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Independence Of Judiciary
J. L. Jawahar

**Progressives vs Populists
in Europe**
D. K. Giri

Migrant Schools
Tanya Majmudar

**Ensuring Progress
of Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan
and Tribal Sub-Plan**
Bharat Dogra

**Democratisation of Higher
Education in India:
Ambedkar's Vision - II**
K. S. Chalam

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Re-connecting with Gandhi: Champaran Satyagraha Centenary National Conclave

Anand Kumar

It was hundred years ago that Gandhi arrived at Patna on April 10, on his way to the historical Satyagraha at Champaran on April 18, 2017 in response to a call from the oppressed Indigo farmers. It was a journey which proved to be an epoch making endeavour as within a week of his Patna arrival a new chapter of the national movement got inaugurated at Champaran which changed the course of our struggle. According to Dr Rajendra Prasad (a colleague of Gandhi in Champaran Satyagraha and the first president of independent India) ' – the whole of India was to get her first lesson and her first modern example of Satyagraha which was to open new flood gates of light and of vision before her. It is an old saying that no harm can come to the true, but a practical demonstration of this was to be given to the world on this day (April 18, 1917) by Mahatma Gandhi.' Now this historic event is being used to reconnect with Gandhi and the Gandhian way through several initiatives all over India.

A national conclave on Champaran Satyagraha Centenary was organized at the recently build

GyanBhawan by the Ministry of Education of Government of Bihar on April 10-11, at Patna to start a year long programme of awareness building and constructive activities to promote the values and the vision of freedom movement with focus upon the Gandhian ideas and practices. It was a gathering of three generations of Gandhian Satyagrahis from all over the country for critical overview of the contemporary issues and future steps needed in the context of the purpose, processes and lessons of Champaran Satyagraha. It concluded with a 10 point Patna Declaration emphasizing the need to follow the path of truth, non-violence, love and Satyagraha in personal, community and national life.

The inaugural session of the national conclave was addressed by an impressive panel of national icons including Justice Rajendra Sachar, Justice Chandrashakhar Dharmadhikari, S Subbarao, Medha Patkar, Razi Ahmed, Kumar Prashant, Ashok Chowdhary and Ms Aditi Desai. It began with a welcome note by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar urging for a roadmap

to take the society and nation forward beyond fear, dominance, exploitation and poverty through 'development with justice' ('VikasaurNyaya') as visualized by Gandhi. He underlined the value of Gandhian constructive programmes for nation-building by narrating the feedback about the socio-economic impact of Bihar Government's decision to implement Sharaab-Bandi (prohibition on sale and consumption of liquor). He declared that the Bihar Government intends to enlarge the scope of Sharaab-Bandi drive to aim at Nasha-Bandi (banning the intoxicating 'drugs') and Dahej-Bandi eradication of evil of dowry).

The conclave focused on 9 challenges of India today for meaningful discussions as the main activity of the gathering — 1. Role of Champaran Satyagraha in Indian National Movement, 2. Gandhian philosophy of education, 3. Gandhian view and methodology of non-violence, 4. Gandhian approach to economic independence and self-reliance, 5. Gandhi and women's empowerment, 6. Gandhian philosophy and way of social justice, 7. Gandhian approach towards peaceful co-existence, 8. Gandhian philosophy on environment, and 9. Gandhi's message to youth.

These sessions were held in halls named after three towering figures of the Champaran Satyagraha — Raj Kumar Shukla, Kasturba Gandhi, and Peer Mohammad Moonis. These discussions involving more than 40 well articulated presentations were chaired by Tara Gandhi Bhattacharjee, Razi Ahmad, Vandana Shiva, Manimala, Tushar Gandhi, Kumar Ketkar and Anand Kumar.

(Continued on Page 5)

Independence Of Judiciary

J. L. Jawahar

Whenever we think of independence of judiciary, we find many authors who insist that it is indispensable. There cannot be any doubt about it. It is a matter so obvious that it need not be repeated. But the next question is 'independent of what?' Prabhakar Sinha (*Janata* April 2, 2017) has rightly pointed out that the judiciary must be independent of the executive government. He also asserted that "The judges are public servants and would serve under any condition prescribed by law". What is the law that prescribes the conditions under which the judiciary has to serve? In a democracy like ours the constitution is supreme. The judiciary, like the other two branches — executive government and legislature — is a creature of the constitution. Obviously, the judiciary has to work as prescribed under the constitution. In fact the judges take an oath that they would always try to protect and defend the constitution. It means that the independence of judiciary as we contemplate it is not absolute. It has its limitations. It has its jurisdiction beyond which it is not supposed to step out. For example, it is not supposed to meddle with administrative matters or other matters that are allotted to the other branches of government under the constitution, like making a policy of government. It is completely independent in discharging its duties and brooks no interference from any quarter. One likely source of interference is the executive government and provision is made

in the constitution to prevent such interference to the extent possible.

But it is *alleged* that the "Modi government has managed to get the power to reject a name recommended by the collegium in the name of national security". It is suggested that this would make the judge 'obliged to the politicians helping in securing the appointment.' Unfortunately, judges have to be appointed by somebody or some authority, which has to be human. Constitution conferred that responsibility on the executive government subject to certain conditions. But what are the provisions of the constitution that gave the right to the collegium to select persons for appointment as judges? Before the collegium was brought into existence by self-serving theories, all appointments of judges were made by the government as prescribed under Art.124 of the constitution. But all those judges were not feeling obliged to those governments. There were many judgments that severely criticized the governments on many issues. There is no reason to be more apprehensive as the present government is led by a person named "Modi". It shows a clear prejudice. I too do not agree with all the activities of the government. But we have to give him credit where it is due.

