

The article “University Autonomy in the Context of New Education Policy” is of only academic interest and has been included on the basis of a paper presented in a seminar on “University Autonomy” organized by the Punjab University Teachers Association, Chandigarh, in January 1986.

Anyway, the issue of university autonomy in this context has been highly controversial. This article is obviously based on the original document which has since then become “The Programme of Action” and not the “Challenge of Education”. There can, however, be no dispute with the author’s stress on decentralization of the system at various levels.

Education in human values is of paramount importance and universities are pledged to “upholding and propagating universal values – human dignity, freedom, liberty, compassion, fraternity, charity, tolerance and such other cherishable virtues. Accordingly, the university structure is so constructed that people who apparently possess the desired universal values, that is teachers, form the pivot around which a university revolves. The teachers are expected to uphold and propagate the universal values, ideally speaking, even against severe odds.” The three suggestions made by the author in this regard are worthy of consideration by all.

This book is in fact a collection of various published and unpublished articles and give us a peep into many issues strictly from the point of view of the author. One would disagree that the primary responsibility of a teacher is to teach and that the existing knowledge is meant to be transmitted to young minds. There is certainly a need for better teacher-student interaction and the teacher has a role beyond teaching. He has to be an agent of social change for the amelioration of society and the progress of the nation.

I must commend the article on the role of the mother tongue and the regional language which the author has highlighted in a forthright manner. Since the days of Macaulay, we have not given a place of pride to our own languages, particularly in the realm of higher education. Departments have come up, pious decisions have been taken and much of slogan-mongering has been resorted to in the name of regional languages, in reality, nothing tangible has been achieved.

The book contains some articles on science, scientists and scientific temper, including one on the Delhi Declaration On Nuclear Disarmament. Another article is on astrology. These are in fact old, old areas of discussion. One may or may not agree with views of the author but one thing is clear that they have been expressed in a clear and concise manner.

The last chapter “The Critic, Performer, and the System” stimulates the thinking of the reader to form an opinion about the role of critic vis-à-vis performer.

Appendices provide the proper background for understanding the viewpoint of the author on the various issues.