

Beware! The Government is making fool of the Indian People

***w.e.f.* 1st April ?**

The so called 'Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009' will be in force *w.e.f.* 1st April 2010. It is being publicized as a revolutionary step. Government claims that due to this all the children of this country will be educated. But what is the truth? Let us examine the facts—

- This Act has taken away the Fundamental Rights of balanced diet, healthy childhood and pre-primary education (Nursery, KG), of the children below six years of age which was guaranteed by the Constitution. What is this Act claiming to give in future if the foundation itself is so weak? We will expose, in the following paragraphs, the deceitful character of the Act which claims to give Right of Education for 8 years (Class 1-8). This Act has closed all the doors of higher education and career building opportunities after 8 years of schooling by not extending the Right for Secondary Education from Class 9 to 12.
- There is nothing in the Act to say that handicapped children will be educated in the regular schools. The provision for the namesake has been made only in the standards for those handicapped who can not move independently. The blind, deaf and mentally retarded children have been totally ignored. The intention of the Government is to keep such children indoors and to wash off their hands by handing over the responsibilities to NGOs.
- There is no mention in the Act that all the children will get free education (Ref Clause 3). In fact there is no mention that fees other than tuition fees will not be charged. Even such strange Rights of Free Education will not be available to those who are forced to study in private schools due to bad or unworthy conditions of the government schools (Ref Clause 8a). If the children in private schools will have to continue to pay the fees as before then is this Act not cutting an ugly joke on the children?
- To fulfill the conditions of the Act Government will surely appoint teachers but they will be temporary, untrained and 'para teachers' on contract appointment. There is no provision to bar appointment of 'para teachers' (*e.g.* contract teachers, guest teachers, *shiksha mitra*, *shiksha upasak* etc.). This leads to a conclusion that the teachings in government schools and low economy private schools will be left to invisible forces. The question arises whether education of children in this country can be carried out satisfactorily without creating a cadre of permanent, trained teachers with a respectable salary.
- The Act has not intentionally defined the qualification, salaries and other terms and conditions of the teachers. The Government can take whimsical decisions on these and related issues as per their own convenience. This will lead to creating chaos in Education. This year's budget has clearly indicated that appointment of 'para teachers and low paid teachers in private schools' and their exploitation –financial and otherwise - will continue.
- The standards of student –teacher ratio and room sizes have been fixed in such a way that it is clear from the data circulated by NUEAP (National University of Educational Administration and Planning) that around 40 percent primary schools (with less than 60 enrolments) will continue to have two teachers and two rooms. What it means is that the existing practice of one teacher-one room with several classes will continue. The same conditions will be applicable to about 30 percent of the schools (with less than 90 or 120 enrolments). That is to say that in future also the practice of educating poor children of two or three classes in the same room will be continued in a shameful way.
- The Act permits the engagement of Government school teachers in non-academic activities like Panchayat to Parliamentary elections, census, relief works during disaster

management etc. This means that the children in private schools will be taught everyday whereas the classes for poor children will get interrupted and disturbed due to the involvement of the government school teachers in non-teaching activities. This way the students of the Government school will continue to be unfavorably discriminated against and made to suffer.