It is suggested that the person appointed by the government would be obliged to those in the government and would not be free from the influence of the government. Extend

(Continued on Page 5)

Progressives vs Populists in Europe

D. K. Giri

Populism dominates political discourse all over the world. Of late, there has been a phenomenal rise of populism in American and Europe, and as the other democracies tend to follow the west, they are also infected with this anomaly. There have been popular sloganeering, ideological posturing and rhetoric campaigns in the past, but the sudden gush of populism characterised by uncivil language, slanders, and untruths in a 'post-truth environment' upend conventional politics. Commentators, scholars and politicians are at a loss to explain the rise of populism, and devise mechanisms to counter it. In a recent international gathering in Europe, a senior politician, a former Minister, from India asked me, 'What is populism? What is wrong with it?' I guess he was confusing populism with popular. I do not blame him, as the range of words and synonyms in English can be mind-boggling for non-native speakers. Populism is however a political style as well as political doctrine that suggest that common people are exploited by the elite and it should be corrected.

The victory of Donald Trump in America, and the Brexit victory of those Britons wanting to leave European Union mark the high point of populist politics. Both democracies are matured and developed ones, the British being the oldest, and the American the greatest in popular terms. In fact, the win of populism in America on the bases of aggression, lies, and one-upmanship has slipped America down to the group of fragile democracies in the

ranking done by the Economist Intelligence unit. Populism is spreading in other parts of the world - Marine Le Pen in France, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, Orban in Hungary, Erdogan in Turkey and some would say Modi in India, but I will certainly include Kejriwal in New Delhi, India. What do all of them have in common? In a world, where citizens are disillusioned with current state of affairs; corrupt politics, unequal society, disruptive economy, the populist politicians have found words and strategies to channel their anger, and win them over with tall promises, rhetorical discourses. They have reshaped the political landscape by reframing the debate. Such politics is not healthy in the longer term although it may secure temporary dividends for the champions of populism, and cynical satisfaction for its supporters.

Sources of populist politics

What are sources of populist politics? Worldwide, the growth of populism could be traced to various factors. The first is the neo-liberal economic idea which has led to gross inequality and insecurity among people. The noble laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz suggests that the neo-liberal economy advocating free trade and market liberalisation has led to financial capitalism and now hyper-globalisation. Secondly, the austerity in Europe increased unemployment and poverty whereas the regressive taxation created wealthy individuals and cooperates, and cutting down welfare state caused more poverty,

ill-health, and consequent dislocation. Third, free movement under globalisation caused demographic changes challenging the conventional approach to culture and identity. This created a backlash for cultural cohesion and identity re-assertion. Fourth, in the developing, non-western world, corruption in government, and collusion of elites alienated and agitated the people. The last UPA Government in India reeked of scandals and elitism in numerous political families, ex-royals and ex-feudals it propped up. Fifth, the anti-immigration rants by populists are not uncommon. They stoke the misplaced fear of local population that immigrants ate up their state resources, took away their jobs, and defiled their culture. The fear 'of the other' and presentation of immigrants as 'coloured, inferior and backward' both in the Brexit campaign and Donald Trump's propaganda were used to the maximum. The anti-immigration language, the nationalist call, and the development rhetoric blurred the difference between facts and fiction, truth and falsehood while blatantly violating the political correctness.

Populism goes well with personalisation of politics. This process has helped the individuals to emerge as rhetorical leaders outside mainstream political platforms and become popular figures through national media. Kejriwal in India fits into this framework, as he made AAP his own, relying heavily on rhetoric, appealing to ordinary people on their basic needs, and attacking

everyone else from a high moral pedestal. That balloon gets punctured sooner than later and it has happened to AAP sooner. As this is being written, the AAP candidate in a Delhi State bye-election lost the security deposit. Look at the fall from the landslide victory of 67 seats out of 70 in 2015. Kejriwal, as a champion of populist politics is biting dust, which is good news for progressives who believe in ideology, values and political correctness. But the tentacles of populism are spreading fast. How do the progressives fight back?

How to counter populism?

Progressives have to come up with better ideas that resonate with people and more viable strategies that win them electoral support. In the pages of *Janata* some of us have been arguing the urgent case a progressive platform in India, and there would be soon a bigger case in a monograph being brought out soon. The monograph discusses several optimistic scenarios for progressive politics - a social democratic party at national level, a progressive coalition with ground rules codified, coordinating the progressive social political movements to back up politics, defining and adhering to progressive values, issues and strategies and so on. For now, I will refer to the European Progressives' challenge in the following section. Progressives would largely mean social democrats.

Progressives would have to rethink winning ideas and strategies. On ideas, they have to take firm positions on liberalising the financial markets, deregulating the labour market, and rationalising the welfare state. Absence of clear positioning

by the social democrats pushes the people in the middle to the extreme right. In Europe, the neo-liberal economy has touched 1 to 20 per cent people at the top and those at the bottom have been touched by the welfare state. The in-betweens benefitted neither from the boom at the top, nor the welfare at the bottom. So, they are frustrated, alienated and resentful. They seem to listen to the Right when it talks to them. But what is Right offering them; more protectionism, more border controls, dismantling of European Union, getting rid of the euro etc. These are potentially dangerous for Europeans, and the rest of the world. In an interdependent, globalised world, isolationism in the name of nationalism is counter-productive. At the same time, one cannot outright dismiss the populist concerns about the dilution of national decision making, profligacy of the welfare state, democratic deficit in the supranational organisations, two prominently cited are European commercial Bank, and the European Commission. Progressives have to, at once, address these concerns to retrieve their support base from the populists. Progressives have also to take initiative in framing the debate and not just being reactive. They have to bring about reforms in two areas: euro zone governance, and Democratisation of EU institutions

