

**SPEECH OF MRS. D. PURANDESWARI, MOS (HRD) AS
CHIEF GUEST AT THE 2 DAY NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
“EDUCATION FOR ALL: POLICIES AND PRACTICES” TO BE
HELD AT THE WORLD PEACE CENTRE MIT CAMPUS, PUNE
ON THE 5TH AUGUST, 2006.**

Mr. Chairman Sir and other distinguished guests and friends,

It gives me a sense of immense pleasure to have been invited here today as the Chief Guest of the two day National Conference on ‘Education for All’ because besides getting the benefit of your considered opinion on this subject of topical importance. I would also have an opportunity to share my perception with you.

OBJECTIVE OF EDUCATION

Few global goals have as consistently and as universally been supported as the notion that every child in every corner of the world should have complete exposure to modern education. The World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien in 1990 set this process in motion by adopting that the goal of Universal Primary Education be achieved by 2000 AD. The World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 reaffirmed and extended this commitment. Universal primary education with complete gender equity in primary and secondary education was affirmed again in the same year as Millennium Development

Goal. Education to my mind is not only a goal in itself but it is a powerful driver of social change. Combined with sound macroeconomic 'policies, education is fundamental for the construction of globally competitive economies and democratic societies. Education is key to creating, applying and spreading new ideas and technologies which in turn are critical for sustained growth. It augments cognitive and other skills and in the process leads to higher productivity and development. Education builds what the Noble Laureate Amartya Sen rightfully calls "human capabilities" and it is one of the most powerful instruments known for reducing poverty and inequality and for laying the basis for sustained economic growth and sound governance.

ROLE OF TEACHERS

In order to ensure that a meaningful education is imparted to our children, it is essential that right type of teachers and instructors are put in place. Teacher education programme generally train our teachers to adjust to a system in which education is seen as a mere transmission of information and knowledge is treated as information 'given' by the teacher and taken by the taught without question. In this system there is very little leeway for inquiry, initiative and innovation. A successful teacher is he who can motivate his students to discover their

latent talents, to help them realize their physical and intellectual potentialities to the fullest, to develop character and to imbibe the desirable social and human values. A teacher who does not measure upto this standard will leave no indelible impression on the society at large. We in India have had a rich record and long history of teaching and learning. “Guru – Shishya parampara” is exclusively unique to Indian ethos. Be it learning of music or archery or techniques of warfare or for that matter worldly or spiritual knowledge, we have traditionally regarded learning as a collective wisdom landed down from one generation to another through Guru – Shishya Parampara) If in yesteryears Texila or Nalanda were acknowledged centers of excellence or learning it was merely an acknowledgement of collective effort and wisdom of our ancestors.

KNOWLEDGE CENTURY

The 21st Century is acknowledged by all as the “Knowledge Century” which means that Knowledge or brain power should be reflected in a country’s competitiveness, advancement and human capabilities Human capabilities are a function of the well-being of a people and the investment we make in human capital formation. The ability of a nation to make best use of its knowledge or brain power will ultimately determine its place in the comity of nations in the present century. Lifelong learning

education should therefore be a high priority for all. Based on the four pillars of learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together, it provides the enhanced opportunities that are essential for full citizenship in the knowledge society. It is fundamental to the development of a nation. It builds the base for economic and social development, develops the capacity of individuals to contribute to and benefit from that development, sustains and enriches both individual and overall culture of a nation and builds mutual respect and understanding that transcends cultural differences.

EDUCATION COMMISSION 1948-49

With the attainment of the Independence the limited role of education introduced by the colonial rulers outlived its utility and lost its relevance. Soon a demand grew up for a new educational system which could address the needs of a country in the changed political scenario. Accordingly in 1948 the Government of India appointed the University Education Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the illustrious philosopher statesmen of the country. The Commission identified some major defects of the prevailing educational system which, *inter alia*, were the absence of linkage between education, productivity and economic growth, and absence of emphasis on character formation and promotion of moral and spiritual

values conducive for the development of a democratic and equalitarian society. The Commission duly recognized education as a critical input in human resource development which was essential not only material for welfare and prosperity of an individual but also for developing the moral and spiritual qualities of the younger generation and to promote the latest potentialities of dynamic social and political leadership. The commission submitted a comprehensive report on educational reforms for the country's development and growth.

