

Comment on

“Developmental Democracy through Education: Production of New-Fangled Subjectivities and Corpulent Psychic Economies”

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1. This is not a complete paper but a draft of an incomplete monograph (book? report?) of which few chapters still remain to be written. Therefore, as a draft, the different sections seem disjointed, often connections are not clearly evident and many more important things are still unsaid. So it is very difficult to comment on a paper (prospective book? report?) like this, because all the time you have to guess about the unspoken half.

2. The paper interrogates the concept of higher education in India and examines the idea of higher education for a developmental agenda in the context of global capital and culture. In the process Anup revisits the idea of the university and liberal education in the West, especially, the Humboldtian movement, and enlightenment idea of education and university as formulated by Kant. In next few sections Anup explores the idea of education as governance, as advocated by various commissions and governmental bodies on education. He also examines Amartya Sen's theory of Capabilities-Functionality in this context.

3. I think Anup is right when he says that the modern idea of the university arose in Europe because existing universities were considered moribund and tied too deeply to religious interests of the church. Hence the emergence of the Humboldtian movement with the common goal of discovering new knowledge and combining teaching and research. While the North American universities followed the Humboldtian model, the genealogy of Indian universities are completely different and perhaps have no connection with Humboldt. A proper understanding of higher education in India should properly map out this genealogy. In the first place, Indian universities when they were founded had absolutely nothing to do with teaching, research or discovery of new knowledges. They were administrative machineries set up to conduct examinations. They remained essentially undemocratic, corrupt, bureaucratic institutions distributing patronage. Calcutta University, for instance, was a personal fiefdom of a particular family for long years and till recently continued to be a fiefdom of one person in the ruling left party. The point I am making is that answer to the question what universities have become in India does not lie in any enlightenment principle at all.

4. While it is true that Humboldt offered a new model, in Indian imagination Oxford and Cambridge remained the epitome of learning and education. Bengalis, for instance, have always had a deep reverence, admiration, awe and adoration for Oxford and Cambridge and that continues to the present. Bengalis even today hanker for a degree from these universities and are happy no end even if they get a seminar invitation from these institutions. A degree from England is still a matter of great pride and sociologically a mark of distinction and status. The second point I am making is that higher education is not something, simply imposed from above, as Anup seems to think, but it is a system which strangely gets 'integrated' in a complex fashion with the imagination and expectation of a society and its people. In

other words, study of higher education cannot simply be done by selecting large historical blocks, but has to investigate the capillary structure of social cohesion and conformity. That is why my plea for a genealogical analysis. Durkheim, who wrote a lot on education (he used to work in the education department) maintained that as each society has a morality that is generally adapted to its needs, so each society has one or more methods of education corresponding to the collective needs. One might, of course, argue at this point that the 'needs' are fabricated, engineered, projected by vested interests, or argue in terms of production of desire, ideological state apparatus and so on but this issue needs to be addressed. Translated in to Kantian terms Durkheim's formula for education was that each of us must be subject to the authority of educational discipline, which is essentially social even when it is moral, but this subjection must also be desired by each of us, because it alone enables us to fulfill our goals. In other words subject of education in India cannot be understood through any enlightenment principle, but this subject has to be comprehended in terms of hierarchy, patronage and Brahminic system of ranking. In my view that is the way subject of education is constituted and recognize him or herself.

5. Kant published *The Conflict of Faculties* in 1798 after the death of King Friedrich Wilhelm II, when Kant felt himself liberated from the censorship which that King had imposed over Kant's publication *Religion within the Boundaries of Moral Reason* in 1793. *The Conflict of Faculties* is Kant's paean to academic freedom – the conflict it describes is not the abstract conflict between faculties of mind but a concrete conflict between university faculties. More precisely, it is an argument for the freedom of the "lower" faculty of philosophy and the "higher" faculties of theology, law, and medicine, especially, the first of these. Kant believed philosophy faculty was training students in the "public use" of reason and hence the necessity of freedom. This, obviously, has no connection with Indian university system.

6. In Europe, enthusiasm for the university system was not the same everywhere, and France, for instance, preferred *grandes ecoles*, which bypassed the normal university system. Universities like Sorbonne ranked low in the esteem of the students compared to *Ecole Normale Supérieure*. In India rough equivalent of *ecoles* could be IITs and IIMs, which have performed better than universities. While Indian universities are worthless and ineffectual institutions, IITs and IIMs have generally shown better results by conventional standards. The question is whether institutions which are unlike the university can play a positive role in higher education.

7. Anup characterises the logic of development discourse in terms of capitalocentrism and orientalism. I think theoretical reach of the concept "orientalism" is so wide and extended that after a point the concept loses its utility. I have a suspicion that "internal orientalism" is by far the most problematic feature of the post-colonial predicament. It is very difficult for both Indians and outsiders to think, about India outside of orientalist habits and categories. The consequence is not simply a sort of lag, where political independence runs ahead of intellectual independence. Rather, the very cultural basis of public life has been affected (and infected) by ideas of difference and division that have colonial and orientalist roots. Whether it is the matter of language and literature, communalism and the census, or caste and social science, education and learning, orientalist theory casts its shadow over cultural politics in post-colonial India even though the specific politics of colonial domination are no longer relevant. This irony is at the heart of the "postcolonial predicament," namely that a theory of difference that was deeply interwoven with the practices of colonial control lives on in the absence of foreign rule.

8. Orientalism without colonialism is a headless theoretical beast, that much the harder to identify and eradicate because it has become internalized in the practices of the postcolonial state, the theories of the postcolonial intelligentsia, and the political action of postcolonial mobs. Moving beyond orientalism is one of the more pressing needs of contemporary scholarly investigations. The option that has been opened by the critique of orientalism is an option to shape a critical theory of our contemporary practice. Such a project is well within the bounds of Foucault's mandate in his later work to pursue "a permanent critique of our contemporary age." Though Foucault did not ground what he meant by a "permanent" critique either methodologically or theoretically, a permanent critique can be assured by the continual return to the task of unveiling the complex contradictions of modernity and its associated academic practices.