For Euro zone governance, the progressives have to insist on the reforming the rules. The Rules are reinterpreted by countries in closed doors and are not brought into public discourse. That must change. The Euro zone has a good coordination policy reaching out to all the Ministers of Finance in each member country. Why not use such a coordination to allow the countries

to choose their own growth models, also development of their own yearly budgetary cycles. Such national budgetary cycles then can be discussed with other countries, European Commission, European Parliament, even the European Commercial Bank. This would put the responsibility of national economy back on the national governments, gives the democratic legitimacy at the national level, and make it legitimate at the European level through coordination. This will also take the wind out of the shell of populists, as the national economic planning will show the differentiation among the countries through different debates and proposals made in member countries. None of this will work, however, if member-states continue to have to contend with excessive debt loads that weigh on their economies (eg Greece and Italy), if they are left without significant investment funds provided by banks or the state (eg Portugal, Spain, Italy, and even France), as well as if some countries continue to have massive surpluses while failing to invest sufficiently (that is, Germany and other smaller Northern European countries). Some extra form of solidarity is necessary, beyond the European Stability Mechanism. Innovative ideas for renewal, such as Eurobonds, Europe-wide unemployment insurance, EU investment resources, an EU self-generated budget, and other mechanisms for other areas of concern—including solidarity funds on refugee or EU migration—would be necessary. Failing this, at the very least, member-states should be allowed to invest their own resources in things like infrastructure, education and training, research and development, incurring long-term debt at low

interest rates—without adding this to deficit and debt calculations, as under current deficit and debt rules.

Democratization of EU is becoming urgent. At the moment, EU is playing into populists by hollowing out its institutions. There are talks of multi-speed Europe etc. But what is important is to

allow all the member states equal say and opportunity to participate in the decision-making, and encourage debates in their national governments. Second, the social democrats who lead the pack of progressives have to come out openly and boldly what does social democracy mean in real and practical terms in the 21st century.

How do they propose to address several issues? How do they bring about a healthy equation between the institutions of market, state and the civil society without privileging one over the other? The answers to such a lot of questions will constitute the progressive platform in Europe and provide the antidote to populism.

(Continued from Page 2)

The speakers represented a meaningful mix of Gandhian practitioners, social thinkers, social activists and academicians. It was interesting to note that there was representation of a wide range of ideological orientations including Gandhians, Marxists, socialists, eco-feminists, and radical humanists. A summary report of these nine sessions was presented by Prof Purushotam Agarwal in the concluding session. The essence of the discussions was read out by Tushar Gandhi as 10 point Patna Declaration marking the conclusion of the national conclave.

The conclusion of the conclave to re-connect with the Gandhian legacy began with singing of Gandhi's favourite Bhajan "Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye je Peer Parayi Jaane Re..." and a welcome notes by Deputy Chief Minister Tejaswi Yadav, Education Minister Ashok Chowdhary and Chancellor of IMG University (Gwalior) Ramashankar Singh. Public release of two well researched books - 'Champan Satyagraha Ki Kahani' and 'Champan Satyagraha Ke Sahayogi' authored by senior journalist Arvind Mohan and published by Sasta Sahitya Mandal

Prakashan was a significant event of this session. The valedictory session of the national conclave had Prof Rajmohan Gandhi as the main speaker who emphasized that the message of Gandhi and his Satyagraha at Champaran became an inspiration for our nation and continues to be relevant for us after a hundred years because it demonstrated the power of saying 'no' to injustice through non-violent ways and the significance of being prepared to pay the price of resisting an unjust authority and defying any unfair government in quest for freedom and dignity.

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the same logic. A person appointed by the collegium would be obliged to the judges who selected him for appointment. Is it acceptable? Or is it suggested that being subservient to other judges is better than being subservient to the ministers in the cabinet? I have not much regard for politicians. I respect judges more than politicians. But I want judges to be free from influence of politicians as much as from the influence of other judges. I wish every judge to be independent by himself and give his honest opinion as a judge without looking to the opinions of other judges. What we need is independence of every individual judge and expect him to be honest and enlightened.

Judiciary is a collective body. It is what the constituent judges make of it. Unless each of them is individually independent, judiciary cannot be independent.

That is why it becomes more difficult to select persons suitable for appointment as judges to the higher judiciary. The quality does not depend on any one academic qualification. Even the Supreme Court of United Kingdom is finding dearth of suitable persons for appointment to the Bench. In order to avoid the blame of misusing the right to select persons for appointment as judges, the Modi government brought in the National

Judicial Appointments Commission in a constitutional way. What are the grounds on which it was struck down by the learned justices? Even then, in complete disregard of practical exigencies, the government is alleged to have stolen the right, in the name of national security, to reject some of the names suggested by the unconstitutional collegium. National security is not the right. It is a responsibility that is cast on it by the constitution. It cannot escape from that responsibility. We cannot reform a system when we are ourselves suffering under a prejudice and bias. Unless we are ourselves independent, we cannot bring in an independent judiciary.

Migrant Schools*

Tanya Majmudar

Yusuf Meherally Centre provides thousands of children with their only chance to go to school

Kachchh, in the north-western part of Gujarat, is known for several things — the intricately embroidered handicrafts, the white desert, the resident wild asses and for those who love them, the migratory birds. But our trip to the region last month was to visit very different kinds of migrants - humans. It was to try and understand the way of life of an unusual people, the plight of their children and a remarkable initiative that enables them to go to school.

The Fisherfolks' Schools

Our first visit was to a place called Randhbandar, near the port town of Mundra. A "*bandar*" is a port or a settlement along the coast. Though not too far from Mundra, the drive took us off the main road and along muddy tracks for quite a distance. In just a short while, the villages and towns fell far behind.

As the *bandar* came into view, we were hit by salty air and the smell of fish. The *bandar*, situated on mudflats, appeared to be a collection of makeshift tents made of jute cloth, propped up on wooden poles. Around this, stretching for miles and miles, were deserted mudflats.

The tents belonged to the Waghers, a Muslim community of fisherfolk. For nine months of the year, the Wagher people migrate from their villages to live in these settlements or *bandars*, along the coast. Entire families leave their homes and move here. They only head back home for the monsoon months. This is an age-

old practice in this community.

Due to the fact that the community spends most of the year in near isolation, the children hardly get a chance to go to school. This fact came to the attention of an NGO called Yusuf Meherally Centre (YMC), during relief work post the devastating earthquake of 2001. While handing out food packets, they observed that no one in the community was signing for them, but using their thumb prints, instead, to acknowledge receipt. That's when they realised that most of the families were not literate.