EDUCATION AS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

Article 45 of the Constitution of India provided that the State would endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of this Constitution, free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years” but it could not effectively direct the States to universalize elementary education. It was only in 2002 that the 86th amendment was made to the Constitution in 2002, inserting article 21A in the Constitution which authorized the State by law to provide compulsory education to all children between to fourteen years age. The contemplated legislative intervention envisaged in Article 21-A will bring about a metamorphosis in universalizing education on a mass scale.

THE COMMON MINIMUM PROGRAMME:

The Common Minimum Programme of the UPA government under the leadership headed by Smt. Sonia Gandhi Ji for the first time decided to give a direction to our new requirements and increase the expenses in the development of human resources to 6 percent of our GDP. True this percentage is not in self a very substantial amount when compared to some of the developed countries like England, Japan, Germany and France all of which allocate a much higher percentage on this account. In actual practice, however we have not been able to provide more than 3% so far. But we are unmistakably on our way to redeem our pledges in this regard. Through a massive expansion of education, the present government wants to empower the vast majority of our people who for centuries have been deprived of their rights and privileges.

SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

The main vehicle at present for providing elementary education to all children is a comprehensive programme called Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), which was launched in 2001-02. This programme has been built upon the experience of several primary education programmes that preceded it including the

District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP), and Lok Jumbish Project (LJP). It is a partnership programme between the Central and State Governments, which seeks to improve the performance of the school system through a community-owned approach, with specific focus on the provision of quality education. SSA is a time-bound mission, with the objectives of ensuring Universalization of Elementary Education and bridging of gender and social gaps by 2010. It addresses the needs of 209 million children in the age group of 6-14 years. 9.72 lakhs existing primary and upper primary schools and 36.95 lakh existing teachers are covered under the Scheme. Major indicators of achievements of SSA till March, 2005 include: opening of 1,77,677 new schools, construction of 77,342 school buildings and 1,43,358 additional class rooms supply of free text books to 5.77 crore children; and appointment of 3,86,458 Teachers . In addition 90,165 drinking water facilities were provided, and 1,20,710, toilets constructed.

National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary level(NPEGEL), is an important component of SSA, which provides additional support for girls' education in educationally backward blocks by way of girl-child friendly school, supply of stationery and uniforms to under- privileged/disadvantaged girls. In the Tenth Five Year plan, an amount of Rs.1064.80 crore has been earmarked for this programme. Another important

component of SSA is the Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS&AIE), which is specially designed to provide, to children in school-less habitations and out-of-school children, access to elementary education. The scheme supports flexible strategies for out-of-school children through bridge courses, residential camps, drop-in centres, summer camps, and remedial coaching.

Since the introduction of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2001, state governments have reported a significant decline in the number of children not attending school. When the programme began, the number of out-of-school children in India was estimated to be about 39 million; since then, this figure has fallen steadily, and in November 2005 it was reported to be around 10 million.

SSA was launched to ensure that all children between the ages of six and 14 would attend school and receive quality elementary education within a fixed time period. Central outlays for SSA were increased from Rs 1,600 crore in 2001 to R 7,156 crore in 2005-06. A 2 per cent education cess was levied from 2004 to provide additional finances for elementary education.

I concede that hundred percent success in universalizing education has yet to be achieved and for that we have to pay focused attention to two problems.

One greater availability of quality school infrastructure-i.e. classrooms, toilets, teachers, teaching-learning material and a learning environment that is conducive to learn. Two most children are not learning at a deeper level and schools are not able to help every child to discover and realize his/ her full potential. This is true not just for rural government-run schools but also for urban schools, which are better resourced. The huge dropout rate is symptomatic of these problems. Unless we take care of these inadequacies, success will continue to elude us in this regard.

No doubt we must get more money flowing into elementary education and the flow of fund will not be problem. But more money alone will not make a difference unless only it is utilized effectively. Therefore, both governance and effectiveness in the education delivery system need to be improved. In time bound programmes like this, outcome is more important than the outlay.

