

**EDUCATION AND REVOLUTIONARY PRAXIS  
- THE CASE STUDY OF ANTONIO GRAMSCI**

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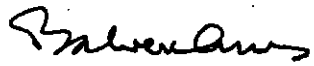
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Declaration

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled "Education and Revolutionary Praxis - The Case Study of Antonio Gramsci" submitted by Mr. Ajay Kumar, is in partial fulfilment for the Degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree in this or any other university and is his original work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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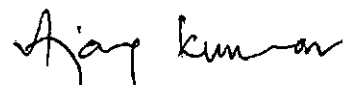
To Manoranjan Mohanty, for teaching me the papers in research methodology, for compelling me to understand the world undogmatically, for linking academics with 'the praxis' which constitutes the endless struggle for human emancipation.

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(AJAY)

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### (A) GENERAL SCHEME OF THE PROJECT

The objective of this project is to study and explore the dominant form of Antonio Gramsci's (1891-1937; an Italian Marxist) ideas on education in the light of his theory of 'cultural hegemony' and 'revolutionary praxis'\*. In Gramsci's scheme, education has no direct bearing on revolution. On its own, it cannot bring about a fundamental restructuring of society. But for Gramsci, the task of education is to equip the masses both with the general training for life and the experience of revolutionary practice. Moreover, it is in the revolutionary practice that human beings develop some of their crucial abilities. Education equips the masses with some general capacities without which revolutionary praxis is impossible. By this 'general capacity' we mean "the fundamental power to think and ability to find one's way in life". (Selections from the Prison Notebooks (SPN); 1971, p.26). The purpose of this paper is to critically examine, as such, Gramsci's views on the political functions of educational process, cultural symbols and meanings, and how he addresses the relation between education, culture and power i.e. the problem of hegemonic struggle.

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\* I have preferred to use the concept 'revolutionary praxis' rather than 'revolutionary change'. The obvious reason is that the concept 'revolutionary praxis' signifies a more 'practical' thematic stand.

There are various reasons for taking up this project. There has been a growing reception of Gramsci during the 1970's and 1980's. There has been a multitude of enterprises in the area of political theory based on Gramsci's work. But not much work/research has been done on his educational ideas. Only Harold Entwistle (1979) has written a book on the implications of Gramsci's educational ideas. But his account of Gramsci is rather too 'conservative' (stressing the need for 'precision, discipline, order, standards and "sobriety" in schooling, p.107). Entwistle's work is gratuitously hitched to an ultimately misplaced polemic against Gramsci and 'current neo-marxist educational theory'. Entwistle confuses the conjunctural specificity of Gramsci's observation on education with the larger arguments about knowledge, language, culture and ideology that his thoughts as a whole can help sustain. Secondly, Entwistle's observations are exclusively focussed on the formal education (i.e. schools and vocational education) only. Here, in this project, I have tried to analyse his educational ideas in a much larger perspective including all those informal sectors like culture, language and symbol in general; media, party, intellectuals and the state in particular.

In a different way, Madan Sarup (1983) has devoted a single chapter on 'Gramsci, education and social change' which is insufficient (hardly sixteen pages) and which is incomplete in many respects. He discusses only few topics: e.g. the role of teachers, the functions of school and different methods of

pedagogy (p.131). Sarup has given only general outlines and lacks rigour of indepth philosophical analyses. Both Entwistle and Sarup, it seems, are interested more in using Gramsci for the sole purpose of personal, political or intellectual clarification and less in the illumination of Gramsci's ideas into any other rythm than his own. Any theory of education is developed in response to the demands of particular social, historical context and therefore, must be understood only in relation to this. The punctuations of any educational theory had to be theorised 'internally'-in terms of theoretical identifications of its own socio-historical contexts, to the specific needs and aspirations. Without understanding his "whole system" view, it is impossible to grasp Gramsci's educational purposes. Since some of Gramsci's original context, the needs and aspirations embedded therein are found even in our own Indian context, I have taken the liberty of trying to draw out some of the implications of his ideas in the contemporary Indian context. But this will be done cursorily and admittedly, with little depth. Some of the topics worth analysing in the Indian context will include examination of classroom teaching, content and curricula, emergence of Hindu Revivalism and its relation with education and finally, the problem of 'autonomy' being given to few public schools.

Gramsci does not provide a proper theory of education or ideology. Much of his writings on education are in part a reaction to the Gentile Reform of Education (1923) introduced by



the fascist regime in Italy. As a result, Gramsci comes to provide us some principles regarding educational problems. It is from these principles and observations on Gentile Reform and his other essays on 'Intellectuals', 'State and Civil Society' and 'the Philosophy of Praxis', that I will try to sketch an educational theory. His writings provide us deeper insights of education in the cultural sphere. For example, we find statements like, "every relationship is a pedagogical relationship" or "education as an activity and initiative in political and cultural hegemony" (SPN: 1971, p.258). Gramsci's resistance to Mussolini, his stress on the role of critical thinking, individual action and thought in history, his vision that workers create their own intellectuals, educational and cultural institutions - all this makes an agenda for this project. I would mainly rely on his 'Notebooks' during his prison years. His pre-prison writings and activities will be referred only occasionally ie. only when they help to clarify some points stemming from the 'Notebooks'.

This project consists of five chapters analysing Gramsci's contributions. The first chapter is a general introduction of the project. The second chapter deals with Gramsci's writings on formal education found in twenty odd pages in the 'Notebooks'. Though Gramsci makes a passing remark on some of less significant things like school buildings, teacher-pupil ratios, examinations, general facilities in schools, I would like to concentrate on four major basic subjects like functions and purposes of schools,

content and curriculum; Discipline, instruction and role of teachers; and vocational schools. These subjects constitute all the mainstream educational debates: the relation between education and class; the problem of specialisation and vocationalism; the ideology of education and division of labour; elite school and the "comprehensive" school. These aspects will demand from us the main premises upon which a theory of education can be constructed. Gramsci's notes on 'Education' consist of three levels at which educational activity occurs. These are: elementary education ('genacio'), secondary schools ('liceo') and the university. Teachers are involved in the process of producing, transmitting and justifying public knowledge. They do this explicitly via the curriculum and implicitly through the organisation of school. Course content, teaching styles, grading procedures, power relations entered into, are all means whereby the formal educational system makes its contribution to the consciousness of students, his personal identity and social roles and to the store of public knowledge, public values and public culture. Gramsci's views in these matters change in their emphasis as well as in content as we move from lower stage of education to higher stages in education. Nevertheless, there runs consistently a coherent theme aiming 'development of critical thinking' as the major function of schooling. This function is integrated with technical knowledge of production at higher stage of education.

Gramsci's opposition to the Gentile Reform of education will also be discussed in this chapter. Gentile reform claimed to be progressive because it was based on the principle of 'child-centred' pedagogy and 'vocationalism'. Gramsci was opposed to the Gentile conception of 'child centred pedagogy' and 'vocationalism'. However his opposition to Gentile reform is taken as a case of conservatism by Harold Entwistle (1979). By 'conservatism' I mean a structural inclination for the 'status-quo' as opposed to radical change. Gramsci's ideas about education are supportive of radical change, though only indirectly. I will try to demonstrate in this project that his educational ideas are 'progressive' and not 'conservative'. He was right in opposing the 'psuedo-progressive' perspective operating in Gentile reform : labelling the central problem of life as 'poverty' rather than as 'oppression'; identifying the cause of poverty as the self-inflicted 'deficiency of the poor, rather than oppression; proposing, as treatment, to change the behaviour of the individual through transmission of information and skills; converting progressive political methods into a 'neutral' classroom technique, 'autonomy' of institutions, emphasis on 'specialisation'; and defining 'action' as coping activity.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with education considered as a part of the 'superstructure' i.e. the Marxian notion of 'base' and 'superstructure'. Education and culture are active dimensions of hegemonic politics. Education and culture take part in the real

processes of social life at various planes like consciousness, ideology, language, symbols etc. Part of this chapter will be concerned with some theoretical perspectives/formulations on relation of these with education. Education in the wider context of consciousness, language, ideology and hegemony shapes the historical present. Account of all these processes will be theory-based because the real is not immediately given. Although science is about the world and its real objects, the object of scientific knowledge are abstracted theoretical objects. The real social world is chaotic and complicated. There are numerous competing causal chains interacting with each other. To understand it, to appropriate it theoretically and intervene practically, we must begin with simplified models and theories. With this theoretical endeavour, we would like to reconstruct some theories of consciousness, common sense, ideology, language, hegemony, state, intellectuals, party, media, texts and symbols in these two chapters. Topics like state, intellectuals, party, factory councils, media, text's and symbols are put under a separate chapter, since they are the agents through which effective changes can be brought about. The role of these agents constitutes the transforming power of education in society. The working class organic intellectuals and their political, cultural and educational organisations can help to give a direction to radical social change. The modern bourgeoisie state, unlike the pre-bourgeois state, has become a "cultural" or "ethical" state in "as much as one of its most important

function is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural or moral level, a level or type which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces of development, and hence to the interest of the ruling classes" (SPN : 1971 P.258). But the relative autonomy of the cultural state provides a terrain for ideological hegemonic struggles. It allows space for the various agents (mentioned above) to bargain in the hegemonic struggle. Dialectics and history expose the real limits of a situation and then suggest means for the transcending of them. Hence, to put it straight, in these chapters, we are going to draw our attention to the question of how intellectual change with help of various agents, can be effected in the people who live their lives, within an ideological hegemony. This presupposes an examination of the role of the agents, necessity of further work on the ideological content of common sense, its contradictory elements and potential weak points, to elucidate the positive content in the semiotics of common-sense, language, symbols and other sign systems and finally, to find out their consistency in the 'totalising' notions of the party, the intellectual and the 'philosophy of praxis'.

Finally, in the last chapter, we are going to discuss Gramsci's contribution to development of Marxism. Our basic aim is to find out whether his educational theory in the light of his political theory can be regarded as a modification rather than an

abandonment of Marxist theory. Marxism sees 'practice' or 'conscious' human activity as mediating between mind and matter-between the subject and the object. On this premise of Marxist 'science and praxis', we would like to examine the thoughts of Gramsci and see whether his thinking is historically correct in its ability to intervene successfully in the causal mechanisms of the world. This chapter is an evaluative study of how education and consciousness arise out of and are shaped by historical practice e.g. dialectics. Proceeding from a rigorous textual analysis of 'Prison Notebooks' and the 'Comintern Marxism', we find that Gramsci has given a new set of vocabulary and punctuation different from 'comintern Marxism' and this is what constitutes his contribution to Marxism. Our task in this chapter is to see how Gramsci could bridge the gap between socialist ideology and 'spontaneous consciousness' which Lenin and Lukacs could not do. Finally, I would like to locate some fruitful areas for future research in Gramsci's educational thought.

(B) QUESTION OF POLITICS, EDUCATION AND REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE : A  
BACKGROUND

Before I examine Gramsci's ideas in the next chapters, I would like to delineate the background to some of the principal issues in Marxist theory of education that I shall raise. Broadly speaking, according to Michael R. Matthews<sup>1</sup>, there are two approaches to radical school reform: (1) the first focusses

on content; (2) the second on procedures. The first is concerned with curricula content by exposing myth, combating folklore, superstition, nonsense and ideology in educational programmes and substituting critical thinking, class analyses, socialist and counter-hegemonic values etc. The second approach believes in altering the relations of power and control within schools as key to altering consciousness. These radical reforms are concerned only with the formal education and not with the society as a whole. In these approaches education is considered as one among the many intervening variables in social change. Recently, sociology of education has experienced a major shift in its emphasis. Previously, it was concerned primarily with the social background of students and their placement in the hierarchy of work roles. More recent approaches concentrate much on the nature of the educational experiences that students go through during their school and university life. It is now understood that social relation, though shaped by the economic system 'in the last instance' (a phrase used by Althusser), are also shaped by pedagogical interactions between teacher and pupil, curriculum materials and school rituals. With all these perspectives in mind, this work is going to address the complex world of educational politics, through an examination of different types of educational categories available in Gramsci's work.

In Gramsci's thought, politics figures philosophically as the central human activity, the means by which each individual's consciousness is brought into contact with the social and natural

world. (SPN: 1971, P.XXIII). In fact, Marxist educational theory is essentially a theory of 'practice' --- to change the 'nature', 'society' and the 'man'. The question of politics, education and 'revolutionary change' is basically related to this central question: 'Does education legitimise the established patterns of socio-economic relationship, or is it supportive of change. There has been a return to the practices of education itself (as in the works of Peire Bourdieu, Passerson, Basile Bernstein), whether these do or donot reproduce the dominant (i.e. bourgeoisie) behaviour and values. Writers like Michael Apple (1979) and Jean Anyon (1981) concentrate on social practices within schools which relate to transmission of dominant class ideologies. In their work, educational system is considered as relatively autonomous superstructure allowing space for dynamic changes in the structure of social consciousness. Thus the emphasis shifted here is on schools as 'cultural'-not as economic institution which was the basic argument of the 'correspondence theory'. Put briefly, the 'correspondence theory' in education sees school as the microcosm of the larger society. That is "its organisational and social relationships accurately reflect the economic, political and social norms of the wider society and its disciplines and pedagogial routines socialise the young towards acceptance of the economic and social status-quo"<sup>2</sup>. In many of the Marxian writings like Bowles and Gintis (1976), there has been an absence of 'contradictions' in their scheme of 'correspondence' theory, and in this sense,



they are 'deterministic' rather than dialectical.

By contrast, the 'contradiction theory' in education suggests that even the educational system has its own contradictions which help in developing a critical attitude towards the society and the educational system itself. Education does not form a 'closed information system but rather, is a historical messenger'. Contradictions in education can illuminate the process of change by pointing to disjunctures between the schools and the economy. The ingenuous process by which the educational system reproduces itself is alterable. It creates different attitudes and mentalities which often question the legitimacy of the system. Gramsci's theory of education goes a step further than these two theories by propounding new concepts like 'contradictory consciousness', 'intellectuals' and 'hegemony'. A 'Hegemonic' educational system is an 'open' system allowing for 'contestation' and 'compromise' among various competing value-systems. It is the role of intellectuals (mediation) and the historical (dialectical) relationship between the objective conditions of the life of men in and outside schools and the way they perceive them (contradictory consciousness). All these provide space for social and educational change. Michael Apple (1979) identifying his own analysis closely on Gramscian lines argues that not only does economic structure not ensure a simple correspondence between it and schooling, but rather, the schools help recreate conditions

for ideological hegemony to be maintained.<sup>3</sup> Hegemony is not a closed system but rather a negotiable process between various competing forces. Hence hegemony/counter-hegemony whether in the civil society or in the educational system, does not come itself. It must be worked for by intellectuals in particular sites such as, the family, the workplace, schools, universities, media, and other working class social, cultural and political institutions. This is the crux of Gramsci's educational, cultural and political thought.