Members of this community belong to villages located all over Kachchh. When the children head off to the coast, their names get struck off their schools' rosters due to insufficient attendance. YMC thought of a solution — to open a learning centre for them at the *bandar* itself! And they did. They pitched a tent right on the beach and started gathering children there to study. Not an easy task. The parents were initially reluctant to send their kids for various reasons. They felt that the children wouldn't be able to take time from fishing. The occupation involves having to wake up at odd hours of the night to haul the fish in. At times they even spend hours out at sea. Older boys help the men in the fishing boats while women and younger children sort out the catch into fish that is to be sold fresh, dried or used for manure. At the time, parents questioned how this education would be useful to their kids in their fishing duties — this wasn't even a recognised school! But this

reluctance was nothing compared to the other struggles faced by YMC. From authorities questioning their right to use the land where they had pitched the tent to getting recognised by the education department to finding teachers to getting funds, every step was a struggle.

Not only did they find innovative ways of solving each of these problems, they also expanded. There are currently nine learning centres run by YMC in settlements along the coast from Samkhayali to Mandvi. Children of grade levels 1 to 7 come to these learning centres. Their attendance gets recorded here and sent to the government schools in their respective villages. This way, their names stay on the rosters. The learning centres thus act as supplementary schools. They are called Sagarshalas. YMC have even arranged for government school question papers to be sent here for students to appear for their exams. Teachers for these supplementary schools are recruited from surrounding areas and some are from the community itself. Some have had to learn Kachchhi in order to communicate with the younger children.

After a few years of running these schools for younger children, YMC felt that these were insufficient to address the needs of students as they grew older. They would require better facilities and more qualified teachers. They built a hostel in Bhadreshwar for boys and girls of higher grades. The

*This article was first published online on Vikalp Sangam <http://vikalpsangam.org/article/migrant-schools/#.WOxtFWclErl>

children who choose to come here, now attend regular schools in Bhadreshwar.

As we watched one family in Randhbandar, huddled around a mound of fish, busy sorting, we wondered the value of such mainstream education that may take the children away from what has been their family's traditional occupation for many, many generations. But we were informed that fishing in Kachchh is, so to say, an endangered profession. With the destruction of mangroves for the construction of Mundra port, the fish populations have deteriorated, as the mangroves provided ideal breeding grounds for fish. The port brings in a lot of big ships that dump their waste here and industries dump chemical effluents as well, further affecting the remaining fish. People from YMC believe that in the next 8 to 10 years, fishing as a profession would no longer be an option, and hence it is essential that the next generation learn non-traditional skills and mainstream languages. Even now, the economics of fishing here is such that the fishermen are eternally in debt. The community faces other challenges too. They are ostracised for fishing, what the upper castes consider '*paap no dhandho*' (business of sin).

The programme has seen a lot of impact on the children. Not only do they now speak confidently in Gujarati, Hindi and some English, apart from their mother tongue, Kachchhi, they have also begun questioning certain superstitions or age-old practices in their community, such as child marriage. The boys are questioning their parents on why girls are forced to drop out of school after a certain age. There are very few girls in higher grades and in the hostel too, compared to boys. Children's

outlook has also changed. For instance, earlier, they used to carry catapults with them to shoot birds for fun. Now, not only have they given that up, they also stop others from doing so. Once a teacher at the Bhadreshwar hostel saw a Muslim boy wearing a *teeka* on his forehead. When asked why, he said simply, "Well, my Hindu friend observed a fast for Ramzan, so it's only apt that I wear a teeka for his festival." At the hostel, YMC holds conversations with children about things like gender roles within the family. Boys are encouraged to take up tasks such as sweeping or making tea, traditionally believed to be tasks for girls. They also talk about family planning and financial planning.

One concern we had was that living in a hostel and attending regular schools may lead children to devalue their parents' occupation. This concern is shared by Devenrabhai, who has been part of this programme since the very start. He says that though living in the hostel has brought about a positive change in the kids, he did observe them becoming a little detached from their earlier lifestyle and the occupation of fishing. He believes that it is vital that the children remain a part of their families and community and for this, he tries to ensure that they go visit the *bandars* every fortnight.

Some people who have been through the YMC programme and finished schooling have gone through ITI and on to mainstream professions such as plumbing, carpentry and others. Some have come back to teach at the schools by the sea.

The Salt Workers' Schools

Just like the Waghers, people from the Agariya community, too, migrate

to the coast for nine months of the year. They work to extract salt from the sea water. Our visit to Jogninar, a salt flat near Mundra, gave a similar feel of being miles away from any town. Barren mudflats stretched in all directions, interspersed with white salt pans and heaps of salt.

Agariyas come from all over Gujarat — Ahmedabad, Patan, Surendranagar, Rajkot, Morbi. Salt extraction work at times starts at around 3 AM, lasts till sunrise and then recommences in the evening. This is to avoid the glare of the sun from salt crystals. This light is so harsh that many workers lose their eyesight when they grow old. Other diseases include chronic dermatitis (skin ulcers) on their hands and feet caused by constant exposure to sharp salt crystals.

Just like the kids of the fisherfolk, the Agariya children did not have any way of going to school and they, too, had their names struck off their schools' rosters for lack of attendance.

A year after YMC started their first school for the fishing community, they opened a school for children of salt pan workers. Here, the additional complication was that salt pan work was contract based. This meant that if one family came to one *bandar* this year, there was a chance that next year they may be somewhere completely different. Despite this, YMC persevered and now, twelve years on, they have ten supplementary schools for children of salt pan workers.

Mahadevbhai, who oversees this programme, was himself a salt worker till a few years ago. Just like the fishing community, these children, too, are first generation school-goers.

The Labourers' Schools

The port and industries near Mundra have brought an influx of labourers from different parts of the country — Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh. These people live in slum conditions near the city. Both parents work as contract labourers, while some children earn extra cash selling *pani puri* and such in the evenings. The slums have many issues — health, hygiene, water sanitation and alcoholism among men. Some of the children we met showed definite signs of malnourishment. These are some of the most marginalised people in this region. Without ration cards or migration cards, their problems are hardly even recognised by the government.

