waive

The floods in Haryana this year had created havoc in the agriculture. Since majority of the students come from a peasant background, JCM took up the issue of waiving off the fee in colleges. On 2nd November, the students of Government college led by JCM went on strike and took out a 200 strong rally. They later met the Sub Divisional Magistrate and submitted a memorandum.

In continuation of this, on 6th Novem

ber, nearly 125 students of all JCM units, took out a rally in Kurukshetra University, met the Vice Chancellor and submitted a memorandum. As a result, the VC promised to take up this matter with the education minister of Haryana. He also promised to discuss with the University body to reduce the prospectus fee and appoint a committee to investigate into the irregularities in Government College, Yamuna Nagar.

Uttarakhand

Ramnagar: PSF participated in the struggle of hotel workers, which was on for 3 months and 3 days from 16th July to 19th October.

Their main demand was to withdraw the transfer of two workers to Bombay on the same pay i.e. 1240/- Rs. monthly. Thus 32 workers started their agitation as a Dharna in front of the hotel gate when on the same night of 16th July, the police forcibly threw their tents and later the hotel management came up with court orders prohibiting dharnas within 300 metres.

After assessing the situation, a coordination committee was formed of all the democratic organisations like Krantikari Lok Adhikar Manch, Progressive Students Forum, Sanyukth Sangharsh Samiti, and AISA along with the worker's union. It was named Shramik Nagrik Sangharsh Samiti. Under the banner of the coordination committee the struggle continued in different forms like dharnas, campaigns in nearby villages and colleges, gherao of the Commissioner (Nanital) or SDM, torchlight processions and even marching to Delhi on 9, October to give a Dharna in front of the headquarters of the hotel for 2 hours. A rally was taken out at Jantar-Mantar, where the police arrested and detained the activists for 4 hours.

Finally on Oct. 19, an agreement was reached by both the parties, in which the workers would get their service charge Rs 11,00/- pay of the strike period plus bonus of 96 and 97. In

the end it was the movement which was not only successful but gave inspiration to the workers and also brought the unity of students with the working class.

PSF took a campaign from 13th Nov. to 22nd Nov. 1998 against the price hike. A street play, 'Roti Ka Khel', was performed at various street corners and colleges as many as 13 times. Also a pamphlet titled 'Krantikari Sanghatan Ki Avashyakta Kyo?' (what is the need for a revolutionary organisation?), was distributed among the masses for their great appreciation.

Almora: On 17th November, a section of students who had gone to give a memorandum to the state education minister was brutally lathicharged by the police. PSF unit of Almora, on 18th Nov., gheraoed the state education minister and expressed their strong protest, notwithstanding the opposition by the goons of ABVP and the student union. Later a memorandum was handed over to the state education minister.

Punjab

Gurdaspur:

Fake cases were framed against some students by the Teachers Association in Gurdaspur. The main motive behind this was some contradictions which some teachers had with the parents of some students. Against these anti-student acts of teachers Punjab Students Union called for a city-wide demonstration in which 400 students and their parents participated. After the demonstration the Teachers Association agreed to take back the fake cases.

PSU with 200 students blockaded the road for 50 minutes and gave a memorandum to the district transport officer demanding to immediately issue the bus passes.

PSU organised a revolutionary cultural programme against imperialist culture at the IIT on 27th November, in which revolutionary plays and songs were performed. Students later paid homage to the AIRSF secretary Com. Janardan

who was tortured to death by the AP police in a fake encounter.

A seminar was also organised in Gurdaspur on the eve of the birth anniversary of Udham Singh. Around 35 students participated in the seminar.

Delhi

Democratic students union (DSU) participated in the protest dharna along with Progressive students union (PSU) Delhi, on 22nd October, in front of Vigyan Bhavan, the venue of the education ministers-conference. The dharna was against the HRD minister's attempt to pass the RSS inspired agenda on education. Police arrested the agitating students and framed cases against them. The students were detained for more than six hours.

DSU organised a cultural programme against the onslaught of imperialist culture on 23rd December in Delhi University. Various progressive plays and songs were performed by DSU activists ■

(contd. from page 32)

to us and apologised for her behaviour and while leaving the village she accompanied us to a long distance.