Michael Apple argues that the educational system themselves are the producers of culture and ideology. Like the workplace, educational processes are also full of contradictions - but it is a process where contradictions compete with each other. It provides a terrain for contestation and struggle.<sup>4</sup> The emerging structure after contestation and struggle of contradictions becomes the hegemonic structure. Thus contradiction and hegemony do not annihilate the opposite elements but they simply transcend them. 'Contradictions' and 'Correspondence' (Compromises) exist side by side within a hegemonic dominance. Pedagogical relationship between teachers and students, curriculum materials and school rituals, hidden ideological interferences with the curriculum and actual educational practices are the primary contradictions in this reproductive process. Gramsci's suggestion for radical reform in education is - focussed both on content and procedure. "Schooling must be studied, on the one hand, as a part of critical theory of society which is logically

prior to and inclusive of a radical theory of education. On the other hand, schooling must be seen not only as a part of 'global' dimension of oppression, but it must be studied in its own right,.... Proponents of a genuinely radical educational theory will have to spend more time in understanding how the many variables at work, in the classroom encounters and pedagogical interactions reproduce and contradict the prevailing ideologies and social relationships in the larger society".<sup>5</sup>

The 'structural determinism' of in educational theories should be examined critically --- where consciousness loses its capacity as an active force, and the socio-cultural forces that mediate between the forces of production and consciousness are also lost. Schools are primarily sites of 'active cultural sphere' which function both to sustain and to resist the values and beliefs dominant in the society. However, there is disagreement over whether social reproduction relies primarily on the production and reproduction of ideology - or - on the reproduction of division of labour and social relations of production. Despite this disagreement, there is a consensus on the assertion that ideology and production are difficult to separate, nor are they mutually exclusive. Both the 'Gramscian' and 'Althusserian' approaches to reproduction and education are not mutually exclusive, though their point of emphasis is in two directions. Gramsci's concept of hegemony is an all encompassing concept in which the 'structural dominance' (Althusser) is

securely withheld. Hegemony is equated to the dominant ideological forms and content which requires that the dominance of a social group be continually renegotiated in accordance with the fluctuating economic, cultural and political strengths of the subordinate classes. Ideology and consciousness play an important role in capitalist development in all states, whether it is a weak state or a strong state (i.e. the various amalgam of 'consent' and 'force' - as the basis of state). The process of achieving the legitimacy of the state does provide some space for ideological and hegemonic struggles. Thus schools, universities, workplace, media, party and other associations provide a site for these struggles.

Apart from the 'content' focussed and 'procedure' focussed strategy for radical educational reform, the question could be seen from another paradigm. An alternative paradigm is given by T. J. La Belle<sup>6</sup> (1976). He makes a useful distinction between "DEPRIVATION - DEVELOPMENT" strategy for social change and "DEPENDENCY-LIBERATION" strategy. The former is based on a psychological view of disadvantage (deprivation) and prescribes behaviour modification (development) as the solution. The latter explains disadvantage as the result of structural inequalities that create dependency and propose to increase the power of the masses/oppressed (liberation) as a solution. In case of Gramsci, the power of the masses can be increased by generating critical thinking among them and giving them a historical orientation. The "deprivation - development" strategy is the crux of the

'pseudo progressive' educationist's argument. It provides a route out of the liberal dilemma of how to handle radical politics. By suggesting that poverty is self-inflicted and not a product of history (oppression), that the major problem is lack of skills rather than historical or structural constraints, the pseudo- progressive educationists succeed in by passing the political aspect of Antonio Gramsci. It is precisely through 'adaptation and adoption' to the tradition, culture and historical knowledge of laws of nature and society, that Gramsci emphasises development of "general culture" (as way of living) and "critical thinking". Radical politics demands abolition of cultural or knowledge monopolies and of privileged forms of schooling. This would establish a change in the in-group relations of the school, a switch from competitiveness to cooperation allowing more open and active relationship between school and society, between the intellectual and the "masses". It presupposes a mutually enriching and active dual relation between the teacher and the taught, between man and society.

Though there are several versions of the several concepts embedded in particular debate or historical reference, and that no chronological or unilinear description of his ideas in 'Prison Notebooks' is possible, it is necessary that his ideas should be understood in the context of the intellectual climate of Italy at the beginning of the century. The dominant influence was a neo-Hegelian philosopher, Benedetto Croce, and throughout his life

Gramsci conducted a sustained 'dialogue' with him. What Gramsci learnt from Croce was a view of history that embraced all human activity - art, economics, morals, philosophy and politics. It was Croce who pointed attention to the importance of culture and thought in the development of history, and to the function of intellectuals in society. He also took his antipathy to 'positivism' and 'economic determinism' from Croce. In short, Croce provided the framework within which Gramsci was to carry out his adaptation of Marxist ideas to the circumstances of Italy in the early 20th century. Besides Croce, the main influences on Gramsci's thinking were : Hegel (State and Civil Society); Machiavelli ('The Prince'); Marx (base and superstructure); Labriola ('Philosophy of Praxis'); Luxemburg ('Spontaneous uprising'), and Lenin (Jacobinism).<sup>7</sup> In rejecting economic determinism and other mechanistic version of Marxism, Gramsci moved away from the fatalistic interpretations that were common at his time. A socialist transformation or revolutionary change was defined by him as the militancy of the communist party, along with expansion of democratic and hegemonic control. An essential element in Gramsci's political philosophy was that the revolution, and the preparation for it, would involve profound change in the consciousness of the 'masses'. It is this understanding of the cultural aspect of social relations, the importance of education and its relation to politics, that makes Gramsci's contribution to Marxism so outstanding.

## NOTES

1. Michael R. Matthews (1980): 'The Marxist Theory of Schooling' (pp.9-10) (Harvester Press).
2. Harold Entwistle (1979) 'Antonio Gramsci-Conservative Schooling for Radical Politics' p.87 (RKP, London).
3. M.W. Apple (1982) 'Education and Power', (RKP, Boston) p.1.
4. Ibid., p.27.
5. Henry A. Giroux (1981) 'Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling' pp.78-79 (Philadelphia : Temple University Press) - It is one of the best analysis of dialectics in Education.
6. T.J. Labelle (1976) - 'Goals and Strategies of Non-Formal Education in Latin America' Comparative Education Review 20(3) : 328-345. Quoted in Krishna Kumar (1989).
7. James Joll (1977) - 'Gramsci', p.72 (London, Collins).

## CHAPTER 2

### GRAMSCI'S IDEAS ON EDUCATION

The essays on 'The Intellectuals' and 'On Education' are found together in Gramsci's original manuscript (Quaderno XXIX, ff.I-12). Both these essays stress the democratic and class character of intellectual function through schools (SPN: 1971, Introduction, p.3). Both the essays underlie his study of history and particularly of the 'RESORGIMENTO'. Philosophically, its premise is that 'every man is an intellectual' and it is the 'organic intellectuals' who perform an essential mediating function in the struggle of class forces. Since many of Gramsci's ideas are at the centre of educational debate, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the dominant ideas found in these two chapters and various other chapters, in order to construct a educational theory. To be sure, Gramsci's relevance lies precisely in his treatment, within the context of his radical political theory, of all those theories which concern the formal educational system. They are: sociology of curriculum, the apparent discontinuity between the culture of the school and that of daily life, problems of language and literacy in education, the role of state in the provision of education, the cultivation of elites and the role of intellectuals, the relative functions of authority and spontaneity in education and the ambiguous relationship of these to different political ideologies (especially Fascism), problems of vocational education, the place



of theory in the curriculum and its relationship to action in the world outside the school; and in particular, the consideration of those theories in relation to the education of the working class. "It is the revolutionary and historial perspective which structures his whole analysis of educational activity" (SPN: 1971, Introduction, p.25). According to Sudipta Kaviraj, in the readings of Hegel and Marx "history appears as a story of human beings rising to self-consciousness and therefore getting some kind of increasing control over their collective destiny".<sup>1</sup> In this sense, Marxian science is a theory of history, theory of self-consciousness and social change. With this perspective of tapping of the originality of the masses' consciousness and thinking process through the mediating role of intellectuals, Gramsci attaches great significance to the question of politics, education and revolutionary change. In his introduction, Quintin Hoare writes that, "(Gramsci) starts by suggesting the terms of a Marxist historicist approach to philosophical activity seeing it as organised critical reflection on existing forms of thought and their relation to the actual world which produced them. The premise behind this approach is that philosophy is not just the abstract cogitation of a few professional intellectuals but a concrete social activity in which, implicitly, all men are engaged." (SPN, p.321). His criticism of the Gentile reform of education introduced in Italy in 1923 by the fascist regime and which claimed to be progressive) should be seen in the light of his personal situation, history and philosophy. Quintin Hoare

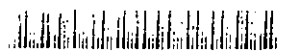
writes that "the apparently "conservative" eulogy of the old curriculum infact often represents a device which allowed Gramsci to circumvent the prison censor, by disguising the future (ideal system) as the past in order to criticise the present. In a different way, Gramsci's insistence on the values of discipline and work in education must also be seen in terms of his own history. He was far from being hostile to the Rousseauesque tradition in education, though he was critical of it". (SPN : Introduction, p.24).

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There are many other contradictory interpretations of Gramsci's writings on education. The difficultutes of interpretation arise for many reasons. Firstly, Gramsci was trying to work towards new concepts with an old vocabulary. Secondly, he was writing in prison and had to disguise his concepts to pass the fascist censor. Thirdly, after Gramsci's death his work was again censored and adapted by the Italian Communist Party leadership to justify the Party's tactics. Because of their variety as well as their fragmentary nature, the 'Prison Notebooks' provide texts to support many different interpretations of Gramsci. Some writers present Gramsci as a theorist with a non-Leninist policy. Harold Entwistle and M.F.D. Young convert Gramsci into a 'liberal philospher of education'. But it will be seen that Gramsci, far from being these, sought to develop a genuine Leninist political practice - both in terms of intra-party norms and of responsiveness to the spontaneous activity of he masses". (SPN:1971, Introduction, p.XIV).

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Gramsci believed that masses organised by intellectuals under a party, working in cooperation with different but allied historic blocs, can become (of their own volition) a force in the dialectical process. His observation on traditional schooling and Gentile reform, and his views on education of the working class through the role of factory councils, party organisation, and various cultural symbols, institutions constitute an integrated comprehensive theory of education which is fully consistent with the requirements of revolutionary praxis. Geoff Eley contends that it was too simplistic to categorise Gramsci as a traditional educationist.<sup>2</sup>

#### FUNCTIONS AND PURPOSES OF SCHOOL

By school, Gramsci generally means the 'common school' or 'comprehensive school' or 'school of humanistic formation' (taking the term "humanism" in a broad sense rather than simply in the traditional one) or education in 'general culture' during childhood. Gramsci in particular talks about formal elementary and high school stage education and sometimes he gives little references about university education. He is also concerned with vocational education and the informal education of working class through agencies outside formal educational system. There is no formal age prescription, but he writes: "the fixing of age for compulsory school attendance depends on the general economic conditions, since the latter may make it necessary to demand of young men and women, or even of children, a certain immediate

productive contribution" (SPN:p.29). The general stages which Gramsci talks about are (1) 'Ginnasio' - whose Indian equivalent would be primary and elementary education, (2) 'Liceo' - high school and (3) the University (ibid., pp.30-31). Common school pertains to the first two of these stages. It "aims to insert young men and women into social activity after bringing them to a certain level of maturity, of capacity for intellectual and practical creativity, and of autonomy of orientation and initiative" (ibid., p.29).

Gramsci's 'Notes' on schooling are, however, an inconclusive interrogation about the kinds of educational practices which he thought desirable and necessary. That is why, much of his writing is concerned not with existing reality but with a possible one. For this reason some of his 'Notes' on education appear prescriptive. For example, when he talks about the 'common school'/'humanist school'/traditional school' (Gramsci uses these terms interchangeably), he writes that "it was designed to develop in each individual human being an as yet undifferentiated GENERAL CULTURE - THE FUNDAMENTAL POWER TO THINK AND ABILITY TO FIND ONE'S WAY IN LIFE" (SPN, p.26). But it must be recognised that some of Gramsci's views on the formal education arise out of his own time and place. They may be irrelevant in western capitalist system, but they are certainly relevant today for third world countries, especially India where the social condition are similar to those of Italy of his time.

In Italy, there existed a prosperous industrial north, alongwith a backward peasantry in south. In India also, there exist few industrial pockets along with large backward areas of rural peasantry. Gramsci is important for us in that he raises some crucial question about education and culture which are relevant for the western systems also, but at the same time, it must be accepted that many of these questions are left unanswered.

For Gramsci, the purpose of schools is to develop a critical consciousness thorough intellectual application. He argues that the school curriculum should provide not only the basis of knowing what is (its not similar to the concept of 'banking knowledge'), but also the means whereby such a reality may be 'transcended'. The aim of education is to guide people so that they may come to know and transform the world (i.e. applicition is necessary). Gramsci provides a rational integrated theory of education (schooling) which ought to adopt the following lines:

- 1) "First, a common basic education, imparting a general, humanistic, formative culture; this would strike the right balance between development of the capacity for working manually (technically, industrially) and development of the capacities required for intellectual work.
- 2) From this type of common schooling, via repeated experiments in vocational orientation, pupils would pass on to one of the specialised schools or to productive work". (SPN:1971, p.27).

Gramsci observed that in modern civilization practical 'activity' and sciences had 'become' quite complex and interwoven that each practical activity tended to create a new type of school for its own executives and specialists. This technical requirement of the society associated with the educational system was further complicated by the ruling class in the process of differentiation and particularisation taking place chaotically, without clear, precise principles, and a consciously established plan. The crisis of the curriculum and organisation of schools, i.e. of the overall framework of a policy for forming modern intellectual cadres, was "to a great extent an aspect and a ramification of the more comprehensive and general organic crisis". (SPN: 1971, p.26). A rational solution to this crisis was the development of the common school system based on the lines discussed in the preceding paragraph.