- The Act does not prohibit enhancement in school fees by private schools. This allows them to enhance the fees in uncontrolled and arbitrary manner. The Act does not require the private schools to follow government guidelines or to allow participation of parents, social workers etc in managing the affairs of the school. In fact the HRD Minister Kapil Sibbal has already announced that after the Act is implemented the laws prevailing in different States with respect to monitoring the management and the fee structure of private schools will automatically become redundant. In such a situation the education will become dearer.
- The Act talks nowhere about measures required to check ever increasing inequality and discrimination in education. Just as a follow up the Government is encouraging further widening of the gap. In such a situation only poor children will be left out in the Government schools with more and more discrimination and miseries. As a result of the implementation of the Act every child will have a formal right to education but poor ones out of them will be destined to have an extremely low quality education and level of dissatisfaction to ultimately drop out from the school education. (Government, by this Act, has ensured a freedom for itself from all responsibilities of ensuring a minimum amount of learning to children by the time they reach 5th or 8th class).
- The Act providing free education to 25 percent poor children in private schools is being publicized as a big achievement (The tuition fees, for such children, will be paid by the Government). But it is cunningly silent on how the poor children will pay the fees other than the tuition fees which are charged by the private schools. The Act is also silent on the modalities, guidelines or criteria for selecting poor students under this provision. It means that it has been left out entirely to the whims and fancies of the private schools to devise ways and means of selection in arbitrary manner. Bigger question than that is whether quality education will be provided to the poor children admitted under this provision. No such possibility exists simply because a majority of private schools are themselves below standard. Added to this is a question about what will happen to those (~75 %) who will be left out. They will be forced to continue with low quality 'namesake' education only. In any case such children will be dumped on the street after 8th class because there is no responsibility of the private schools under the Act for educating them any further.
- The Act provides for education up to class 8 without appropriate formal evaluation of the students. This means that children in Government and low economy private schools will be pushed upwards up to class 8 with half education or no education at all. Class 8 certificate earned in this manner, for sure, will not help them in admission to higher classes.
- The Act provides for mother tongue as medium of teaching only if it is 'practicable' for the government. For selected few, English has been left anyway as medium of teaching. Therefore, the education with double standards has been allowed to continue.
- There is neither the intention nor a will in this Act to control profit making and commercialization of education. Opposed to this the Government, under the guise of public-private-partnership (PPP), is inviting capitalists, NGOs, religious organizations and helping them by allotting government land, money, and other direct and indirect concessions to allow them higher profit making by charging arbitrary fees, employing low paid teachers and paying taxes under concessional rates.

- The Act is silent on the quality of teachers with the B.Ed and D.Ed. Degrees earned from an ever flourishing high-cost private colleges which are infamous for awarding degrees without conducting proper teaching/ training programmes.
- The privatization, commercialization of higher education and ever rising coaching business is continuously on the rise. HRD Minister Kapil Sibbal has already announced that syllabus for Science and Mathematics for Class 11-12 and the entrance test for different technical courses (Engineering, Medical, Management etc) will be the same for the whole country. It is clear that this will add class 9-10 students also to the increased coaching business for some, whereas the number of poor children will be diminishing in the higher classes in the same order. This Act legitimizes the multi-layered discriminatory system of education as a permanent arrangement and has no scope for common syllabus or common entrance examination.
- Government will have a moral right to introduce common syllabus or common entrance examination if and only if it replaces the present Act by an appropriate law to establish common school system in which every school - government or private-will be a neighborhood school (CSS-NS) and every child-rich or poor-will receive education under the same roof without discrimination. The world history is replete with evidences that the countries which educated their whole population followed common school system one way or the other. But this Act takes the country in reverse direction.
- A new Bill is being brought to Parliament for permitting foreign universities to enhance commercialization of education, profit making and exploitation of resources which will result in continued mismanagement of and misrule in higher education.
- One more danger. The Union Government has tabled a proposal to GATS (General Agreement on Trade and Services) under WTO (World Trade Organization) with the intention of converting higher and professional education as a saleable item. If this is not withdrawn immediately the foreign universities/ institutions will claim to have the same or higher level of facilities in comparison to the Indian Universities / Institutions in India. In addition the Government will be under compulsion to provide legal protection to the foreign universities.

From the aforesaid facts it is clear that the Right To Education Act 2009, being implemented *w.e.f.* 1st April 2010, is nothing but cheating and deception of Indian public. Under the guise of this the Government is making fool of the Indian public by expanding commerce, trade and profit making in Education. This, in turn, will lead to deprivation of education to the children of common people and accelerate number of suicides by them. Under the circumstances, the Indian youths will be compelled to move further towards increased unemployment, inequality, violence and extremism. Do we desire to make this type of India?

Let us come together to oppose both the so-called Right To Education Act and the Foreign Universities Bill. Let us raise our voice against trade and commerce in Education and work for the right of equal opportunity in education to all the children of this country. Let us agitate and fight to make the Government to repeal the present Act and fulfil its constitutional responsibilities by formulating a new law for equitable quality free and compulsory education for all under CSS-NS system.

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