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REMEMBERING JUSTICE SACHAR

In Justice Sachar's demise, the nation has lost one of the last representatives of the generation that carried forward the socialist vision from the freedom movement for the post-independence India. He would be remembered for his uncompromising commitment to building a secular, just and democratic society where civil liberties and democratic rights of all sections of society, particularly the oppressed castes and classes and women and the disabled, are protected as per the Constitutional mandate.

For All India Forum for Right to Education (AIFRTE), Justice Sachar has a special significance since he stood firmly with the vision of Free and Equitable Common Education System from 'KG to PG' and resisted the prevailing policies of privatisation and commercialisation of education. He raised the moral stature of our March to Parliament in February 2010 and led AIFRTE's resistance in December 2015 to WTO-GATS being given a license to convert India's higher education into a tradable commodity in the global market.

Justice Sachar's Committee Report (GoI, 2006) is probably the only official document that established how the majority of the muslims of India have been left behind in socio-economic development. As per the report, this disparate development of the muslim masses is the primary cause of their unacceptably low representation in legislature, judiciary and executive and also in various services, including administration, police, armed forces and educational institutions. It marked a paradigm shift through the introduction of the concept of 'socio-religious community' ('SRC'), which recognized the heterogeneity within Muslim community as the most important social phenomenon for policy formulation. Thus, in recognising that the vast sections of the muslims are socio-economically equivalent to the Scheduled Castes and OBCs, the Justice Sachar Committee Report provided an insightful sociological tool to transform the destiny of the muslim citizens in nation-building. Further, if implemented, its recommendation that all public institutions should maintain a 'diversity index' of recruitment, admission and participation and that the same should be linked with the funding criteria would have democratized entire public life, not only for Muslims, but for the entire society. His demise has offered a historic opportunity to all of India's citizens having conviction in the Constitutional values to reflect upon the Report's far-reaching insights and resolve to raise the consciousness of the people to persuade the ruling dispensation to implement the report in letter and spirit. The All India Forum for Right to Education (AIFRTE) and its 75 member-organisations in 22 states salute Justice Sachar's relentless pursuit for protecting the democratic, just, egalitarian, socialist and plural vision of Indian society.

- All India Forum for Right to Education (AIFRTE)

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