Apart from these aims, the school should also meet the practical requirements of the society. Thus Gramsci writes:

"The last phase of the common school must be conceived and structured as the decisive phase, whose aim is to create the fundamental values of "humanism", the intellectual self discipline and the moral independence which are necessary for subsequent specialisation - whether it be of a scientific character (university studies) or of an immediately practical - productive character (industry, civil service, organisation of commerce etc.). The study and

learning of creative methods in science and in life must begin in this last phase of the school, and no longer be a monopoly of the university or be left to chance in practical life. This phase of the school must already contribute to developing the element of independent responsibility in each individual, must be a creative school". (SPN:1971, p.32)

Another main object of schooling is to develop complete knowledge of a common standard form of national language, one's own tradition, history, philosophy and culture and to raise national literacy for mass cultural action:

"If it is true that every language contains the elements of conception of the world and of a culture, it could also be true that from anyone's language one can assess the greater or lesser complexity of his conception of the world. Some one who only speaks dialect, or understands the standard language incompletely, necessarily has an intuition of the world which is more or less limited and provincial, which is fossilised and anachronistic in relation to the major currents of thought which dominate world history. His interest will be limited, more or less corporate or economic, not universal. While it is not possible to learn a number of foreign languages in order to put oneself in contact with other cultural lives, it is at the least necessary to learn the national language properly. A great culture can be translated into the language of another great culture, that is to say a great national language

with hisotric richness and complexity, and it can translate any other great cutlure and can be a world-wide means of expression. But a dialect cannot do this". (SPN:1971; p.325).

It is generally acknowledged that linguistic domination of one group or nation implies cultural subordination of another group or nation. One implication for the (organic) intellectuals is that their task in schooling the working class children lies in developing in them the mastery of language skills. Gramsci was aware that the culture of the working class child's family is often discrepent with culture transmitted by the school. He believed that with the mediating role of the teachers working class children's own sub-culture could be bridged to the mainstream culture. In this process the teacher's primary role was to enforce linguistic knowledge and accuracy and to transmit an understanding of the mainstream culture. This discipline (strict enforcement to learning) is necessary for poor, working class children especially in countries like India, where there is lack of general facilities in majority of primary and secondary schools. For this one reason there is high rate of school drop-outs and very small percentage of enrolment in Indian schools. Though Gramsci talks of necessity of improvement in school facilities, at a more practical level, he emphasised discipline at the initial stage of schooling to compensate lack of general facilities in schools. In elite (convent) schools the gap between the school culture and the family culture is sharply



distinguished. So Gramsci, emphasised that common schools should equally teach ones own tradition, history and philosophy. He writes:

"The starting point of critical eloboration (the basic aim of education) is the consciousness of what one realy is, and is "knowing thyself" as a product of the historical process (and tradition) to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory" (SPN:1971, p.324) (words within brackets are my additions).

Similarly, he writes somewhere else, emphasizing the need to teach philosphy in schools:

"The traditional descriptive philosophy backed by a course in the history of philisophy and by reading a certain number of philosophers, in practice seems the best thing. Descriptive, definitional philosphy may be dogmatic abstraction, just as grammer and mathematics are, but it is an educational and didactic necessity". (SPN:1971, p.41).

And he further writes:

"The philosophy of an age is not the philosphy of this or that philosopher, of this or that group of intellectuals, of this or that broad section of the popular masses. It is a process of combination of all these elements, which culminates in an overall trend, in which the culmination becomes a norm of collective action and becomes concrete and complete (integral) "history". (SPN:1971, p.345).

Another function of schooling was to foster cognitive 'baggage' or 'equipment' and provide pscho-physical training to the pupil. Gramsci emphasized learning not only as a 'process' but also as a 'product'. Gramsci wrote of the Italian elementary school before the fascist educational reform of 1923. "Previously, the pupils at least acquired a certain "baggage" or "equipment" (according to taste) of concrete facts. Now that the teacher must be specifically a philosopher and aesthete, the pupil does not bother with concrete facts and fills his head with formulae and words which usually mean nothing to him, and which are forgotten at once' (SPN:1971, p.36). This means that schooling, then, was concerned with acquisition of cognitive capacity. Schooling was also work, a training in pscho-physical training. There could be no learning without effort, drill, even drudgery: "Would a scholar at the age of forty be able to sit for sixteen hours on end at his work-table if he had not, as a child, compulsorily, through mechanical coercion, acquired the psycho-physical habits" (ibid., p.37). Gramsci's emphasis on language, tradition, history and philosophy as central concern of curriculum implies that there be a continuity with the past in order to reconstruct the future. 'For Gramsci there is no so-called proletarian culture or working class cultures to be idelaised, absolutely discontinuous with the historical cultural mainstream. In this respect he is at one with the traditional Marxist-Leninist position'.<sup>3</sup>

Gramsci was not a historicist in the sense of believing in inevitable outcomes of the historical process. His attitude was that of 'voluntarism' the "conviction that men could influence events, the historical developments were not pre-ordained, that in history none could necessarily predict that the oak tree would grow out of the acorn".<sup>4</sup> Voluntarism here implies the relatively autonomous space of human action, consciousness and historical will (orientation) of a class. The study of the history in school is not merely an experience to be enjoyed for its own sake; it is indeed, the essence of education (SPN, pp.34-35):

"It provides basis for the subsequent development of an historical, dialectical conception of the world, which understands movement and change ..... and which conceives the contemporary world as a synthesis of the past, of all past generations, which projects itself into the future".

In fact, Marxist Leninism views that the only adequate cultural resource for the development of revolutionary practice was history language, tradition and philosophy - what had served as the substance of the humanist school. Even according to Lenin, the proletarian culture could only be created by 'reworking' the traditional culture rather than rejecting it.<sup>5</sup>

Another dimension of schools function was an enterprise for enlarging the component of good sense within common sense. Good sense is the positive potential of common sense, it is a state of mind in which common sense is purged of its superstition and

folklore and given a coherent unity through exposure to philosopher's philosophy not by rejecting folklore but by using it. "It is simply the sound pedagogy to derive philosophy, science, history, etc., in the classroom from popular folklore and commonsense"<sup>6</sup>. The importance of schooling lies in its pursuit of this objective:

"The school combated folklore, indeed every residue of traditional conceptions of the world. It taught a modern outlook based essentially on an awareness of the simple and fundamental fact that there exist objective intractable natural laws to which man must adapt himself if he is to master them in his turn - and that there exist social and state laws which are the product of human activity, which are established by men and can be altered by men in the interests of their collective development". (Notebooks, p.34).

For Gramsci, then, the purpose of schools is to develop a critical consciousness and self awareness in its historical totality, through intellectual application to participate in the mainstream national life. And participation in the mainstream national life was a democratic necessity. He did not say that changes in the educational system alone was a tool for revolution. Some social scientists hold that it was through changes in education that society should be transformed. This is liberal dilemma of how to handle radical politics. This notion over emphasises the role of schools; the educational system does

not possess the power to do this. Though Gramsci believes that one of the main functions of the school is the creation of working class organic intellectuals who will develop among the masses a critical self awareness and consciousness, he also argues that the struggle for changes in the school must be concurrent with other counter-hegemonic struggles.<sup>7</sup>

#### CONTENT AND CURRICULUM

In his essays on education, there is no attempt to outline, systematically a programme of subjects for the curriculum. What Gramsci does, again paradoxically, is to praise many of the good elements of traditional Italian elementary school, which he believed to have been significant as a matter of principles in education. As we have seen in the last section, Gramsci insisted on a kind of 'humanist' common school to prepare students in 'general culture' (a way of living). He emphasised the role of intellectual application to build a democratic national life with the study of language, tradition, philosophy and history. Gramsci's emphasis on certain elements of old Italian school like curriculum, retaining many old contents and mode of teaching emphasizing, instruction as against 'spontaneity' has raised certain controversy about him. Some scholars have charged him of being a 'conservative', 'traditionalist', 'reformist' or 'bourgeois philosopher' of education. We will see that Gramsci was a true revolutionary, far more pragmatic in his advocacy of educational principles.

The term 'curriculum' refers to the amalgam of the content of a topic, the manner in which the content has been codified in a textbook, and the manner in which the teachers interaction with students ultimately shapes the transmission of the content. It is generally understood as the prescribed kind and nature of syllabus in the schools. In the technical pedagogic parlance current in Indian circles of educational research and training, content is treated as the core of the curriculum. In Gramsci's case critical and constructive action is not confined to the textbook teaching of rudimentary language, tradition, history and philosophy. His major emphasis is on active teacher-pupil relationship shaped by actual life conditions. All these subjects should be included in the syllabus (apart from the scientific and technical subjects) at various levels of schooling e.g. 'gennasio' (elementary stage), 'Liceo' (high school) and university. In Gramsci's scheme, the roles played by the teacher and pupil, and the conventions of the pedagogy they have to follow - is an active teacher-pupil relationship. "Truly active participation of the pupil in the school can only exist if the school is related to life. The more the curricula nominally affirm and theorise the pupil's activity and working collaboration with the teacher, the more they are actually designed as if the pupil were purely passive". (SPN:1971, p.37).

The purely physical and graphic aspects of the textbook or curriculum does not tell us much about its educational function. Gramsci's emphasis on teaching of history, culture, tradition,

philosophy and language has to be seen in this perspective. Just because these subjects were also included in the old Italian school curriculum, H. Entwistles charges Gramsci of being conservative. But Gramsci was not a conservative in the sense of status-quoist. In order to make sense of the 'text' contained in it, we would have to deal with the words that make up each lesson, though we will not be looking at words in the way a linguist would. Words concern us in terms of the units of meaning they form, the images they convey, and the worlds they evoke. Gramsci's emphasis on teaching of history, philosophy, tradition and language was not similar to those in the curriculum of Indian schools. For example, Indian History curriculum is confined mainly to the chronology of rulers and their policies.<sup>8</sup> Even improved texts (history curriculum reform in Indian took place in 1980s) continue to present history as knowledge independent of a point of view, as a body of facts not as what E.H. Carr (1964) calls "a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts"<sup>9</sup> or what Gramsci calls "an active 'teacher-pupil' relationship, 'man and nature' relationship.

In a pedagogical interaction, what meanings will be learnt by pupil depends upon the way in which power is used by the teacher to indicate approval for assigning significance. In Gramsci's writings there is insistence on teachers' supremacy in the technical sense (due to superiority of knowledge) and not in the sense of domination. 'Even discipline' on the part of

teacher giving instruction is a qualified category in Gramsci. It is not a mechanical discipline: "In fact the common school should be organized like a college with a collective life by day and by night, freed from the present forms of hypocritical and mechanical discipline; studies should be carried collectively, with the assistance of the teachers and the pupils, even during period of so called individual study etc." (SPN:1971, p.31). In the successive stages of schooling relation between learning, curriculum and discipline continues to be free, active and creative. "From the school, where his studies are subjected to discipline that is imposed and controlled by authority, the pupil passes on to a phase of study or of professional work in which intellectual self-discipline and moral independence are theoretically unlimited. And this happens immediately after the crisis of puberty...." (ibid., p.32).

The school curriculum and instruction at the elementary stage may be a little similar to the conception of 'received knowledge' or 'banking knowledge', but it has to be more autonomous, spontaneous and creative from high school onwards. Thus he writes: "The study and learning of creative methods in science and in life must begin in this last phase of the school and no longer be a monopoly of the university or be left to chance in practical life. This phase of the school i.e. high school (lecio) must already contribute to developing the element of independent responsibility in each individual, must be a creative school". (ibid., p.32).



Even the apparently conservative prescription as regards curriculum at elementary stage has modernizing function. It retains the first instrumental notions of schooling i.e. reading, writing, sums, geogrpahy, history, grammer and mathematics. Those instrumental subjects are indispensable as they form the fundamentals for successive stages of education. At the elementary level, the child cannot be left to chaotic, unprincipled, unsystematic influence and politics of the environment, or to be more specific, to the socio-economic system. Teaching of civics has a modernising influence and thus needs to be included in the curriculum: "...in addition to imparting the first "instrumental" notions of schooling-reading, writing, sums, geography, history, ought in particular to deal with an aspect of education that is now neglected - i.e. with "rights and duties", with the first notions of state and society as primordial elements of a new conception of the world which challenges the conceptions that are imparted by the various traditional social environments, i.e. those conceptions which can be termed folkloristic". (ibid., p.30).

The didactic problem is one of mitigating and rendering more fertile the dogmatic approach which must inevitably characterise these fist few years of schooling. The last few years of common school, as we have seen just earlier, they are more creative catering to actual, genuine autonomy. The justification for this kind of elementary stage curriculum as given by Gramsci are thus: "Scientific ideas (as in the curriculum of rudimentary natural

science and civics) were intended to insert the child into the 'societas rerum', the world of things, while lessons in rights and duties were intended to insert him into the state and into the civil society (both state and civil society are modern phenomena). The scientific ideas the children learnt conflicted with the magical conception of the world and nature which they absorbed from an environment steeped in folklore; while the idea of civic rights and duties conflicted with tendencies towards individualistic and localistic barbarism-another dimension of folklore. The school combated folklore, indeed every residue of traditional conceptions of the world. It taught a more modern outlook based essentially on an awareness of the simple and fundamental fact that there exist objective, intractable natural laws to which man must adapt himself if he is to master them in his turn". (ibid., pp.33-34) [words in barkcets are my additions].

Hence, the first step is entry into modern state and civil society (bourgeois revolution) and then its re-construction in a revolutionary perspective (proletarian revolution). Gramsci's relevance is primarily associated with the situation of Italy of 1920s and 1930s. But, still it applies to Indian and third world situation - existence of a vast backward peasantry along with few highly developed industrial regions. The majority of the third world population is deprived of eiter an adquate or a continuous education, Gramsci's success in school and university culture lies basically in the role of intellectuals, the teachers.

