

Interference of Government in Higher Educational System

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❖ University autonomy and academic freedom are twin concepts that have been well-accepted in the context of higher education as part of the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression. Justice Frankfurter of the U.S. Supreme Court, as early as in 1957, had stated in the context of university autonomy in *Sweezy's case* that a university has the right to decide what to teach, who to teach, how to teach and who to admit for teaching as part of the first amendment: the right to freedom of speech and expression. Therefore, in the West these principles enabled universities to have maximum autonomy in academic matters, including courses taught and degrees offered.

❖ These universities have also been able to maintain supremacy in global rankings as they frequently introduce innovative courses. In 1947, these principles also found acceptance in the Indian Supreme Court when the eleven-judge Constitutional Bench in the *T.M.A. Pai* case quoted with approval the report of the Dr. Raddhakrishnan Committee (The UGC Committee), which stated that universities should be free from governmental interference. It said-Institutions of higher learning controlled and managed by governmental agencies act like mercenaries, promote the political purposes of the state, make them acceptable to an increasing number of their population and supply them with weapons they need. We must resist, in the interests of our own democracy, the trend towards the governmental domination of the educational process.”

❖ The Central government enacted the UGC Act in 1956 to determine and maintain standards of teaching and research in universities. The UGC was also constituted to provide funds to institutions of higher education. At the time of enacting the Act there were very few universities – only about 58 – compared to the number today. Most of them were public universities, either owned by the Centre or by States. There were no private and deemed universities and the conferment of a regulatory body. Later, as the number of private universities and the conferment of deemed-to-be university status to many educational institutions grew, the number of universities in India multiplied manifold. This necessitated the need for a regulator.

❖ Not a single India institution of higher learning figures in the list of top 200 universities prepared by *The Times Higher Education Supplement*. These dismal rankings are quite often taken as a measure of the crisis of higher education in India, notwithstanding the obvious limitation of the ranking exercise. But all is not well with India universities. So far, the Narendra Modi government has done very little to address the crisis in higher education. The government started on a controversial note. Prime Minister

Modi's selection to head the Ministry of Human Resources and Development (HRD) raised questions about the importance of education under this dispensation as it showed scant regard for education in spite of the fact that the Singh Parivar takes education very seriously.

CONCLUSION- The common syllabi particularly at a time when the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is spearheading the agenda of the present government. Even though the right-wing intelligentsia has failed to provide a credible account of India's past and present, the Singh Parivar is nevertheless busy reorganising educational syllabi to reflect a view of history and society gleaned from mythology and religious texts, in effect giving an open licence to fantasise history.

References

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