These children do not understand Gujarati. Up until recently, if they wished to go to school, they could either go to the Gujarati school in Mundra or attend school in a different state, away from their parents. There were no Hindi schools here. A few children did try going to the Gujarati schools, but didn't fit in and couldn't cope.

A few years ago, Childline India Foundation, an organisation involved with child rights, was working in the area. During awareness raising activities, the staff of Childline used to keep reiterating that children must be sent to school. One day, irked by this, parents retorted by asking where a Hindi medium school was. Hearing this, Dharmendrabhai and Sangeetaben of YMC took up the challenge of meeting the need. The very next day, they held class in the slum. Thus began YMC's work in providing Hindi medium schools.

Soon, more children arrived and they had to shift to a rented building.

In a short while, even this building proved too small — such was the overwhelming response from the parents! They soon had to paint a blackboard on the outer walls of the building and start taking classes outdoors. Finally, Arti Industries, a Mumbai based company that was already funding some fishing and salt schools, funded the project, and a building for the school was constructed, which they named Vallabh Vidyalaya. This school now provides lunch to the children and medical services to the children and their family members.

There are now three Hindi schools catering to a total of 800 children from 11 different states of the country. One of these schools, Shishu Vidya Mandir, is run in the godown of a Jindal steel plant, and the third is in Seeracha village. Many parents who had earlier left their kids back home while migrating to Kachchh have now brought them here.

Impacts and Challenges

YMC has through these three kinds of schools reached out to children of migrant families along coastal Kachchh. Many of these children did not even exist in the eyes of the Government in the early years of this programme. The RTE Act in 2009 provided some impetus for Government officials to agree to the supplementary school model, as this ensured that more children remained enrolled in school.

The education provided by YMC is completely free for the students. Through this, they have made a difference in the lives of some of the most marginalised children in the district. It has been a struggle, given the challenges with space, funding and human resources.

Some of the teachers of these schools have themselves studied up till 6th or 8th grades in conventional schools and thus tend to focus on classroom discipline, rote memory and so on. We felt that the methods of teaching needed improvement. This should hopefully be addressed soon given that YMC is already thinking of ways of enhancing competencies through training and exposure visits to other schools. YMC also encourages teachers to study further and train in education.

We also felt that the curriculum being followed in school should link in some ways to the local environment of the children of the fishing community and the salt workers. There were efforts earlier in the fishing villages, but these were not sustained. It is important that the education received in school does not devalue the traditional knowledge or skills that the families have.

On hearing the older children speak, it was clear to us that YMC has managed to get children to think on issues of gender inequality, of respect for nature and of acceptance of all religions. These are important interventions and would hopefully help the children grow up to be fair-minded and non-discriminatory adults.

YMC has undertaken a huge responsibility by running these schools and hostel for migrant children. Their impact is clearly echoed by the words of Suggiben, a migrant to Mundra from Gorakhpur, whose children now study in Vallabh Vidyalaya, "I am so happy that we were able to bring our kids here. A family should remain together. Now my kids' future is in the hands of YMC."

Ensuring Progress of Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan and Tribal Sub-Plan

Bharat Dogra

To ensure that the interests of scheduled castes and tribes are protected and there is inclusive development, special sub-plans were prepared for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and these have played an important role in trying to ensure that in various sectors allocations for benefit of scheduled castes and tribes are made in conformity with the share of SC&ST in the total population of the country.

Of course the success in ensuring this was never completed and various organizations and activists have been complaining over the years about the lack of realization of full benefits under these sub-plans. At the same time there has also been some satisfaction that real gains have nevertheless been made by scheduled castes and tribes under these sub-plans and at least till recently these gains have been increasing to some extent.

This year also at the time of the release of the Union budget the government viewpoint has been that funds available under these sub-plans are being increased

significantly. But this viewpoint was contested strongly by some Dalit advocacy groups. The lack of clarity has been compounded by several changes made in the budget for the current financial year.

As from this year the practice of merging plan and non-plan expenditure has been adopted, certain questions have been raised regarding how the sub-plans will be implemented now. The provisions for scheduled-caste sub-plan now appear as Statement 10 A in the budget. This is not merely a procedural change and implications can be wider.

As the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA), a Delhi based organization which has been closely following these trends, has commented recently in a review of these changes, "While Statement 10 A remains important from the perspective of ensuring budgetary outlays for Dalits across sectors, in the absence of any reference to the Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan there is no clarity on parameters for assessing the allocations reported by various ministries/departments in this

statement. The main difference between the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan until the last budget and the statement 10 A presented in this year's budget lies in the fact that while the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan provided a norms-based framework to assess allocations reported by various ministries, the Statement 10 A does not do so."

Similarly in the case of Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) the earlier Statement 21 A has been mentioned in the latest Union Budget as Statement 10 B 'Allocation for welfare of scheduled tribes'. As the review by CBGA has pointed out "What is inherently missing in Statement 10 B is a framework for earmarking funds, which was provided in the earlier TSP statement."

Hence it is clear that there are some genuine apprehensions regarding the continuity of the inclusive changes brought by the Scheduled Caste Sub-plan and the Tribal Sub-Plan. The government should explain the new situation clearly and give a clear assurance that the progress made under the two sub-plans will be continued.

**Footprints of A Crusader
(The Life Story of Mrunal Gore)**

by

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Democratisation of Higher Education in India: Ambedkar's Vision* - II

K. S. Chalam

In his budget debates in Bombay Legislative Assembly in 1927 as an MLC, he remarked, "I wish to remind him that the backward classes have come to realize that after all education is the greatest material benefit for which they can fight. We may forego material benefits, **we may forego material benefits of civilization, but we cannot forego our right and opportunity to reap the benefit of the highest education to the fullest extent.** That is the importance of this question from the point of view of the backward classes who have just realised that without education their existence is not safe. It is for this reason that the fight for increase of seats is being made.