Thus, it has been noted that the problem of 'education', 'learning', 'autonomy', instruction, 'spontaneity', and 'child-centred' education are misrepresented theoretical constructions of Gramsci. One cannot be sure, even empirically, as to what results would each categories yield in different circumstances. For example, 'instruction' and 'discipline' are necessary among the working classes. They may not work well with the children of elites who have all luxuries. Hence the central point in content and curriculum is basically related to the question 'what is worth knowing'. It is a question of learning and identify. The problem of 'worth knowing' and 'identity' should, essentially, be related to the actual life conditions. Thus Gramsci writes: "The truly active (lively and interesting) participation of the pupil in the school...can only exist if the school is related to life. The more the new curricula nominally affirm and theorise the pupils activity and working collaboration with the teacher, the more they are actually designed as if the pupil were purely passive". (SPN:1971, p.37).

The history curriculum represented as 'facts' (chronology of rulers and their policies, which we discussed earlier) is a part of the wider view that all school knowledge is 'fact'. This view not only informs the prevailing curriculum policy but also shapes the perception of the teachers role. This 'factualism' is prevalent in teachers training also. For example, in India, neither curriculum policy, nor teacher's training acknowledges the impact that the composition of a class (in terms of students'

social background) has, on teacher-pupil interaction and on the meanings generated in these interactions. The implication of this 'history as facts' approach is mechanical discipline, the treatment of all learners as an undefined group by the teacher and irrelevance of the social background to which the learners belong and the points of view that these backgrounds shape. Gramsci was very much opposed to the exercise of such mechanical discipline by the teachers and such purely encyclopaedic (fact instilling) role of intellectuals (teachers). He writes:

"The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, "permanent persuaders" and not just simple orator (but superior at the same time to the abstract mathematical spirit); from technique as work one proceeds to technique as science and to the humanistic conception of history, without which one remains "specialised" and does not become "directive" (specialised and political)". (SPN:1971, p.10).

Gramsci's proposal for common school presents a significant example of the influence of the sociology of knowledge on the school curriculum. An important aspect of his proposal was the teaching of history, civics, tradition, language and philosophy of two levels of cultures existing side by side, e.g. on the one hand, the high culture or the national culture and on the other, the "mass" culture, the "folkloristic" culture, or the "sub-

altern" culture. A parallel distinction has been drawn in Indian case by Milton Singer and McKim Marriott.<sup>10</sup> They talk of "Great traditions" and "Little traditions" which constantly interact with each other. In symbolic terms, by proposing such a curriculum, Gramsci was advocating the allocation of a substantive place in education to systems of knowledge developed by and associated with, the oppressed groups, the masses, the working class and the folks. In India, these oppressed groups include what are now called backward castes (OBCs)<sup>11</sup> and the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (SC&ST). For centuries education had been denied to these groups, and knowledge systems associated with them had been denied the label of 'knowledge'. 'Common School' or 'comprehensive school' system approach proposes a subtle plan to provide space within the edifices of school knowledge for the knowledge and skills original to the lower castes and classes. Effective impletation of Gramsci's educational system through special and directive (political) role of intellectuals (teachers) could rock the prevailing hierarchy of the different monopolies of knowledge in our caste/class society. This would also bring these deprived castes/classes into the mainstream of national life.

Apart from the selection of appropriate forms of knowledge, school systems also face the problem of representing knowledge through appropriate symbols (e.g. vocabulary and images) (For a detailed study see chapter 4). A study reported in Krishna Kumar's work<sup>12</sup> reveals that only two out of a total of 41 story

lessons included in the Bal Bharti series used in Madhya Pradesh had central characters whose background could be identified as tribal, and no story had a central character identifiable as a scheduled caste, whereas taken together, the SC/STs comprise one third of the population of Madhya Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh is one of the nine educationally backward states of India.<sup>13</sup> It indicates a high degree of deprivation of education to the lower castes.

For examining the symbolic structure of the two story lessons used in the Hindi textbooks which have a tribal character in the central roles, passages from Krishna Kumar (1989) are being reproduced here: One of the stories is the famous puranic myth of Eklavya, the Bhil Youth (Bhil is a tribe of Central India) who has to sacrifice his thumb to satisfy a Brahmin whom he regards as his teacher. The (Brahmin) teacher requires this sacrifice to allay the jealousy that this princely (upper caste) disciples feel towards Eklavya (the tribal boy) for his self-acquired skill in archery. The myth resolves the symbolic clash of caste backgrounds by upholding a pedagogical ideal: the pupils' obedience. In the other story, a tribal boy of Bastar (Madhya Pradesh) saves a forest officer and a brigadier from being killed by a wild buffalo. The boy's courage and bravery are shown in a context in which an army officer acts as the audience and 'certifier'. In the structure of symbolically portrayed relationships in both stories, tribal boys depend on members of the dominant groups of non-tribal society for legitimation of

their achievements.

Of course, Gramsci does not go into the relevance of curriculum in specific contents but his message is clear: 'Self-identity' and 'critical thinking' must be developed in order to bring the deprived castes and classes into mainstream national life, while letting them retain their sub-cultural identity. The paucity of SC/ST and backward class symbols in the prescribed curriculum materials indicates the status of such symbols in the culture of schools which itself is a reorganised version of the cultural forms prevalent in society. The reorganisation involves selection and elimination of forms - including forms of knowledge and human behaviour. As Apple (1980) says, "the curriculum in schools responds to and represents ideological and cultural resources that come from somewhere. Not all groups' visions are represented and not all groups' meanings are responded to". The groups whose visions and meanings are represented in the curriculum and text materials prescribed in India are the dominant groups in society. The visions and meanings held by the oppressed (Caste/class) groups are cited as examples of backwardness and obstacles to progress.

Curriculum representation of symbols relating to different social groups is a significant index of the value attached to these groups in the cultural configuration that education helps to form and to transmit. A curriculum can be regarded as a cultural form 'like house, architecture, etiquette, the design of

roadways, or modes of civic participation' (Anderson 1976, quoted in Krishna Kumar, 1989). A curriculum which does not represent cultural data of all social groups in a proportionate manner can act as a means of aggression on groups whose data are excluded or which are poorly represented. Madan Sarup reminds us : "As it is clearly acknowledged that linguistic (symbolic) domination implies cultural subordination, one implication for us as teachers is quite clear: Working class children need a mastery of language skills."<sup>14</sup> The children of such groups are forced to identify with the symbols of dominant groups, and thereby have to perceive themselves as backward. The educational experience which is supposed to ameliorate the life of the SC/ST and OBC students becomes a means of training the younger members of these groups to internalise their subservient position in society. It is true, of course, that whatever its content, education does assist individuals among the SC/ST and OBCs to qualify for jobs traditionally inaccessible to them. It is also true that the success of such individuals can act as a source of inspiration for other individuals in these groups. Yet for the majority of SC/ST and OBC children, the education available today is a discouraging and demeaning experience. Hence we can distinguish three main strategies that can change in curricular policy. The first strategy is to develop a separate curriculum and textbooks for students from SC/ST and OBC background. But in this strategy researchers do acknowledge the difficulties a separate curriculum would create for the OBC and tribal students who want to proceed



to higher education. The second strategy is Gramscian, which is to reorganise a common curricular based on the 'common school' approach so that it becomes more realistically representative of a society which includes SCs, STs and OBCs. This strategy provides a ample space for the intellectuals mediating role. The third strategy is what Paulo Freire<sup>15</sup> calls, curriculum as a "generative theme" - the curriculum should contain the possibility of unfolding themes for the new tasks to be fulfilled in the counter-hegemonic direction. The themes we see in the literacy agenda of policy makers, on the contrary, are one dimensional and flat, incapable of leading the learner to a better understanding of the structural context of his oppression through associative thinking.

#### DISCIPLINE, INSTRUCTION AND ROLE OF TEACHERS

The problem of discipline, instruction and role of teachers is essentially related to the debate between 'Instruction' and 'Education'. In this section the discussion would be limited to this debate. According to Harold Entwistle "Gramsci's perception of the debate which the Gentile Reform (of education in 1923) engendered in Italy was that it diminished the importance of instruction in the teacher-pupil encounter, and his purpose was to stress its importance as a function of schooling.... Here Gramsci seemed to be taking a stance similar to that of Jacques Barzun who has argued that there cannot be an 'education without instruction' nor 'instruction without authority'.<sup>16</sup> Here again

Entwistle has misrepresented Gramsci. Actually Gramsci was opposed to the pseudo-progressive appropriation of the concept of 'autonomy' and 'spontaneity' in teacher-pupil relationship. This also contained in Gentile Reform. Gentile Reform was anarchic, chaotic and unprincipled arising out of a general organic crisis in Italy. He says : "It may be said, indeed, that the educational crisis (Gentile Reform) raging today is precisely linked to the fact that this process of differentiation and particularisation is taking place chaotically, without clear and precise principles, without a well studied and consciously established plan. The crisis of curriculum and organisation of the schools i.e. of the overall framework of a policy for forming modern intellectual cadres, is to a great extent an aspect and a ramification of the more comprehensive and general crisis". (SPN:1971, p.26).

One solution to this general crisis is the development of common/comprehensive school system based on certain principles which have been discussed earlier. The new organisation of the school should be based on balanced principles for child's development. "In fact, the common school should be organized like a college, with a collective life by day and night, freed from the present forms of hypocritical and mechanical discipline; studies should be carried on collectively, with the assistance of the teachers and the pupils, even during periods of so-called individual study, etc. (SPN, p.31). Though Gramsci insisted on the need for didactic, and disciplined application by the learner

to academic work, this was prescribed for school stage only and not for higher education. This is what Entwistle considers as conservative aspect of Gramsci. This is not true, as it will be evident from this work. There was to be rigorous, formal study of reading, writing, science, geography, history, tradition, language and philosophy at school level but it was an active and creative education. In the previous section on content and curriculum we have seen in what way these subjects have a modernizing role and hence essential.

'Instruction' does not necessarily turn a pupil into a passive recipient. The pupil could be actively assimilating and structuring knowledge whilst s/he was receiving instruction. Indeed the "relationship between teacher and pupil is active and reciprocal so that every teacher is also a pupil and every pupil a teacher" (SPN, p.350). Gramsci's views regards teacher-pupil relationship is still more clear when he makes a distinction between an active and a creative school. He writes : "The entire common school is an active school, although it is necessary to place limits on libertarian ideologies in this field and to stress with some energy the duty of the adult generations i.e. of the state, to "mould" the new generations. The active school is still in romantic phase". This active school specifically pertains to elementary stage school. "He was far from being hostile to the Rousseauesque tradition in education, though he was critical of it" (SPN : Introduction by editors p.24). Gramsci believed in 'spontaneity' according to age gradation.

Thus he writes about the creative school: "The creative school (high school) is the culmination of the active school (elementary school). In the first phase the aim is to discipline, hence also to level out - to obtain a certain kind of "conformism" which may be called "dynamic". In the creative phase, on the basis that has been achieved of "collectivisation" of the social type, the aim is to expand the personality - by now autonomous and responsible, but with a solid and homogeneous moral and social conscience. This creative school doesnot mean school of "inventors and discoverers", it indicates a phase and a method of research and of knowledge, and not a predetermined "programme" with an obligation to originality and innovation at all costs. It indicates that learning takes place especially through a spontaneous and autonomous effort of the pupil, with the teacher only exercising a function of friendly guide - as happens or should happen in the university". (SPN:1971, p.33)

Thus, we see that Gramsci's ideas are not conservative, but genuinely progressive. At some other place in 'Prison Notebooks' Gramsci writes: "the problem of collectively attaining a single cultural "climate" can and must be related to the modern way of considering educational doctrine and practice, according to which the relationship between teacher and pupil is active and reciprocal so that every teacher is always a pupil and every pupil a teacher" (SPN, pp.349-350). Apart from bring active, the teacher-pupil relationship is one of friendly nature as we have seen earlier. Moreover, the distinction between 'instruction'

and 'education' is totally craps. There has been an excessive emphasis on this distinction, which has been a serious error of idealist educationalists. The effect of this error is visible from the reorganisaition of present day school system, "that there is no unity between school and life, and so there is no automatic unity between 'instruction' and 'education'" (SPN, p.35). If 'instruction' is completely separated from 'education' pupil would become purely passive, they will become a 'mechanical receiver' of abstract notions. This is absurd and this absurdity is asbractly denied by the supportees of so called 'pure-educativity' (e.g. the 'pseudo-progressives'). As with every progressive notion, there is an accompanied distortion by ruling class ideology, so is the case here, in the name of opposition to mechanical 'instruction' a support 'for 'pure educativity'\*. The idealists in a abstract manner, become advocates of 'pure educativity' divorcing 'instruction', completely. In case of Gramsci, there is a harmonions and dynamic balance between 'instruction' and 'education'. Thus writing about lack of unity between school and life, he says that "in the school the nexus between instruction and education can only be realised by the living work of the teacher" (ibid.). This is because "the child's consciousness is not something "individual" (still less individuated), it reflects the sector of civil society in which the child participates, and the social relations which are formed

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\* The term 'pure educativity' is used by Antonio Gramsci See SPN:1971, p.35,

within his family, his neighbourhood, his village, etc. (ibid.)"

This task entails development of a qualified teaching body (SPN, p.36) otherwise the problem of teaching would be conjured away by sheer cardboard schemata exalting 'educativity'.

Gramsci was opposed to the Gentile Reform in education introduced by the Fascist regime in Italy in 1923. Gentile's reform was basically an idealist error in a pseudo-progressive manner. Though it was based on the adequate class analysis of the society, it catered badly to the need of the society. It was an effort to perpetuate the existing form of social relations in the schools. The reforms were intended to encourage 'spontaneity', 'learning' from experience and 'freedom of expression'. "But as with most idealistic conceptions of education "freedom" reflected only that which was compatible with the existing social and economic order. So that where the philosophers strove towards the higher ideals of education, the structure of the education system itself denied those very ideals..."<sup>17</sup> Gramsci believed that in its pseudo-progressive effort, the Gentile reform would only cater for an intellectual aristocracy. Gramsci's argument against 'free pupil activity' and 'spontaneity' was that "they leave the individual a prey to fortuitous, chaotic and arbitrary impact of environment. Such an abandonment of children implied the abdication of the older generations responsibility for education. This type of schooling seems to leave pupils without the cognitive resources to question and criticise". (SPN p.36)

Another reason for a balance between 'discipline', 'instruction', and 'education' was that working class and peasant background children needed certain "habits of diligence, precision; poise (even physical poise) ability to concentrate on specific subjects which cannot be acquired without the mechanical repetition of disciplined and methodical acts" (SPN, p.37). This was essential in the larger perspective. Gramsci believed that working class needs its own organic intellectuals in order to work out its own hegemonic 'directive' function, so they should be trained in some kind of disciplined psycho-physical habits. This would also help to create an intellectual order. He writes: "If one wishes to produce great scholars, one still has to start at this point and apply pressure throughout the educational system in order to succeed in creating those thousands or hundreds or even only dozens of scholars of the highest quality which are necessary to every civilization (of course, one can improve a great deal in this field by the provision of adequate funds for research, without going back to the educational methods of the Jesuits)". (SPN:1971, pp.37-38). Empirical evidences show that none of the existing elite/convent schools (which cater mostly to a kind of aristocracy), have produced great thinkers, philosophers, literateurs social scientists and revolutionaries. At the most they have produced managers, bureaucrats, diplomats and journalists. Working class needs not a training in aristocracy in schools, but a training, a school related to their actual life conditions arising out of their oppression in society.