Then we have to reform the curriculum in such a way that it encourages deep learning. Currently, education is largely rote based which does not let the child think independently. NCERT

has recently brought out the National Curriculum Framework 2005, but action is required at state level to translate the intent into reality. Every state must bring out its own curriculum framework to help schools and teachers assess what is worth teaching, how to teach it and how to measure what the child is learning. And this effort must reach the district, block, cluster and school levels.

These and many other issues will be thrown up for deliberation in this forum and I hope there will be meaningful discussions thereon which will benefit us all.

The present Government is convinced that education can be great lever in building up an egalitarian society and provide a level playing field to all for development and growth. The task is gigantic and challenging which requires sustained efforts on the part of us all but the magnitude of the problem need not dampen our spirit. Let us remember the famous Chinese proverb that a journey for two thousand miles has to begin with the first step. Keeping in view the spirit of this problem let us march forward towards the desired goal of education for all which will really make 'India shining' in the true sense of the term.

Before I end, I convey my best wishes to the MIT school authorities for their laudable objective to train up educated and

motivated band of youth who could provide selfless and dynamic leadership to the country. I wish all success on this grand endeavour.

Jai Hind.

SPEECH IN THE ANNUAL DAY CELEBRATIONS OF THE SCHOOL

It gives me a great pleasure to be present here to-day to participate in the annual day celebrations of the school.

Education plays a pivotal role in a country's development and growth. It holds the key to political, social and economic progress and promotes national integration in underdeveloped and developing countries. As rightly emphasized by the Education Commission a well-developed and well integrated educational system can be an effective means of national development if it is related to productivity, strengthens social and cultural bonds, hastens the process of modernization and strives to build character by cultivating moral and spiritual values. We have, therefore, been paying adequate attention to draw up an organized educational system which could take care of our special needs as a developing country. While the educational progress in terms of quantity has been impressive, we somehow missed the qualitative aspects of the educational development. Partly because of our failure to organize proper man-power planning and partly due to an imbalance in the provision of facilities between general and technical education our schools and colleges have been turning out large number of pupils with general education courses which were not employment- oriented. The result is a phenomenal increase in the number of educated unemployed persons in the

country which clearly points to a defective educational planning and performance.

We have, however, come to realize that educational system needs vocational bias and terminalization, which do not exist at present. Education at the primary and secondary stages has been rapidly developing no doubt. But in the absence of vocational bias at the secondary level, students are proceeding to higher education pursuing degree course in general education resulting in the creation of surplus manpower who do not fulfill the productive requirements of the country. Diversification of education at secondary education would reduce the pressure on higher education. Provision of vocational training facilities in agricultural and industrial schools after eighth standard would reduce the pressure of secondary education and enrich the vocational stream. Vocationalization and terminalization of education at the middle school level and secondary education level is essential to gear up educational development for economic growth.

The Education Commission rightly advocated the introduction of work experience at all levels of education, primary, secondary and higher. Work experience means participation in productive processes, learning the dignity of manual labour, social and national service and community living. These indeed were the prime principles of Gandhiji's programme of basic education that constitutes the first attempt in India to synthesize the dignity of manual work with the power of intellectual learning. The emphasis at the elementary stage

will be on free and primary education, elimination of wastage, and work orientation of the curriculum. At the secondary stage, the provision of vocational education of a terminal character and the strengthening of science teaching and technology will receive special attention.

In order to correct the imbalance between the general education and technical education facilities in the country we want to take up vocationalization of education as one of our core programme. The idea is that at the termination of secondary education a child is not left to his fate in his endless search for a gainful employment. On the contrary he would be fully equipped with effective vocational training to take a profession of his choice. This is our commitment to the nation and we shall make sincere efforts to achieve this goal. Vocationalization alone will put our country finally on road for growth and generate huge employment opportunities for our youth.

Education is a means of social and economic empowerment, which can work wonders in the country's march forward towards growth. China has attained the high growth rate and one important reason is that the adoption of vocational education on a universal scale. If we follow the same route, success will undoubtedly be ours.

With these words I thank the Principal and management of the school to give me this chance to share with you my thoughts on matter of topical importance.

@ @ @ @