It is necessary to bring here the total intellectual contributions of Ambedkar to the educational development of the mass of people. He is perhaps one of the first economists in the world who had realized the economic importance of education. In his debates in the Assembly and Parliament, one can find the tenor of his argument in favour of subsidies for education in general and for the weaker sections in particular. He was arguing in the Bombay Presidency Legislative debates in 1927 as follows, "We should at least spend on education the same amount that we take from the people in the form of excise revenue. The amount of expenditure that we incur per individual in this Presidency on education is only 14 annas, but the amount of money that

we recover in the form of excise revenue is Rs 2-2-9 (Rs 2.17). I think it is only fair that our educational expenditure should be so adjusted that we should spend on the education of the People as much as we taken from them in the form of excise." He has also calculated the fees income at different levels and argued that it financed 36 per cent of expenditure in collegiate education, 31 per cent high school and 26 per cent middle school education. Higher education should be made cheaper so that lower classes (not necessarily low castes) can enter higher education and benefit from the opportunities it creates. He had lamented that educational institutes were running on commercial lines during the British Raj. His words are prophetic that today higher education became a business that does not recognize 'merit', but only money power.

Varsity Education Views

Higher education is generally related to university education that provides undergraduate education in colleges affiliated to a university and UG and PG and research mostly on campus departments now. However, university system was just evolving in the first 50 years after 1857 as it was basically used as a body to conduct examinations and confer degrees and later on developed on the lines of London University. Ambedkar was the first Indian economist who had two doctorates in Economics from two premier universities of the world - Columbia

and London School of Economics. Interestingly, he was offered a Lecturer post in Sydenham College while several others were directly offered Professorship in the University system after they with a foreign degree. If you read his debates on education in the Bombay Assembly, evidence submitted before University Reforms Commission etc, you would notice that he has carried the pain, but made constructive suggestions for the development of higher education.

Let us look at what Ambedkar noted in the Bombay Assembly in 1927. He said, "Sir, the University is primarily a concern of the intelligentsia and of the educated classes, and that as the University is to function properly it is necessary that it should be controlled by what are called the educated classes. I would accept that principle, if the educated classes who are going to control the University possessed what we called social virtues. If they, for instance, sympathized with the aspirations of the lower classes, if they recognized that the lower classes had rights, if they recognized that those rights must be respected, then probably we, coming from the backward communities, might well entrust our destinies to what are called the advance communities. But, Sir, for centuries we have had the bitterest experience of the rule of what are called the higher and the educated classes, Sir, I think it is hardly to the credit of the advanced classes that there should exist in this country a large part of the population

which is known as the criminal tribes. It is certainly not to their credit that there should exist in this country a population which is regarded untouchable. Surely, they could have raised the status of the depressed classes; they could have raised the status of the criminal classes. They could have brought their culture to us and made us equal to them, if they had only the desire to do so. But they have never done so in the past and do not mean to do anything in that direction in future. By their callous neglect of us and by their active hostility to our progress they have convinced us that they are really our enemies. There is no doubt that it is their desire to keep us where we are. I do not wish to refer to the debate that has gone on for the last few days. But there is not the slightest doubt about the fact that the opposition benches which looked upon Government as their enemy sided with it now with the sole object of defeating us on this vital question. There is no other excuse for their conduct except that they wanted to defeat the claims of the backward communities for representation through nomination. It is for that reason that they have joined Government whom they opposed in season and out of season. Sir, can we have any trust in an intelligentsia so narrow, so illiberal in its views."

He continued by saying that, "I agree with the Inspectors of the Board of Education in England that the aim and functions of University Education should be to see that the teaching carried on there is suited to adults; that it is scientific, detached and impartial in character; that it aims not so much at filling the mind of the student with fact or theories as at calling forth his own individuality, and stimulating him to mental effort; that it accustoms him

to the critical study of the leading authorities, with perhaps, occasional reference to first hand sources of information, and that it implants in his mind a standard of thoroughness, and gives him a sense of the difficulty as well as the value of reaching at truth. The student so trained should learn to distinguish between what may fairly be called matter of fact and what is certainly mere matter of opinion. He should be accustomed to distinguish issues, and to look at separate questions each on its own merits and without an eye to their bearing on some cherished theory. He should learn to state fairly, and even sympathetically, the position of those to whose practical conclusions he is most stoutly opposed. He should become able to examine a suggested idea, and see what comes of it, before accepting it or rejecting it. Without necessarily becoming an original student he should gain an insight into the conditions under which original research is carried on.

"If a University as a corporation of learning is to serve the community, then its constitution must provide (a) for a body which will keep it in touch with all varied requirements of the community; (b) for a body which will give the University a statesman-like guidance in the provision and also in accommodation of means to ends so as to bring about a working compromise between the possible misconceptions of the public and the possibly too narrow outlook of the scholar; and (c) for a body of scholars engaged in the work of teaching to give an authoritative direction to the academic business of the University. I want to impress upon the Committee that a University does not become a teaching University merely by engaging in the work of teaching through the agency of its own staff. That is not the criterion

of a teaching University. A University may undertake teaching and yet may not be a teaching University. Whether or not a University is a teaching University depends upon whether or not the scholars engaged in the work of teaching have the authoritative direction of the academic business of the University in their hands. If it is in their hands then the University is a teaching University. If it is not in their hands then the University is not a teaching University. **A teaching University is a teachers' University.**

In making these comments upon the management of the educational affairs of the Presidency under the Reform in their bearing upon the depressed classes, the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha is not oblivious to the special provisions made for the education of the Depressed classes in the form of a few hostels and a few scholarships for higher education. But the Sabha begs to point out that it is useless to make provision for higher education of the depressed classes unless steps are taken to ensure the growth of Primary Education. Besides there is no guarantee that such concessions will continue. On the other hand that they depend a great deal upon the policy of the particular Minister in charge of Education and upon the voting strength of the Depressed classes in the Legislative Council, both of which are uncertain factors and cannot be depended upon.