Gramsci's ideas on education are integral to his political theory. Common school system can not remain neutral with the ideology of a political system. Common school has to be creative and active in order to create cadres of working class organic intellectuals. Though Entwistle is polemical against Gramsci, his interpretation by implication suggests certain merits: Firstly, Entwistle's interpretation of Gramsci's educational system is characterised by necessity for 'authority', the existence of hierarchies, the need for experts and by implication, the importance of leaders.<sup>18</sup> This is quite true. Intellectuals have played a decisive intervening role. Hence political parties should create and strengthen solidarity among their intellectuals. Particularly, the working class should create their own cadre of organic intellectuals. Secondly, Gramsci's insistence on study of history, culture, tradition and philosophy has been interpreted as 'conservatism'. This is not true, but Gramsci's significance lies in that he emphasizes continuity while simultaneously generating discontinuities in any radical social reconstruction. Entwistle, by implication, brings at this significance of Gramsci. Gramsci, in order to work for a counter-hegemonic culture or a proletarian hegemonic culture, does not reject the previous culture, history and tradition, rather, he emphasizes a continuity with these historical realities. Further he feels that the received culture must be reworked rather than rejected in order to create a new socialist culture. Gramsci was thus, a real, practical revolutionary in



working out a new socialist strategy.

Gramsci's opposition to mechanical 'instruction' arose out of the belief that an active school should be related to life (SPN p.37). This means that what is more important in the practical interest is the style of teaching. Styles of teaching have a powerful influence on how texts are presented to children and how they are received. Teaching involves the shaping of a socially - valued experience in the child's life - and his school experience. "There is not unity between school and life, and as there is no automatic unity between instruction and education. In school, the nexus between instruction and education can only be realised by the living work of the teacher". (SPN, p.35). The teacher's personality, style and political orientation intervene in the child's encounter with his symbolic world. Whether the child attaches any meaning at all to it is itself dependent on how much concern and earnestness the teacher is able to show. We can expect that a teacher whose manner of presentation is totally ritualised, mechanised, in the sense that he conveys no personal enthusiasm for the texts being dealt with in the class, will convey little sense of worth in the texts. His students are unlikely to feel encouraged to relate to the text they read, watch or listen to in a personal manner, by interpreting it in the context of their own life experiences. The ethos created by such teaching will have a sense of disinterestedness towards shared texts without the urge and freedom to establish personal meanings in the texts. This description resembles many features

of ethos found in Indian classrooms. In the Indian context, though the educational system has established a sizeable body of literary, historical and civic knowledge as 'shared texts', it lacks 'value-orientation' which itself is a product of the total cultural fabric of a society. Secondly, it also lacks a fundamental intellectual concern of the teacher who has to provide for oppositional criticism of both the past and the present as Gramsci envisaged. According to Philip Simpson, Gramsci did understand and value traditional mainstream culture, but as a critical opponent.<sup>19</sup>

#### VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

The complexity of modern civilization has resulted in the differentiation of schools into various specialised schools, vocational schools, elite schools, rural and urban schools. This multiplication of types of vocational schools and other schools tends to perpetuate the traditional social differences. Though, it gives the impression of being democratic in tendency, this is not exactly true. The educational system is associated with the social relations of production and to the demand of reproduction of division of labour. Here Gramsci's position is similar to the position advocated by the 'correspondence theory' popular in educational analysis. Gramsci writes that "the social character (of school) is determined by the fact that each social group has its own type of school, intended to perpetuate a specific traditional function, ruling or subordinate. If one wishes to

break this pattern one needs, instead of multiplying and grading different types of vocational school, to create a single type of formative school (primary - secondary) which would take the child up to the threshold of his choice of job, forming him during this time as a person capable of thinking, studying, and ruling - or controlling those who rule". (SPN: 1971, p.40). (It must be noted that Gramsci did not use much of Marxian concepts and terminology in order to disguise them).

Thus Gramsci was in favour of resolving the present educational crisis in a more practical way. He opposed vocational (in the polytechnical sense) education at primary and secondary stage of schooling. He favoured general training in work and industry at this stage and specialised and vocational training after the onset of puberty i.e. after the secondary stage. He feared that an early specialisation and vocationalisation of school would predetermine the pupil's destiny and future activity. Gramsci's ideas on vocational education' is allied with general 'single type formative' school.

In the successive stages of schooling in order to facilitate the transition to the more liberal stage of higher education, Gramsci envisaged a diminution of 'disciplined' pedagogy to a more creative and specialised education orientated to practical life. At the upper stage of secondary schooling "one has entered the phase of intellectual maturity in which one may discover new truths. In this phase the fundamental scholastic activity is

carried on in seminars, in libraries, in experimental laboratories. ('Prison Notebooks', p.33). Thus, secondary education is oriented to professionalism but in a different way. Gramsci believed that school learning shapes into a stage of 'generalisation', as the cognitive baggage acquired in school is employed by adults in experiences which are critical and creative. School learning is the instrument for evaluation of the existing culture and for its transformation into a new humanistic culture: "The development of autonomy, liberalism and spontaneity of life beyond childhood can only derive from the disciplined learning of the child. For Gramsci, revolutionary spontaneity does not exclude but on the contrary, presupposes an intellectual order".<sup>20</sup> In more general terms, "the construction of a human science does not take place in the medium of a detached and unhistorical awareness but in that of a historical world to which this awareness belonged from the start".<sup>21</sup>

Gramsci is not a theorist of education nor do his 'Notebooks' exemplify any educational ideas in detail. Much of his writings are in the form of 'Notes'. Though he doesn't give details of many of the elements, (for example, vocational schools), he sufficiently provides us the principles, rationale and methodological guidelines to reorganise schools. He was a realist. He believed that though "it was right to struggle against the old school, but reforming it was not so simple as it seemed. The problem was not one of model curricula but of men, and not just of the men who are actually teachers themselves but

of the entire social complex which they express". (SPN:1971, p.36). Gramsci praised the old Italian school. He favoured many of its characteristic nature, but he didn't support old Italian school entirely in all its forms.

Democracy in education for Gramsci does not mean merely that more and more unskilled workers can become skilled. It must mean that every "citizen" can "govern" and that society places him, even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this." (SPN:1971, p.40). The apparent democratic ethos of vocational schools, was in fact, due to its technical organisation, to restrict recruitment to the technically qualified governing stratum. The social and political implication of such complex organisation of vocational schools is that it makes difficult for "personal initiative" of the members of the deprived section to acquire such skills and 'technical political preparation. "Thus", he writes, "we are really going back to a division into juridically fixed and cysallised estates rather than moving towards the transcedence of class divisions". (SPN: 1971, p.41). Hence the proliferation of specialised/vocational schools from the very beginning of the child's educational career was a problem of great magnitude for Gramsci. It endangered democracy and strengthened class division. (SPN: 1971, p.41).

There is another dimension of 'vocationalism' apart from its purely formal connotation of being specialised and technical. Historically, it has a broader connotation in the traditional

usage of the term which recognises that the worker is involved in more than the mere production of goods and services : in this sense, 'Vocational' refers to the total cultural context within which work is undertaken... It also entails an awareness of moral obligation, an appreciation of the political and economic implications of a job of work and, often, of the aesthetics of 'production'.<sup>22</sup> Dialectically, 'Vocation' also implies a confrontation with ethical, political and aesthetic imperatives bearing upon an occupation. It is work, which mediates between man and his environment. It is this idea of work and education which is central to the Marxist notion of 'polytechnical' education. In this sense, marxist theory of education is, in fact a theory of practice (praxis). Gramsci's emphasis on work is an aspect of his understanding of Marx. 'Work' is a fundamental category in Marx, because it has a transforming power.<sup>23</sup> Like Gramsci, in Marx's formulation also, the combination of instruction, gymnastics and productive work is the most important feature. "The objective implied here is neither a better vocational training, nor the inculcation of a work ethic, but rather the closing of the historical gap between manual and mental work, between conception and execution, by assuring to all a full understanding of the productive process"<sup>24</sup>. It is this sense in which Gramsci believed the schooling of children to be concerned with work. Gramsci writes: "The common school, or school of humanistic formation taking the term "humanism" in a broad sense rather than simply in traditional one) or general

culture, should aim to insert young men and women into social activity after bringing them to a certian level of maturity, of capacity for intellectual and practical creativity, and of autonomy of orientation and initiative". (SPN, p.29). Here education is considered as an 'initiation' into life.

Labour is a condition of freedom in that by means of labour human beings satisfy their needs and can liberate themselves from the constraints of nature. Gramsci endorsed this principle of Marx as a vital principle. Nature is mastered and society changed through work. Gramsci's writings suggest that he saw education as being not only about 'self-discipline' and 'self knowledge' but about the possibilities of change:

"The discovery that the relations between the natural and social orders are mediated by work, by man's theoretical and practical activity, creates the first elements of an intuition of the world free from all magic and superstition. It provides the basis for the subsequent development of an historical, dialectic conception of the world, which understands movement and change, which appreciates the sum of effort and sacrifice which the present has cost and which the future is costing the present, and which conceives the contemporary world as a synthesis of the past, of all past generations, which projects itself into future". (Prison Notebooks : 1971, pp.34-35).

This broader implication of vocation and work is related to the role of intellectuals and to the task of creating an intellectual order which is vital for building up working class hegemony through the central role of party. His notion of 'intellectualism' (meaning theoretical and practical activity) which is organic to a work role is integral to his conception of work as organic to a culture:

"The individual doesnot enter into relations with other men by juxtaposition, but organically, in as much, that is, as he belongs to organic entities which range from the simplest to the more complex. Thus man doesnot enter into relations with the natural world just by being himself part of the natual world, but actively by means of work and technique... Thus the ways in which the single individual enters into relations with nature are many and complex, since by technique one should understnad not only the ensemble of scientific ideas applied industrially (which is the normal meaning of the word) but also the 'mental' instruments, philosophical knowledge." (Ibid., pp.352-53).

This kind of foundation of vocational education i.e. knowledge of general polytechnical principles could be laid in schools. But Gramsci was hostile towards proliferation of specialised vocational scholls at early stages of schooling, because it appropriated class divisions.



Gramsci saw them as a device destined not merely to perpetuate social differences but "to crystallise them into Chinese complexities" (Notebooks p.40). According to Entwistle, "Gramsci's solution to this was a common school system without specific vocational focus, but with an underlying curricular and methodological orientation emphasising the general cultural imperative towards work".<sup>25</sup>

There is another dimension of work and discipline in the development of technology. Gramsci's emphasis on school as work was an affirmation of his belief, firstly, that work and discipline is intrinsic to learning itself and secondly, education was instrumental for the mode of production. The problem of acquiring discipline and learning implicit in this idea of work was essential for development of technology. This theme recurred in Gramsci's essay on "Animality" and 'Industrialism' (Notebooks, p.298) : "The history of industrialism has always been a continuing struggle (which today takes an even more marked and vigorous form) against the element of 'animality' in man. It has been an uninterrupted, often painful and bloody process of subjugating natural (i.e. animal and primitive) instincts into new, more complex and rigid norms and habits of order, exactitude and precision which can make possible the increasingly complex forms of collective life which are the necessary consequence of industrial development. This struggle is imposed from outside, and results to date, though they have great immediate practical value, are to a large extent

purely mechanical : the new habits have not yet become 'second nature'. For Gramsci, it is not the existence of discipline which compromises liberty but the nature of 'power' which ordains it. For example, in the capitalist mode of production, the instrumental conception of education requires that a particular kind of division of labour be reproduced in which working class people possess certain non-cognitive attributes for performance of work. These are : "(a) acquiesce in the lack of control they exercise over their productive activity, (b) acquiesce in the fragmentation of their productive activity, (c) acquiesce in the alienation of their productive activity, (d) acquiesce to, if not endorse, a competitive ethic and (e) be rule-oriented".<sup>26</sup> Thus in his reference to a new form of society, Gramsci was concerned not only with the discipline required by the worker to maintain efficient production procedures in the technical sense, he also, and especially, had in mind the discipline necessary to acquire political, economic and administrative skill and knowledge necessary to develop new productive and distributive relationships and organise steadfastly for political action.<sup>27</sup> (Political Writings, 1910-20)

The vocational education which is implicit in the merging of technical and management functions aimed at humanising work and showing the different cultural and moral imperatives of a socialist revolution, is a process which should begin in school. But its results and successes depend on post school education.

