I have been heading a University Recognised Management Institute for the past 20 years; in the capacity of its Director. During these years, I have found that in the name of decentralisation, actually more and more centralisation has taken place in the higher education sector. Thus, clearly we are moving in a reverse gear. As the director, I have to interact and deal with a dozen government offices to get the job done, which is like an obstacle race. My fees are decided by Shikshan Shulka Samiti. My admissions are through the state government C.E.T. with a further cap that I have to get my merit list approved by Pravesh Niyantran Samiti. I have to select and recruit my teaching staff through a University Selection Committee prior to which my roster is approved by three agencies namely the B.C. Cell of University, Council Hall and Mantralya. I have to give fee concessions to reserved category students while they take admissions into my Institute, but I have to claim and recover their fees from District Social Welfare Office by following a tedious, cumbersome and lengthy process. Further while my institute is 100% non grant self financing one, the said fee reimbursement from the District Social Welfare Office takes 3 years thus blocking my funds to the tune of Rs. 1.40 crores at any given point of time. At the other end, I have to pay salary to my teaching and non-teaching staff by following 6th Pay Commission Norms. Thus, it could be seen that I have hardly any control over selection of my students, staff or deciding my fee structure. My precious 75% time is lost in administrative hurdles leaving only 25% time for teaching and research. Director of an institute could be termed as “Lambi Race Ka Ghoda!”

From the above case study, it could be inferred that Permit Raj has been prevailing in the education sector for a very long time and unless the same is abolished, it is not possible to improve the quality of education that is being imparted to the students. As per S.J.T.U (2015) rankings, there were 144 American, 44 Chinese and only 01 Indian universities in the List of Top 500 Universities globally. In fact, China has got more obstacles in terms of its language, culture and political ideology and system as compared to India, yet they have been able to completely revamp their education system at par with the world standards during past 12 years. It could be further noted that the one Indian university which is there in the top 500 list is Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore which has been founded by Sir Jamshedji Tata, the doyen of Indian Industry. In the top 20 management institutes of the world as per Financial Times, London Rankings, the situation is really good. There were 3 Indian management institutes, namely I.I.M. Ahmedabad, I.S.B. Hyderabad and S.P. Jain Institute, Mumbai which are all autonomous. Thus privatisation and autonomy of Indian Education Sector is most important.

Educational reform bills as per the recommendations of National Knowledge Commission (N.K.C.) and Prof Yashpal Committee have been kept pending for past four and half years. They must be immediately taken up by N.D.A. government for debate and clearance both in the Loksabha and Rajyasabha. Government has to inject foreign investment and private sector investment to upgrade Indian education sector. This sector must be revamped on the basis of equity, expansion and excellence. Indian universities must get educational, administrative and financial autonomy. Let there be 1500 universities, 1 university per district, 100 affiliated colleges per university. G.E.R. in higher education must be raised from 18% to 30%.

Let there be campuses of foreign universities like Harvard, Stanford, Berkeley, Cambridge, Oxford, Yale, Cornell, Columbia in India. Allow corporate houses like Tata, Birla, Ambani, Mahindra, Kirloskar, Bajaj, Kalyani to open up their own private universities. Let foreign and private universities compete with IITs, IIMs, state and central universities. Let there be open competition.

Today, 6.5 lakh Indian students go abroad annually spending 4 billion dollars worth of foreign exchange. Instead of brain-drain, we can start the reverse flow if we can open up Indian education sector and make it vibrant and competitive. We have to remember that the way to superpower goes through the knowledge corridor of this country. India got its political freedom in 1947, economic freedom in 1991 and we are still awaiting educational freedom even in 2016!

Let “Saraswati” be liberated on the lines of “Laxmi”.

Regards,

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