It is also necessary here to bring in the ideas of Dr Ambedkar about the University education in his written reply to the Bombay University Reforms Committee. Dr Ambedkar had expressed his opinions about the aim and functions of university education:

1. That it is scientific, detached and impartial in character.
2. It aims not so much at filling the mind of the student with fact or theories as at calling forth his own individuality and stimulating him to mental effort.
3. It accustoms him to the critical study of the leading authorities, with perhaps occasional reference to first hand sources of information and that it implants in his mind a standard of thoroughness and gives him a sense of the difficulty as well as the value of reaching at truth.
4. The student so trained should learn to distinguish, between what may fairly be called matter of fact and what is certainly mere matter of opinion.
5. He should be accustomed to distinguish issues and to look at separate questions each on its own merits and without an eye to their bearing on some cherished theory.
6. He should learn to state fairly, and even sympathetically, the position of those to whose practical conclusions he is stoutly opposed.
7. He should be able to examine a suggested idea, and see what comes of it, before accepting it or rejecting it.
8. He should gain an insight into the conditions under which original research is carried on without unnecessarily becoming an original student.
9. He should be able to weigh evidence to follow and criticize argument and put his own value on authorities.

Democratic Functioning of Colleges

Ambedkar has also expressed strong views about the relations between affiliated colleges and the university administration. He was of the view that government should have no control over the academic affairs of the university. He put forward an innovative idea that the duration of study for post-graduate degree in social sciences should be 4 years, with two stages of two years each. At the end of the first stage, the candidate should be entitled to the MA Degree should specialize in one subject only which should be the subject of his major interest. The test should consist of a written examination accompanied by an essay of some 75 typewritten pages showing his familiarity with the art of using original source and commenting upon them. At the end of the second stage, the candidate should be entitled to the PhD Degree. There the test would include an oral examination and a thesis of a respectful size fit for publication. He has always upheld the dignity of the teacher. In explaining the criterion of the teaching university, Ambedkar has proposed that both the teaching and academic business should be under the control of the teachers. He has argued for reservation of places in the universities senate and syndicate to represent the interest of the weaker sections. He wanted the use of vernacular as a medium of instruction at all stages of education. Some of his innovative ideas of pooling teaching resources at one place in urban areas appear to be more relevant today than ever before.

He was also emphatic in his arguments about the devolution of

functions between college and University. He was not at all favorable for professorial positions in the University who did not bother to teach and benefit under graduates. He gave written evidence before the University Reforms Committee wherein he had elaborately discussed the objects of higher education functions of various committees etc. which are still relevant. He has also argued in favor of more powers for the University Syndicate and also delineated the functions of senate, which he considered a Legislative Council of the university and syndicate in debates in the Bombay Assembly. He was of the opinion that the object of post graduate education is to train the student "to learn to distinguish between what may fairly be called matter of fact and what is certainly mere matter of opinion".

Ambedkar was found to be a thorough academic in his approach to problems with practical insights. He has a total understanding of education starting from primary to University level. He has expressed his scholarly vision on research. He spent most of his life for the development of education and even after retirement from active political life, he took interest in the development of educational institutions. He is the first among many Indians who had initiated a Peoples education movement for the poor in India.

In his detailed note, Ambedkar mentioned that education under the British rule in the Bombay Presidency must have a beginning with the foundation of the Bombay Education Society. It was later named as Bombay Native Education Society and was headed by Mount Stuart Elphinstone but the progress

achieved by this society was according to him. minimal. He has pointed out that, “what do these figures show? They show that although mass education was the policy of the Government, the masses were as outside the pale of education as they were, before the years, 1854 and that the concept and aborigine classes of the Hindus still remained lowest in order of education.”

Upper Class Bias

The lacunae in the British Policy of Education according to him were its partial attitude towards the elite. The Court of Director’s mentioned that “it is our anxious desire to afford to the higher classes of the Natives of India the means of instruction in European Sciences and of access to the literature of civilized Europe. The character which may be given to the classes possessed of leisure and natural influence ultimately determines that of the whole people.

In this he found that the education in the British India was confined to few upper classes only. Ambedkar here provided the information and the arguments to show that the landlords, the higher employees and the Brahmins were the real upper classes who were benefited by the British education. See Appenix Tables for data provided by him before 1930, reproduced. Therefore, he wanted that the educational subsidy given by the British should provide opportunities to every one of the depressed classes much less the untouchables. He has provided sufficient data to prove what Mahatma Phule has brought to the notice of the British in 1882. In fact, he has extended the argument of Mahatma Phule as his spiritual heir asking for the British

support for universalizing education. In his debates in the Bombay Presidency he has opposed the introduction of Compulsory Primary Education Act as the proposed Act shifted the responsibility of educating the people to the School Boards. He pointed out that the School Boards would again implement the mandate of the elite as the Boards are dominated by higher classes and with little funding. It is irony that the country is still debating on the free and Compulsory Education to the mass of people even after 70 years of independence. The free and Compulsory Education Bill made as an Act and as a Right under Article 21A is not made fully operational. Had Ambedkar wisely included Art 45 in Directive Principles of State Policy, the Apex Court would not have directed the government to amend and incorporate Art 21A.

Ambedkar was a practical man as far as education is concerned. He registered the People’s Education Society in 1945 in Bombay to start Siddhartha College. He sent an application to government for an interest free loan of Rs 6 lakhs. While he was the Member of the Governor General Council, he made an appeal to people to contribute liberally for the establishment of the college. In his memorandum of association, he noted that the society is formed to establish a cosmopolitan college to provide education to Scheduled castes, Buddhists and others and will be managed by Buddhists. J H Subbaiah of Secunderabad was also a member of the society. The foundation stone for Milind College was laid by President of India Dr Rajendra Prasad in 1950 in Aurangabad. The land for the college was donated by Nizam and it was affiliated to Osmania University. I

had an opportunity to participate as Chief Guest of a National seminar at Milind College in 2004 where Dr Sahare and the principal had shown pictures of Babasaheb physically carrying construction material and was totally involved in building the institution.