As with political education, to which it is obviously organically related, vocational education is adult education, in this sense. In Gramsci's formulation, childrens are nowhere directly involved in politics or political education. Childrens, whether it be general formative education or vocational education, they are to be imparted with only the general imperatives of life in a critical way. If adult education is political education and also proper vocational education is adult education, then in that case two sites of political education become very important. They are trade unions and factory councils in particular, and it is the party in general which gives this political education a direction and consideration for political action. (We will discuss in detail about factory councils and the party in chapter 4.) Trade unions would be responsible for the technical education of workers in a particular trade or industrial process.<sup>28</sup> The factory council were also concerned with political and economic education, aimed at teaching those administrative and economic skills necessary for workers to take control of factories and administer efficiently the productive process. The factory councils were intended to be unique organs of power and supreme direction for the organisation of production and distribution, as well as for the whole complex of economic, moral, and political relations that derive from it (Boggs and Davidson).<sup>29</sup> Gramsci's relevance and contribution to development of Marxism lies in that counter-hegemonic activity must begin before and go concurrently with direct political action for the replacement of capitalist

class. However, while the theoretical validity of this principle is widely recognised, its practical application (as shown by the many short lived, or only partly successful experiments) presents problems, especially under the conditions of rapid scientific and technological change.<sup>30</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we observed that all educational activity should occur on the historical terrain of actual contemporary social life. In Gramsci, historicity is a constitutive factor of educational activity and that it should not be taken away from it. 'In fact, marxist educational theory is essentially a theory of practice' in all its historical totality of the present (zsuzsa, 1979). Gramsci was a major figure who contributed to this Marxist conception of education and practice. Education, in this sense, becomes a potential tool for social change whereby each man, develops his critical consciousness and engages himself in concrete social activity and changes nature and society according to his needs. "In Gramsci's thought politics and practical activity, figure, philosophically as the central human activity, the means by which the single consciousness is brought into contact with the social and natural world in all its forms" (Quintine Hoare : Introduction; SPN, p.XXIII). Gramsci's historical approach to educational activity sees it "as organised critical reflection on existing forms of thought and their relation to the actual world which produced them.....It is not

just the abstract cogitation of a few professional intellectuals but a concrete social activity in which, implicitly, all men are engaged" (SPN,p.321). With this philosophical background, it can be said that Gramsci has a general theory of education, though, he does not give much technical details. The components of his theory of education are: (a) Cultural or knowledge monopolies and privileged forms of schooling must be abolished and replaced by a 'common school' or 'formative school' to develop a 'general culture'- 'the fundamental power to think and ability to find ones way in life' (SPN, p.26). The reasons were that everybody should get equal opportunity in education to know himself, his society, his past and his present national culture. (b) Education in successive stages must combine knowledge of material production, it must close down the gap between manual and mental work, between conception and execution by assuring to all a full understanding of the productive processes. (c) Development of human beings as a producer in the full sense by his all round development of personality. By uniting science and production, society can generate a universe of needs activating the individual in all spheres of social life. The realisation of this objective would require an understanding of the social contradictions and then an effort to resolve it. (d) In Gramscic's scheme, intellectuals (in the broadest sense : of their role in production, in the organisation of work and in their directive and political function) are assigned a new and vast role in the educational process and in the society. The teacher can change

the in-group relations of the school, create a more close relationship between school and life by presupposing a mutually enriching and active dual relationship between himself and his students.

Gramsci believed that political revolutions are preceded by the creation of a new cultural climate. He was always insistent on the need to educate the workers in the widest sense. An essential element in Gramsci's political philosophy was that the revolution, and the preparation for it, would involve a profound change in the consciousness of the masses. It is this understanding of the cultural aspect of social relations, the importance of education and its relation to politics, that we will go to discuss in the next chapter of this project.

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## CHAPTER 3

### EDUCATION AS A PART OF SUPERSTRUCTURE

In the previous chapter, we discussed Gramsci's theory of education i.e. the formal educational system. It consisted a theory of history, structure, content and functioning of school systems. In fact Gramsci's theory of education is a theory of practice. It was a theory about schools and their function in society. We discussed the specific features like curriculum, content, discipline, instruction, role of teachers, vocationalism etc. We also took notice of the misrepresented accounts of Gramsci. Now, in this chapter we will analyse how Gramsci's ideas on education in the context of cultural hegemony constitutes an active dimension of politics. In this sense, if politics is an element of superstructure, then education becomes an obvious superstructural sphere where constant struggle at the level of ideas take place. Based upon this Marxist assumption, the aim of this chapter is to explore the dominant form and shape of pedagogical practices, their interactions and relationships in the domain of superstructure. This task entails further examination of other elements in the superstructure e.g. ideology, language, consciousness, education etc. and their relation with education. As stated, Gramsci's theory of education is a theory of 'practice' to change 'nature', 'society' and the 'man' himself. The general methodology in Gramsci is one of 'practice' consistent with historical necessity, unlike normative

theorising which is, in a major way utopian theorising. Marx, rejecting utopian socialist schemes, wrote in 1843 that, "We do not attempt dogmatically to prefigure the future, but want to find the new world only through criticism of the old".<sup>1</sup> Dialectics and history are useful in theoretical understanding of a situation. They expose the real limits of the situation and then make proposals for transcending those limitations. For Gramsci, empirical 'appearances' do not explain the reality. Hence any account of real processes should be theoretical, because the real is always beneath the surface of appearances. The objects of scientific knowledge should be based on 'abstracted theoretical objects'. The social world is chaotic and complicated. There are numerous causal chains which interact with each other. To understand it, to appropriate it theoretically and intervene practically, we must necessarily begin with simplified models and theories. Hence it is necessary to examine the 'superstructural' aspect of education and its relation with other elements of superstructure. In this chapter, with this theoretical endeavour, we will reconstruct some theories of consciousness, common sense ideology, language and hegemony in the context of education.

The 'building' like metaphor of 'base' and 'superstructure' is used by Marx and Engels to propound the idea that the economic structure of society (the 'base') conditions the existence and forms of the state and social consciousness (the 'superstructure'). It also refers to the consciousness or 'world

view' of a class. Here economy refers to the sum total of production relations entered into by men e.g. the class relations between them.<sup>2</sup> The relationship between base and superstructure is historical and uneven. The superstructure of ideas is not conceived as a mere passive reflection but it is capable of some effectivity.<sup>3</sup> Education and culture being a part of superstructure have to be seen in this light. According to Althusser, though the economy is always determinant in the last instance, it does not always play the dominant role. Determination by the base doesnot reduce politics and ideas to economic phenomena. This aspect has been rendered as the 'relative autonomy' of the superstructure. However, in the Gramsci's writings, we find that there is more of 'voluntarism', than what Althusser's structuralist analysis would allow for. Gramsci added a new dimension to the Marxian perspective in education by spelling out the differences between the 'state' and the 'civil socety'. He visualised how hegemony of a class is developed not just by brute domination of state power but also through organs of civil society such as laws, schools and media which assist ideas to permeate and thereby perpetuate the domination of a class as "natural". Gramsci took Marx's concept of 'hegemony' in civil society (see German Ideology) and made it a central theme of his own version of the functioning of the capitalist system.

Education (in the broadest sense of working class education)  
is dependent upon Marx's theory of society - that for a society

to continue in existence it must produce materials and reproduce people. There is a biological reproduction and the birth of biological individuals. But the reproduction and formation of the individual into a human subject is a matter of socialisation into the language, knowledge, competencies, structures and ideologies of the society. The productive forces and relations of production interact. In Marxist writings this is known as the 'first law of sociology' - the necessity of conformity between the productive forces and the relations of production. The former are recognised by Marx as the leading factor, as they are first to undergo change. Tools and techniques of production are constantly being improvised; the relations of production, buttressed by customs and laws, are more resistant to change. After certain decisive changes in the productive forces it is necessary that productive relations must change. The present day mode of production which is dominant and universal is the capitalist mode of production. It is characterised by : (1) the major means of production being privately owned by a comparatively small minority of the population; (2) labour power, or the capacity to work, being also privately owned and saleable in the market; (3) the owners of the means of production can buy labour power and put it to work; (4) the bulk of production being concerned with commodities things which have a use value and an exchange value; (5) commodities being exchanged or sold in order to realise profits.

Men not only produce and enter into relations of production; they also live in families, establish legal and ethical systems, form social and political organisation, create schools, institutions, universities and develop language, knowledge and a way of life (ideology & culture). For Marx, this domain (or locale) or superstructure, is not independent of the mode of production. This is sometimes referred to as the second law of Marxist sociology: the law of necessary conformity between mode of production (base) and superstructure. This law has two significance: Firstly, it has a heuristic value. There may not be mechanical relationship between base and superstructure, but it certainly suggests a relationship which needs to be investigated. Secondly, there is relative autonomy of the superstructure when it constitutes a locale, sometimes when its permeation is more widespread, deep rooted and universal, it becomes an objective reality featuring as a base. At different times in the Marxist tradition this problematic has been given an utterly mechanical interpretation whereby all elements of the superstructure are seen as a direct response to factors in the economic base. For many aspects of culture manifested in certain social formations - like metropolitan cultures imposed upon colonised people, this kind of Marxist interpretation is quite obvious and direct. However, this second law has much richer and more subtler interpretations.<sup>4</sup> Whatever the matrix of relationships exist, there is a continuous class struggle going on at basically three levels namely (a) economic (b) political -

struggle for control of state and political power, and (3) ideological - winning of 'hearts and minds'. The state with its all repressive and ideological state apparatuses has a crucial role in all aspects of class struggles going on at all levels of plurality and mixture. Marxist social theory does not reduce itself like a mechanical form of functionalist theory. There is a conflict, fluidity, antagonism in the economic, political and ideological domains. In most of the social formations, the capitalist mode of production does not function in a rigorously determined manner.<sup>5</sup> The state can be influenced by the non-capitalist classes. Dominant ideologies need not be hegemonic, they can be partially exposed and occasionally penetrated by resistant ideologies or non-conformist and contradictory ideological consciousness. This is an important consideration in arriving at an adequate account of schooling and education of large.

#### EDUCATION AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Gramsci's writings on 'Intellectuals' and 'Education' in the 'Prison Notebooks' raises the task of human consciousness to a prominent place in the 'philosophy of praxis' (What he calls as Marxism). The role of intellectuals is a highly original scheme in Gramsci. Its philosophical implication is that 'all men are philosophers' (SPN, p.3). It relates to Gramsci's ideas on education : They stress on the democratic character of the intellectual's function of creating an intellectual order and

developing critical thinking in general, and also on the class character of the formation of intellectuals through school i.e. the task of working class to create their own organic intellectuals. Control of consciousness is as important as the control of the forces of production. There is no doubt that Gramsci was primarily concerned with radical - socio-political change and hence simultaneously his work is committed to counter-hegemonic educational activity.<sup>6</sup> Like Lenin, he also argued that by and large, both before and after the revolution, the traditional inherited culture should be 'reworked' rather than rejected. In this sense, his theory of consciousness is based on the study of history, culture, tradition and actual life conditions. As Rachel Sharp writes : "Progressive ideological change must generate crucial continuities. It must not neglect the positive and transcendent aspects of common-sense consciousness, even if they too are infused with hegemonic assumptions and meanings. This is precisely the lesson to be drawn from an analysis of the way the dominant ideology works. It emphasises continuity even whilst simultaneously generating discontinuity, if the balance of forces requires it".<sup>7</sup>

The Marxist thesis is that schools are primarily concerned with the production and reproduction of labour power in a social formation which in a manner ensures the stability of the productive relations i.e. schooling legitimises the existing system of privilege, power and resources (Cf. correspondence theory). But in case of Gramsci there is an emphasis in another

direction of dialectics, that the schools raise competence, they also create and procreate public knowledge on the basis of a 'humanist school' and curriculum, by the study of one's own history, tradition, culture, philosophy and actual life conditions. This knowledge has a political function of creating an intellectual order towards counter-hegemonic function. Thus, Gramsci's advocacy for a common school system and his opposition to vocationalism and specialisation at early stages of education (as we have seen in previous chapter) signifies two aspects in the reconstruction of common consciousness in a capitalist mode of production. One is the creation of positive public knowledge having potentials for social reconstruction. The other is the conformist character of public knowledge, which the labour force acquires in a capitalist mode of production.

The crisis of education in the present day, for Gramsci, was result of a general, larger, organic crisis (SPN: p.27) due to complexity of social life caused by capitalist mode of production. It forced 'specialisation' and 'vocationalisation' in educational system right from the early stages of schooling. This for Gramsci was a trend towards 'proletarianisation' and proliferation of mental labour.<sup>8</sup> In another sense it was a process of 'de-skilling' of labour as evident from "Taylorism". Taylorism as a concept is related to the new system of scientific management in administration introduced first in USA. Separation of mental and manual labour was the need of the capitalist mode



of production. It requires an specific labour attitude e.g. acquiescence to legitimacy of lack of worker's control over production, feeling of competitiveness rather than cooperation etc. Since cognitive skills and capacities are increasingly less important for most lower occupations in the capitalist mode of production, Gramsci was afraid of this process of proletarianization of white collar workers and professionals and the embourgeoisment of the working class which was chaotically developed through schools in particular and through policy planners (e.g. the state) in general (SPN: pp.26-27). Thus the capitalist mode of production requires a consciousness with certain non-cognitive attributes which are : (a) Acquiesce in the lack of control they exercise over their productive activity, (b) Acquiesce in the fragmentation of their productive activity, (c) Acquiesce in the alienation of their productive activity, (d) Acquiesce to, if not endorse, a competitive ethic, and (e) Be rule oriented.<sup>9</sup> Thus at one level in Gramsci's writings, consciousness, by implication has an 'isolating effect' of individual competition for prestige consumer goods.

At another level, role of education is to combat superstition, folk idiocy and the tyranny of common sense : a common sense structured throughout by hegemonic meanings. It has to be substituted by critical consciousness through the mediating role of intellectuals and a general humanistic school culture.<sup>10</sup> It has to confront the energetic wastefulness and the imaginary forms through which the problems of life are accepted. Teaching

of history, tradition and culture didnot mean anything else but it meant developing a consciousness with modern outlook through a critical appreciation of the past and present. Thus Gramsci wrote : "The school combated folklore, indeed every residue of traditional conceptions of the world. It taught a more modern outlook based essentially on an awareness of the simple and fundamental fact that there exist objective, intractable natual laws to which man must adapt himself if he is to master them in his turn - and that there exist social and state laws which are the product of human activity, which are established by men and can be altered by men in the interests of their collective development" (SPN, p.34). Thus, education creates and procreates public knowledge which has a political function. It consists in creating a new culture. "Creating a new culture doesnot only mean his own individual "original" discoveries. It also, and most particularly means the diffusion in a critical form of truths already discovered, their socialisation as it were, and even making them the basis of vital action, an element of coordination and intellectual and moral order" (SPN: p.325).