In all the villages, the girls in the campaign team were received warmly by the people. We did not face any problem for stay or food. Another inspiring thing was, the letters we received from eight places a month after the campaign. In all the letters, it was mentioned that the women remembered us well to hum the songs which we had sung during the campaign. ■

Naxalbari

Not Just the name of a village

Published by AIRSF

Price : Rs. 12/- Postal Charges Rs. 6/-

Second Conferences of RSF (West Bengal) & JCM (Haryana) Successfully Held

RSF (WB):

Revolutionary Students Federation (West Bengal), held its second state conference on 20th September 1998 in Shiakhala of Hooghly district. The conference started with flag hoisting in the morning by the father of Sudev Chakravarty, a martyr of the Great Naxalbari Struggle of the 70s, who had gone to Midnapore while being a student to organise the peasants and got killed by the jotedars along with two other local comrades named Shashi and Gurudas (These 3 martyrs' names were referred to by Comrade Charu Mazumdar in one of his famous letters written to the local organ just after their martyrdom). The inaugural speech was delivered by Amitdyuti Kumar from the Association for Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR), who was also associated with the Naxalbari Student Movement. As Sudev's father inspired the students in the conference with a stirring account of his son's revolutionary zeal and indomitable spirit, Amitdyuti Kumar expressed the necessity of organising students on their academic issues besides inspiring them with revolutionary politics. He told how all over the world students are playing a revolutionary role even today and are up in front of all social movements. Fraternal delegates from RSA and PDSF also gave their speeches wishing full success to the RSF conference.

As the conference progressed, the programme and constitution of RSF was placed before the students by Com. Arnab. Many delegates participated in the discussion of the same. Some amendments were placed and finally both were accepted unanimously with some corrections. It was soon followed by the organisational report of the last one year's work which was placed by the secretary Com. Ashish.

RSF was initiated in the early nineties to organise students on the basis of the revolutionary ideals of Naxalbari and its resurgence in AP, Bihar and Dandakaranya. During the last 3 years, RSF was slowly gaining its base. In Calcutta and its suburban areas, RSF is emerging more and more as a student organisation synonymous with struggles. It is keen to revive the revolutionary tradition of West Bengal students by conducting regular "go to village" campaigns, taking up students' issues as much as possible and conducting solidarity campaigns in support of struggles of other sections of the people. The resolve and sincerity of RSF to resurrect the glorious tradition of Bengal Students Movement was evident from the organisational report.

Altogether, 100 students, youth and cultural activists attended the conference, among which, 72 were student delegates. The conference hall was decorated with quotations of teachings of Mao and Charu Mazumdar. A martyr's column was garlanded and silence observed in memory of hundreds of student martyrs of 70's Bengal movement and the recent martyrs of different states particularly AP, Bihar and Dandakaranya. Student cultural activists and Nishantika (cultural organisation) activists sang many revolutionary songs throughout the conference.

In the evening, a procession of nearly 200 students and youth was taken out from the conference hall to Shiakala Bazar where a mass meeting was held. Leading activists of RSF and secretary of NDYF spoke at length about the developments in Bengal and the role to be played by the students and youth at this crucial juncture. The mass meeting was concluded with songs and skits which evoked good response from the gathering.

JCM (Haryana) hold its Second State Conference and Work Shop

Jagruk Chatra Morcha (JCM), is making its first steps in building a revolutionary students movement in Haryana. It should be noted that

there is no such history of any revolutionary student movement in Haryana. Its against this background that JCM is organizing the students on various issues ranging from academic to political. To consolidate the organisation which is quite nascent, JCM decided to organise its conference annually. Hence it organised its second conference this year, in the form of a delegate session. JCM also has become the constituent of AIRSF from this year.

Student activists of JCM gathered at Com. Janardhan Hall in Ambala city from 26-28 October 1998 to participate in the two-day workshop organised alongwith the second conference of JCM. On the first two days, i.e., on 26 and 27, a work shop was held to discuss the organisational problems and work methods.

Workshop: The programme started with the homage to Com. Janardhan, General Secretary of AIRSF who was killed by the AP Police in a fake encounter and Com. Anil Ojha, a DSU (Bihar) activist, who died under mysterious circumstances.

The issues placed before the delegates to discuss were:

1. How to start work in new colleges?
 2. What are the problems faced in the Colleges?
 3. How to form units?
 4. How to give membership?
 5. What are the problems arising side by side from family while working in the organisation?
 6. On what issues students can be organised?
 7. What are the agitational forms?
 8. How to organise girl students?
 9. How to impart political education?
 10. With whom can we go for joint activity?
- etc.

The delegates discussed at length on these issues to get some clarity so as to devise appropriate work methods.

Second State Conference: On 28 October, the second conference started with scores of revo

lutionary songs forming the background for the hoisting of the red flag.

The inaugural address was delivered by Prof. P.D. Sharma from Kurukshetra University. In his speech he spoke on the importance of the need for a revolutionary student movement and appealed to the delegates not to be silent spectators to the problems in the society. He also expressed his anguish against the communal fascism of BJP and pointed out that uprooting of this unjust and exploitative system is an immediate task before us. After this, the fraternal messages from AIRSF, DSU (Delhi), Progressive Students Front (UP), Lok Sangram Morcha, Nav Javan Dasta and Disha Sanskritik Manch (all from Haryana) were read.