Ambedkar was more interested in higher education and the above two examples are worth mentioning here. In his Manifesto of the Scheduled Caste Federation under Art 6 he mentioned that, ‘the set of education which the SCF has in mind with regard to these classes is not primary education, not even secondary education. What is in mind is advanced education of such high order, both in this country and outside, which will enable these classes to fit themselves for taking hold of administration.’ The SCF insisted on reservations in higher bureaucracy subject to minimum standards. Interestingly, in his memorandum to the government for loan to start Siddhartha College, he gave data relating to the enrolment of dalits in higher education as very low and appealed to the government for assistance in view of dalits being: 1. Poor, 2. Lacking accommodation and 3. for the sake of diversity in education. He noted that the institution would function affectively as it is headed by him and said, “having been a professor of Economics in the Sydenham College of Commerce, Bombay, Principal of the Government Law College, Bombay, a Member of the Senate and Syndicate of the Bombay University I feel that I can get recognition for the proposed College more readily from the Bombay University than from a University outside that Province.”

Practical Approach

He had a pragmatic approach as far as education is concerned. In his speech for Voice of America on May 20, 1956, he said, "Can education destroy caste? The answer is 'yes' as well as 'No'. If education is given as it is today, education can have no effect on caste. It will remain as it is. The glaring example of it is the Brahmin caste. Cent per cent of it is educated, may be majority of it is highly educated. Yet not one Brahmin has shown himself to be against caste. In fact an educated person belonging to the higher caste is more interested after his education to retain the caste system than when he was not educated. For education gives him an additional interest in the retention of the caste system namely by opening additional opportunity of getting bigger job...But education may be solvent if it is applied to the lower strata of Indian society. It would raise their spirit of rebellion. In their present state of ignorance they are the supporters of the caste system. Once their eyes are opened they

will be ready to fight the caste system."

The data presented by Ambedkar from the reports of Hartog Committee and others clearly show that there were hardly a couple of graduates from scheduled castes in the presidencies in 1930, except in Bengal where there were 1670 graduates, Madras 47, Bombay 9 and in others nil. Now SC enrolment constitutes around 10 per cent of the total enrolment of higher education, while the enrolment of the nation itself is below 20 per cent. We do not have data about other castes except the reserved groups and in public institutions. The emergence of private sector under the tacit support of all non-reserved castes helped the bourgeoning of science, technology and management courses where the entry of the poor dalits, adivasis and backwards is formidable not only due to cost restrictions, but caste cleavages working against the reserved groups now.

The above analysis of Babasaheb Ambedkar and his understanding

about education and its ameliorative character tells us about his vision for the future. Babasaheb realized that unless higher education is democratized there is no future for the lower castes. It does not mean that by providing places in public institutions in proportion to the population of each caste, the inequalities and social discrimination would end. As we have witnessed during the last decade how dalit and backward caste boys and girls committed suicides for not getting admissions in to the system, but the echo system of higher education has become vicious for them to survive. Ambedkar himself has given the answer by saying that "once their eyes are opened they will be ready to fight the caste system." It is possible by popularizing and educating the learned citizens, the 'others' about the long run benefits of higher education would be higher and perpetual if your own citizens are educated and admitted as part of a democratic society as the externalities would be fabulous human development, failing which it would lead to social disaster.

Table-1 Disparity in Education in 1923-24

Classes of Population in the Presidency	Order in respect of Population	Order in respect of education			Primary Edu. Students per 1000 of the Class the Pop	Second Edu. Students of the Pop Class	College Edu. Students per 1000
		Per 1000 Pop of the 1000 of Class					
		Primary			Secondary	Collegiate	
Advanced Hindus	4 th	1 st	1 st	1 st	119	3000	1000
Intermediate Hindus	1 st	3 rd	3 rd	3 rd	92	500	52
Backward Hindus	2 nd	4 th	4 th	4 th	38	140	14
Mohammedans	3 rd	2 nd	2 nd	2 nd	18	14	NIL (OR NEARLY ONE)

Source: Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches

Table-2 Educational Achievement during 1854-1882

	Primary Education Total	Secondary Education Total	Collegiate Education Total
Christians	0.49	2.26	3.0
Brahmins	20.17	40.29	50.0
Other Hindus	64.69	34.84	22.3
Mohammedans	12.54	2.04	1.5
Parsis	1.12	19.66	21.5
Aboriginal and Hill Tribes	0.87	--	--
Low caste Hindus	0.87	--	--
Jews and others	0.12	0.86	0.4
Total	100.0	100.00	100.00

Source: Adopted from Dr Ambedkar as above

**Table-3 Higher Education in India by social category
Access and Equity Program-wise enrolment 2004-05**

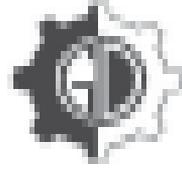
Program	Total	% Girls	% SC	% ST
PhD/D.Sc/D.Phil	55,352	41.2	5.8	2.4
MA	469,291	46.6	16.2	4.9
M.Sc.	198,719	45.7	10.4	2.8
M.Com.	122,257	34.0	9.2	3.0
Post-Graduate-sub total	790,267	44.4	13.6	4.1
BA/BA Hons	3,772,216	43.9	8.5	5.2
B.Sc/B.Sc	1,490,785	38.9	11.3	3.3
(Hons)	1,465,028	36.6	14.9	3.3
B.Com/B.Com (Hons)	696,609	23.7	8.5	3.1
B.E/B.Arch				
Undergraduate —subtotal	7,424,638	39.6	12.3	4.3
Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing,	256,748	34.7	11.5	3.7
Pharmacy, Ayurvedic, Unani and Homeopathy				
B.Ed/B.T	155,192	43.8	12.4	5.8
Others	3,095,099	37.9	6.0	2.1
Total enrolment	11,777,296	39.4	10.7	3.7
2015-16			18.5	13.3

** Key note address delivered at Dr B.R.Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad on April 4, 2017 on the occasion of 125th birth celebrations of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar

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