Education creates consciousness -- consciousness of what one really is and it creates knowledge of 'thyself' as a product of the historical process. This critical consciousness is essential because every man is a 'man in the mass' or a 'collective man' in the sense of being a conformist of some kind or other. Thus Gramsci writes 'When one's conception of the world is not critical and coherent but disjointed and episodic, one belongs

simultaneously to a multiplicity of mass human group. The personality is strangely composite : it contains stone age elements and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history of the local level and institutions of a future philosophy which will be that of a human race united the world over. To criticise one's own conception of the world means therefore to make it a coherent unity and to raise it to the level reached by the most advanced thought in the world". (SPN: p.324). The development of critical consciousness does not remain as closed entity, but has a dynamic relation with the political tasks , the organisation and the intellectuals or the leaders. Thus "Critical consciousness means, historically and politically, the creation of 'elite intellectuals'. A human mass doesn't "distinguish" itself, doesnot become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organising itself; and there is no organisation without intellectuals, that is without organisers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory - practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of people "specialised" in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas" (SPN: p.334). Hence we find that Gramsci talks of a higher culture, a more comprehensive culture, where each individual develops the faculty to reason e.g. each individual is a highly conscious entity, 'who can work under an intellectual and moral direction. This brings us to the "terrain of ideology on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position,

struggle, etc." (SPN: p.377). Where Lenin and Lukacs could not bridge the gap between socialist ideology and spontaneous consciousness, between the 'ascribed' consciousness and the psychological consciousness of the class, Gramsci could find a double current of determinations between them.<sup>11</sup> True, socialist ideology is developed by intellectuals but it is not their sole and exclusive property. Moreover, there can not be absolute distinction between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, and also, the working class itself has to create its own organic intellectuals. So there is no question of a science being introduced from outside into the working class, rather the task is to renovate and make critical an already existing intellectual activity. Gramsci doesnot substitute for a deficient consciousness but expresses a collective will, a historical orientation present in the working class in a embryonic form, to effect a mass-level consciousness through intellectual application.

Class consciousness may be defined as the actual consciousness of existence of classes and its real manifestations, where each class is subject to conscious activity. Consciousness is considered primarily in cognitive terms where class reality becomes the object of cognition. This assertion is in line with Marx and Engels assertion in the 'German Ideology' that the premises of a materialist method should be "the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity".<sup>12</sup> Gramsci adds

concept of 'common sense' here, which has a more generic connotation than class consciousness. 'Common sense' is the ground which generates class consciousness and provides an area where the latter may be located. At different places in the Prison Notebook's, Gramsci draws attention towards the 'elements of popular psychology' of the masses which must be studied historically and sociologically if one has to educate them. While stressing the need for a philosophical movement in close contact with the masses, Gramsci writes: "Perhaps it is useful to make a 'practical' distinction between philosophy and common sense in order to indicate more clearly the passage from one moment to the other. In philosophy the features of individual elaboration of thought are most salient : in common sense on the other hand, it is the diffuse uncoordinated features of a generic form of thought common to a particular period and a particular environment" (SPN: p.330). The history of philosophy is generally taken as history, of the philosopher's philosophies. Similarly, history of social moments is generally taken as a narration of collective actions and/or of the acts and ideological positions of the leadership in the context of state policy. But according to Gramsci "at least as a methodological guideline, attention should be drawn to the other parts of the history of philosophy, to the conceptions of the world held by great masses, to those of the more restricted ruling (or intellectual) groups, and finally to the links between these various cultural complexes and the philosophy of philosophers...." (SPN: pp.344-45).

Class consciousness is located in a collective, actual mass level consciousness with a distinct status of its own. It has also intimate relation with other forms of intellectual activity under some organisation. It has a subjective consciousness quite different from its more readily observable objective manifestations in actions and socially structured relations. The historical dimension of such actions and relations are crystallised in their cultural and educational practices, ideologies and their organisations. This category is quite complex and has its own symbolical value, collective conceptions or meaning systems implicit in their system of common sense. Gramsci identifies certain areas where the common sense philosophy, the 'spontaneous philosophy' of the masses of a particular class may be found. "This philosophy contained in:

- (1) language itself, which is a totality of determined notions and concepts and not just words grammatically devoid of content;
- (2) 'common sense' and 'good sense'.
- (3) popular religion and, therefore, also in the entire system of beliefs, superstitions opinions, ways of seeing things and of acting, which are collectively bundled together under the name of 'folklore' (SPN: p.323).

Gramsci's emphasis on language as a bearer of consciousness-- "from anyone's language one can assess the greater or lesser

complexity of his conception of the world" (SPN:p.325) -- suggests the possible uses of linguistic analysis, the analysis of oral traditions and of indepth, narrative interview materials as tools and areas for the study of the depth and complexity of consciousness. He draws attention to the restrictions on consciousness placed by a dialect which may be influenced by localism and may not contain adequate concepts to explain complex situations and to encompass wider currents of thought. Therefore he suggests the mastery of the national language (SPN: p.325) in its common standard form, because linguistic domination by one group implies cultural subordination of other group. Hence knowledge of national language and culture could bring various sub-cultures into the mainstream culture. Language serves as a mediator of ideological signs. Language is a coding system which classifies and organises the external objective world in some kind of meaning or hegemonic relationship. Language and thought both partially presuppose each other. Hence language is a vital basis for the development of cognitive system as mediator of ideological signs. The cognitive system of people is product of their, practical experience and bears "a certain measure of 'experimentalism' and direct observation of reality, though empirical and limited" (SPN:p.348). Gramsci views this "faith in a certain rationality of history" as mixed with superstitions and religious elements, giving the masses a resilience in times of defeat, but leading to passivity if not subjected to critical pedagogy (SPN: p.420 and pp.336-37). Dominant hegemony attempts

to bring about a homogeneity in religious beliefs but in practice every single religion, has a number of contradictory beliefs that are practiced. Common sense is "influenced by the crudest and least elaborated forms" of these religions and even by previous religions (SPN : p.420).

It has yet another dimension, that man in general are conformists of some kind or the other what Gramsci calls 'uncritical man-in-the mass' or 'collective man' who interprets common sense. The 'uncritical man-in-the mass' has a contradictory character. His consciousness is constituted by various levels of identity, that are contextually derived and referential. The individual conforms to the groups to which he belongs to its shared modes of thinking and acting. The salience of a particular level of identity is situational in character and is heightened in different social context.<sup>13</sup> Subaltern consciousness is caught in the conflict of contending social hegemonies. According to Gramsci, mass-level consciousness has a dual character. There is a dual conception of the world, one affirmed in words and the other displayed in effective action" which cannot be explained by the category of 'self deception'. Apart from the contradictory character of consciousness arising from its being structured in depth with overlapping identities, consciousness demonstrates a dynamic character that is open to various possibilities. The reification of consciousness of the 'man-in-mass' is overcome in the process of class formation and creation of an intellectual order through the role of organic



intellectuals. The study of class consciousness is to identify the critical element within the profanity of consciousness through appropriate methodological approaches. Implicit in such an exercise would be a critique of science and ideological practices. Another exercise could be identification of various levels of identity as mediated by the awareness of opposition. But this dialectic of 'identity - opposition' cannot achieve a political significance in action unless consciousness extends to embrace an understanding of socio-historical totality in relation to the state and unless embryonic forms of an alternative are conceived and actualised. Thus Gramsci writes : "The concept of revolutionary and of internationalist, in the modern sense of the word, is correlative with the precise concept of state and class, little understanding of the state means little class consciousness (and understanding of the state exists not only when one defends it, but also when one attacks it in order to overthrow it); hence low level of effectiveness of the parties, etc." (SPN:p.75).

The scientific study of popular consciousness of a class is the dialectical meeting point of the categories and conceptual framework of the scientist and the cognitive areas and conceptions of the people. Individuals engaged in the social relation of production contribute also to a collective consciousness. Spontaneous individual reflections on social existence would generally reveal perceptions that are in the foreground of consciousness; material of a practical immediate,

situational and individualistic significance. However, introspection and/or further abstraction on the part of the individual and an adequate scientific approach might reveal collective identities and more 'total' explanations which otherwise remain unexpressed. As we have discussed earlier in this chapter, Gramsci (unlike Lenin and Lukacs) successfully could bridge the gap between socialist ideology and spontaneous consciousness, between the 'ascribed' consciousness and the psychological consciousness of the masses through a double current of determinations between them. The responsibility of this task specifically lies with the individual himself and the working class organic intellectuals under the banner of a party. Party and 'organic' intellectuals are the two main catalytic determinants of class consciousness. The task is to give a historical orientation to the embryonic elements of working class consciousness. The interrelation of conscious individuals in everyday life and in heightened class situations gives rise to collectively held meaning systems - collective conceptions - which are historically crystalised in culture, ideology, organisation, education and in individual consciousness in an ongoing dialectical historical process - and where state has been the main agent in mediating between various institutions in order to give legitimacy to them.<sup>14</sup>

Hence there is a need to overcome the implicit reification of political activity as seen in the three main Indian left parties: namely, CPI, CPM and CPI (ML). They must learn lessons

from the failure of stalinist socialism in Eastern Europe and USSR and from the successes in our own country, of fundamentalist forces like Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal etc. Their use of common mass language (symbols) and religion during 1990-91 in particular presents an illustration how a historical situation - the conjunction of masse's aspirations, feelings and idea - can be analysed in terms of 'relations of forces' at work at different 'moments' or 'levels' (SPN:pp.180-83). In general for the Indian left, both the ritualism of economic struggles/routinised electoral participation and the adventurism of armed voluntarism tend to neglect the sustained ideological education of mass-level consciousness (SPN : pp.204-205 w.r.t. Gramsci's view in Italian context). A decisive intervention in history, is always preceded by "long ideological and political preparation, organically devised in advance to reawaken popular passions and enable them to be concentrated and brought simultaneously to detonation point" (SPN : p.110). Political parties need to have an understanding in depth of 'popular feeling'.

Above all, there is also another important element of "collective will" which Gramsci considered necessary towards establishing an alternate hegemony. ".....Will as operative awareness of historical necessity, as protagonist of a real and effective historical drama" (SPN : p.130). According to Gramsci, collective consciousness requires a socio-economic historical -

material foundation, a premiss. This premiss, has a cultural dimension also, and hence intervention becomes necessary and is not arbitrary. Gramsci writes "...necessity exists when there exists an efficient and active premiss consciousness of which in people's minds has become operative, proposing concrete goals to the collective consciousness and constituting a complex of convictions and belief which acts powerfully in the form of 'popular beliefs'. In the premiss, must be contained, already developed or in the process of development, the necessary and sufficient material conditions for the realisation of the impulse of collective will, but is also clear that one cannot separate from this 'material' premiss, which can be quantified, a certain level of culture by which we mean a complex of intellectual acts and, as a product and consequence of these, a certain complex of overriding passions and feelings, overriding in the sense that they have the power to lead men to action 'at any price'. (SPN: pp. 412-13).

#### THEORY OF COMMON SENSE

With the foregoing perspectives on consciousness and class consciousness, Gramsci's concept of 'common sense' can be reconstructed e.g. a theory of subaltern consciousness to participate in hegemonic process. Gramsci's scheme, has a certain distinctiveness in the Marxist tradition and needs special attention in any discussion of the cognitive maps of the popular element. It is important because intellectuals

('intellectuals' is a very broad term in Gramsci - meaning (a) that all men are intellectuals (b) there is an intellectual order and (c) all those who are involved in organisational work - See SPN p.334 and 340) organise the web of the beliefs and institutional and social relations which Gramsci calls hegemony. Gramsci defines state as force plus consent, or hegemony armoured by coercion, (SPN : p.263) in which political society organises force, and civil society provides consent. Although Gramsci writes that the institutions of hegemony are located in civil society, whereas political society is the arena of political institutions in the legal constitutional sense, he also says that the division is a purely methodological one and stresses the overlap that exists in actual societies. (SPN:p.160). According to Mouffe, the great innovation of the 'hegemony' concept consists precisely in its breaking of a pre-given link between economic class and political behaviour.<sup>15</sup>

'Philosophy of praxis' is concerned with creation of an intellectual order..... an intellectual and moral bloc in order to participate in hegemonic process. It consists of "criticism of "common sense" basing itself initially, however, on common sense in order to demonstrate that "everyone" is a philosopher and that it is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone's individual life, but renovating and making "critical" an already existing activity. It must then be criticism of the philosophy of the intellectuals out of which the history of philosophy developed and which, in so far as it is

a phenomenon of individuals (in fact it develops essentially in the activity of single, particularly gifted individuals) can be considered as making the "high points" of the progress made by common sense, or at least the common sense of the more educated strata of society but through them also of the people" (SPN: pp.330-31). Philosophy of praxis must lead the simple masses to a higher conception of life. Mass contact is necessary in order to form an intellectual and moral bloc so that intellectual progress of the masses is politically made possible (Ibid., pp.332-333). Significantly the "process of development is tied to a dialectic between intellectuals and the masses" (Ibid., p.334). This brings us to a closer analysis of the subaltern praxis in the hegemonic process and study of internal structure and dynamism of the 'common sense' category.

There are two tendencies in Marxism regarding 'ordinary' folk's sense perception, intuition of the subaltern groups exemplified in the works of Bukharin and Croce of which Gramsci takes a critical note with rejection. Bukharin's critique of bourgeois ideologies does not have anything to say about the ideas or activities of the workers themselves. In its concrete political forms, Bukharin's scheme undertakes only those political tasks which help to 'educate' the working class in the philosophies of the "philosophers". It offers only a critique of the more holistic dimensions in political economy or a propaganda of philosophy of socialism. To transpose this kind of attitude

on the Indian masses, the CPM, the CPI and the CPI (ML) have only professed to educate the working class in a political economic critique of the Congress regime, critique of planning models, or in the recent years to expose the communal nature of BJP-RSS-Bajrang Dal Nexus. They assume that the perceptions of the subaltern groups subjected to domination of a regime are completely moulded by the ruling ideas. They ignore the "philosophy of the non-philosophers", which is relatively original to their mode of thinking. Consequently, Marxism projected in Bhukharin's manner turns out for the workers, like any other philosophy, external to their everyday existence, and not as an integral part of their knowledge process. In such a situation, the relationship between Marxism and its agencies is, in an organisational sense, a one-sided monologue, structurally similar to the relationship between the church and the believer, the brahmin priest and the peasant, the teacher and the disciple and the like. In such a situation, the working class becomes increasingly dependent on the 'direction' of the organisation's professional intellectuals. The organisation, following the logic of 'educating' the subaltern groups, has not been able to facilitate an intellectual formation within the agency itself in order to be active, reciprocal and dialectical relationship. The 'de-classed' intellectuals in the organisation become the permanent explicators of Marxism for the workers. Thus, the 'original' cognitive map of the subaltern groups are subordinate to the organisational discourse e.g. Comintern Marxism.