This was followed by the Secretary's report on JCM activities after the first conference till date. The report dealt with the issues taken, problems faced and lessons learnt. Later the delegates proposed some amendments to the constitution which was passed after due discussion. Then the treasurers' report was followed.

The conference later elected Com. Mandeep as President, Com. Rajesh as Secretary, Com. Nirmala as Treasurer and Coms. Dharamveer and Shukrapal as Executive Committee members. The conference concluded with the passing of resolutions condemning anti-farmer policies of the government leading to suicides of peasants, Pokhran blasts and unequal treaties like CTBT, Commercialisation of education, price hike, privatisation of power sector, communalisation of education, in solidarity with the Indonesian students struggle and demanding compensation for the farmers in the flood hit areas and demanding India to come out of WTO.

The conference concluded with renewed enthusiasm, to build up a revolutionary student movement in Haryana by mobilising students of the state into struggles and thus carve a niche for Haryana student community in the revolutionary student movement of India.

“A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser” _Lenin

Dear Readers!

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Please send your articles, letters and opinions to this address.

-Editor,

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A System that failed

When the British left India only 16 per cent of the population was literate. In 1997 the figure reached 51.2. Impressive sounding? Till you consider that countries like Sri Lanka, Uruguay, Tanzania, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Zambia and many others which had a comparable literacy in the 40s have now reached much higher levels. Today India has more illiterates and lower literacy rates than even sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, India may soon have the dubious distinction of housing more than half the illiterate population of the world.

Take a look also at the composition of the country's literate. They comprise all those who can write their name and read it when it is written. Of these 12.5 per cent have received no formal education, and 10.7 percent have studied only upto primary school But, more than 60 per cent of primary schools in India have only one teacher, or at best two for conducting five classes. 2,628 schools have none! The NCERT's Fifth Survey also found that of the 5.29 lakh primary schools :

More than 50 per cent had no drinking water facilities

Nearly 85 per cent had no toilets

71,000 had no buildings, kuccha or pucca, while in all, nearly 50 per cent were conducted in kuccha, thatched houses or open spaces.

Dropout rates are naturally enormous-only 70 of every 100 children enrol in class 1, half of these dropout before completing primary school, less than 10 cross class 8, less than 5 complete high-school and only 2 may graduate!

Once again the rulers of 'Independent' India are totally to blame. The 1st 5 year plan gave education 7.86 per cent of total outlay, the 2nd plan 5.83 per cent and the 7th Plan 3.5 per cent. Today the country devotes less than 3.5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to this crucial sector-less even than Tanzania (4.3), Kenya (6.7) and Malaysia (7.8)

At higher level too while the number of universities grew from 27 in 1950-51, to 214 in 1995, and the number of colleges rose from 578 to 8210, India has not been able to develop necessary infrastructure of skilled manpower. A recent survey shows that more than 50 per cent of students of the country's premier engineering institutes-the IIT- were planning to 'Quit India' after government has spent more than Rs. 2 lakh per student.

Today after 5 decades of Independence, India has only 134 scientists and engineers per one million people compared to 5183 in Japan and 3874 in USA. Only six per cent of those in the age-group 17-23 attend college while in UK about 30 per cent, in S Korea 46.04 per cent and in Germany 37.6 per cent do so.

Clearly the system has failed!

(Courtesy : AIPRF booklet 'Fifty years of dependence and fifty years of resistance'.)

poem

The Guerrilla is Like A Poet

*The guerrilla is like a poet
Keen to the rustle of leaves
The break of twigs
The ripples of the river
The smell of fire
And the ashes of departure.*

*The guerrilla is like a poet.
He has merged with the trees
The bushes and the the rocks
Ambiguous but precise
Well-versed on the law of motion
And master of myriad images.*

*The guerrilla is like a poet.
Enrhymed with nature
The subtle rhythm of the greenery
The inner silence, the outer innocence
The steel tensile in-grace
That ensnares the enemy.*

*The guerrilla is like a poet.
He moves with the green brown multitude
In bush burning with red flowers
That crown and hearten all
Swarming the terrain as a flood
Marching at last against the stronghold.*

*An endless movement of strength
Behold the protracted theme:
The people's epic, the people's war.*

--From the flaming fields of Philippines

All India Revolutionary Students Federation (AIRSF)

Seminar on

Commodification of Education & Onslaught of Imperialist Culture

- ❑ Onslaught of imperialist culture : Com. Chalasani Prasad
(Revolutionary Writers Assbciation, A.P.)
 - ❑ Saffronisation of education
 - ❑ Private educational institutions: Money making
monsters : Com.C.S.R. Prasad (Revolutionary Writers Association, A.P.)
- ❑ Students struggles in India : Com. Shiv Sunder (AIPRF)
 - ❑ Education for sale: A critique on coaching
classes : Com. Shoma Sen

**20-21 January 1999
Com. Janardhan Hall
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