Comintern Marxism seems more and more difficult and pedantic for the workers to grasp and internalise it. Philosophical contents of Marxism have generated prejudices that philosophical exercises are incomprehensible for them. A Marxism that is meant to educate the subaltern groups but which does not evolve out of the workers' perceptions, original or appropriated, cannot but remain an external force imposed on the working class as a whole. This is the reason for (to a certain extent) what actually has happened in recent years in Eastern Europe.

Gramsci also criticised the philosophical tendency as found in Benedetto Croce's view of the popular element. Croce (1886-1952) had considerable influence on the young intellectuals of the Italian Left during the pre-fascist period. Croce influenced by the Italian hermeneutic tradition, considered 'common sense' as a set of views expressed by the 'ordinary' folk and treated it as the source as well as the content of each and every philosophical system. Gramsci criticised this proposition precisely because, it can be made to contain 'anything'. Common sense becomes a chaotic aggregate of perception in workers' everyday life. Thus Gramsci writes: "In Croce, the proposition that 'all men are philosophers' has an excessive influence on his judgement about common sense .... But what can this mean concretely?....One can find there (in common sense) anything that one likes". (SPN:1971, p.42). Furthermore Croce's attitude towards common sense did not lead to a conception of culture which would be productive for the 'national-popular' point of



view. Croce's conception of 'common sense' lacked a concrete historicist conception of philosophy. According to Gramsci, the history of philosophy was in certain sense a 'resolution' of contradictions in the world of common sense, and not just a mirror reflection of it.<sup>16</sup> Croce treats it as a simple reflection of the commonsensical world and undermines the historical growth of philosophical systems which are products of an ongoing critical thinking process, and of a dialectical relationship between intellectuals and masses, between man and nature. Philosophical systems are the 'high points' of progress made by the history of common sense. (SPN:1971, pp.330-31) in order to construct an intellectual-moral bloc which can make politically possible the intellectual progress of the masses (Ibid., pp.332-33).

However, there is a heuristic value in Croce's proposition, which recognises that there is a close affinity between a philosophical system and a structure of common sense, though he exaggerates this affinity without being able to establish their distinctions. In such a scheme, the affinities between the two systems are external. "This limits the original thought of the popular masses in a negative direction, without having the positive effect of a vital ferment of interior transformation of what the masses think in an embryonic and chaotic form about the world and life" (SPN:1971, p.420). Gramsci's analysis of the nature of working class 'common sense' in the hegemony process is based only on the Marxist notion of 'totality'. In space and

time, the structure of common sense appears to be contradictory in character e.g. protests yesterday and subordination today. He writes: "The active man-in-the-mass has a practical activity but has no clear theoretical consciousness of his practical activity, which nonetheless involves understanding the world in so far as it transforms it.<sup>17</sup> His theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his activity. One might say that he has two theoretical consciousness (or one contradictory consciousness) : One which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow workers in the practical transformation of the world; and other, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. But this verbal conception is not without consequences. It holds together a specific social group, it influences moral conduct and the direction of will, with varying efficacy but often powerful enough to produce a situation in which the contradictory state of consciousness doesnot permit of any action, any decision or any choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity. Critical understanding of self takes place therefore, through a struggle of political "hegemonies" and of opposing directions first in the ethical field and then in that of politics proper, in order to arrive at the working out at higher level of one's own conception of reality. Consciousness of being part of a particular hegemonic force (that is to say, political consciousness) is the first stage towards a further progressive self consciousness in

which theory and practice will finally be one (SPN:1971, p.333). And finally, Gramsci links this consciousness of being and progressive political consciousness as a hegemonic force for a proletarian hegemony. This philosophical advance is similar in nature with Marx's dictum that 'ideas become a material force'.

Commonsensical views are meaningful in immediate surroundings of space and time, even though it may have certain false conceptions of a totality. It has in a sense certain direct affiliations with the object of 'immediacy'. The distant objects in a totality, from a commonsensical view, seem to be the external ones. The internal character of the external objects are not intuitively grasped, at least, not in the same way as the immediate objects are grasped. Commonsensical views are systematically incapable of establishing on its own 'the laws of interconnections' between the objects in their totality. It is in general fragmentary. Nevertheless, subaltern commonsense has its own originality and dynamism. Some rationalisations of their subordination might have been constructed by themselves, such a thought process could have been directly received from their own structure, traditions and beliefs and not necessarily as created by the dominant hegemonic class/economic class. For example, every religion has a surface unity. But there could be multiple of strands of each and every religion. There could be one kind of Hinduism for the peasants, one for the workers, and one for 'intellectuals'. Geographically also, there could be one variant of Hinduism for the Kashmiris, one for the north Indian and the

other for the south Indian people and like that. These variations, philosophically, prove that each locale has its own mode of thinking which is original to it. This is the quality directly received from their own actual life conditions, their own tradition, and they are not prescribed to them by their organisers. Anthropological studies by Freeman, also confirm similar point. Evidences from study of stratified societies prove that no group of people is content to be low in a caste hierarchy - to live a life of inherited deprivation and subjection - regardless of the apparent stability of the system and regardless of the rationalisations offered by their superiors or constructed by themselves".<sup>18</sup> Even when rationalisation of the caste/class system are accepted by lower sections, there are evidences to show the proliferation of discontent and resentment about their subordination in a hierarchical society. Even while there are deeply rooted Hindu worshipers and devotees in our country, but many of them condemned the 'Rath Yatra' led by L.K. Advani of Bhartiya Janata Party during October 1990 as politically motivated and dangerous for communal harmony.

Within Marxism the debate on ideology and consciousness had led to two trends with little difference on emphasis, one, historical and the other positivist.<sup>19</sup> The positivist tradition has its origin with Engels and is reflected in Lenin, Plekhanov and Labriola. The historicist approach is reflected in early Lukacs and Gramsci. According to George Larrain, "In Engels, Lenin and Plekhanov it underrates the role of consciousness which

has a structural determinism. In Gramsci and Lukacs, it tends to overrate the role played by consciousness in the production of ideology and overcoming of capitalist society".<sup>20</sup> The Marxist studies on 'Ideology' have a tendency to treat subaltern consciousness either as an outcome of an 'appropriation' of bourgeois value or its inversion. Both the approaches are two sides of the 'False consciousness' school in Marxism. They treat working-class consciousness in hegemony processes as some kind of concealment of the "structural antagonisms" in bourgeois society. Both seem to be satisfied with a critique of the dominant ideologies and structural antagonisms. They ignore to recognise the cognitive processes original to the 'being' of the subaltern groups. Gramsci's concept of 'contradictory common sense', however, recognises the 'original' thought processes of the subaltern groups. Study of 'subaltern consciousness' in the hegemony process may be considered as a significant development of the theory of 'hegemony' in the structural aspects of Marxism. The significance of Gramsci, according to David Forgacs, lies in that his "Whole system" view provides a way of conceptualising the relations between economic conditions, state forms and political action which allows for specific descriptions of the formal constraints and determinations at work in the system but does not see the outcomes of particular political struggle as pre-given".<sup>21</sup>

Gramsci's theory of common sense has a larger significance in terms of a 'whole-system' and found the support of amorphous

groups of theorists trained in sociology any anthropology who focus on the interaction of politics with the 'belief systems' of the society. Some of them stand for 'traditional' value, others for 'modern' values. Gramsci corrects the structural bias of the "maximalism, sectarianism and economism of Bordiga and the pessimism, liquidationism and culturalism of Tasca, while seeking to develop a genuinely Leninist political practice-both in terms of intra-party norms and of responsiveness to the spontaneous activity of the masses" (SPN: p.XCV). Gramsci reminds that both commonsensical beliefs and academic theories are not external to state and the civil society; they are constitutive of the entity called state. However there is a tension between the levels of mediation analysed by Gramsci. There is problem of ensuring perpetual coherence between the self-consciousness of the mediator and that of the mediated. The possibility is reached in Gramsci's resolute effort to coordinate all the positions necessary for the emergence of the 'collective will'. This possibility presses on the need to fill up the critical gap in the approach to mediation. These frontiers are significant. They present problems which can be only analysed in practice and not in any theoretical resolution. Gramsci sufficiently revealed the main cognitive maps of politico-hegemonic struggles and issues to emphasise the new tasks of Marxist praxis. According to PIERRE VILAR "the world history covers both the knowledge of material and material of that knowledge" which consists generally in the question of production, politics, hegemony and change.<sup>22</sup>

## EDUCATION AND IDEOLOGY

The debate on ideology within Marxism has generated too many complexities and controversies. As we have seen, Gramsci and Lukacs tend to overrate the role played by consciousness in the production of ideology and overcoming the capitalist society. In Engels, Lenin Plekhanov and Labriola, the role of consciousness is underplayed by structural determinism (George Larrain). In some of the writings creation of consciousness begins from a void whereas in others it begins from the contradictions in the reign of necessity. In Marx and Engels the concept of ideology has different connotation - Sometimes ideology is treated negatively as false consciousness or as double conversion of reality. At other times, it is treated as positive as the totality of forms of social consciousness or as the political ideas connected with the interests of a class. Despite a basic thrust in the direction of a negative concept, their writings are not exempt from ambiguities and obscure statements which occasionally seem to indicate a different direction<sup>23</sup>. Gramsci, for instance, often quotes the passage in which Marx refers to legal, political, philosophical - 'in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out' (Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy) in order to sustain his interpretation of ideology as the all-encompassing superstructural sphere in which men acquire consciousness of their contradictory social relations. (Gramsci : 1971: SPN; pp.138,164,377).

The concept of ideology has emerged from the new scientific and philosophical approaches of the modern times in close connection with a critique of religion. At first, it was used to designate science of ideas. It is in Marx, that the critical tradition and the term ideology fuse themselves into a new concept. With Marx, the concept loses its former psychological overtones and becomes connected with the historical evolution of social contradictions. The concept of ideology is born as a critical notion which accounts for a misrepresentation rooted in material reality. Ideology has been conceived negatively as a critical concept which means a form of false consciousness or a necessary deception which somehow distorts men's understanding of social reality. Cognitive values of ideas affected by ideology are called in question. This kind of interpretation is held more by the positivist interpretation of Marx in the writings of Engels, Lenin, Plekhanov and Labriola. Ideology is also held as positive - as a 'world view', expressing the value of a particular social group. The cognitive value of ideological systems, is, therefore, set aside as a different problem. This kind of interpretation is held by Lukacs and Gramsci. In the first category of interpretation, ideology is regarded as a subjective, psychological phenomenon, as a deformation of consciousness - unable to grasp reality as it is. This subjectivist view emphasises the role of individuals, classes and parties in the production of ideology. In the second category of interpretation, ideology is regarded as objective, a social phenomenon. Ideology



appears as a deception induced by reality itself. It is not the subject that distorts reality but the reality itself which deceives the subject. It sees ideology as impregnating the basic structure of society. However, Gramsci differs on this point which we will discuss later in this chapter.

Ideology is sometimes treated as a specific element in the superstructure. It is a restrictive concept of ideology since not all cultural objects would be ideological. Sometimes, ideology is seen as identical with whole sphere of culture. It identifies ideology with an objective level of society. Ideology is also sometimes seen as antithesis of science equated with pre-conceptions or irrational elements which disturb reason - thus preventing it from knowing the truth. So when scientific method is applied, ideology should vanish. In case of Gramsci, science and ideology have common features. They have a common basis in the world view of the originating class. Ideology cannot be overcome by science and science itself may become ideological. According to Gramsci all ideologies and science belong to reign of necessity.<sup>24</sup> Superiority of Marxism is based upon it's being the most conscious expression of social contradictions. Gramsci's views on ideology must be seen in its totality in relation to philosophy of praxis, consciousness (critical thinking), common sense and hegemony. This broad spectrum in Gramsci's construction is also visible in "structuralism". Structuralism originated, both within and without Marxism, with new, forceful propositions for the understanding of ideology.

Cultural phenomena are no longer understood as genetic products of a subject but rather as subjectless, synchronic, underlying structures. Hence the important aspects of linguistics and semiology could also be used to rediscover Gramsci. Structuralism has found important manifestations in the anthropological writings of Levi-Strauss and Godelier, structural linguistic writings of Barthes and Griewas, semiological studies by Tel Quel and the Althusserian transposition of structuralist elements into Marxism.

Gramsci rejected a negative conception of ideology (SPN: 1971; p.376). He refers it as "arbitrary elucubrations of particular individuals" (ibid.). In Marx, it is distortion of reality or 'false consciousness', an inversion of reality - a inversion caused by reality itself and not by consciousness. For Gramsci, ideology is a superstructural expression of a contradictory reality, an expression of 'kingdom of necessity' which embraces every class in society. Gramsci propounds a distinction between two kinds of ideology : 'arbitrary' or 'willed' ideologies and 'historically organic' ideologies. Gramsci concentrates on the latter. In the second sense, ideology is "a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life" (SPN:1971:p.328). Ideology is more than a system of ideas; it has also to do with a capacity to inspire concrete attitudes and provide orientations for action (symbolic meanings). Ideology is

socially pervasive in that men cannot act without rules of conduct, without orientations. Hence, ideology becomes "the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc. (Ibid.p.377). Ideologies are historically necessary, they have a psychological validity because they organise human masses. "To the extent that they are arbitrary they only create individual movements, polemics and so on" (Ibid.). Gramsci reaffirms Marx's dictum "solidity of popular beliefs" as a necessary element of a specific situation. It is in and by ideology that a class can exercise hegemony over other classes, that is, can secure the adhesion and consent of the broad masses. Whereas Lenin and Lukacs treated ideology at the level of theory, Gramsci distinguishes four degrees or levels of ideology; namely (a) philosophy, (b) religion (c) common sense and (d) folklore in a decreasing order of rigour and intellectual articulation. At each level every individual plays his role in different capacities through various ideological apparatuses (media, education etc.) to breakthrough in the hegemonic system.

Thus, ideologies are systems of representations which signify a set of relationships which are real but, which are hidden in another set of relations between people which are no less real. They are not merely 'disguised metaphors of class relations', but have a reality of their own, an interval patterning, 'sui generis'. They do produce inversions and distortions precisely because they gear into social practices and

routines which are hard to transform. The world of appearances does have a reality which is absolutely necessary for capitalist production. The concept of ideology refers not merely to abstract systems of thought, institutionally recognised as such but something more than that. Althusser considers ideology as the way individuals live their life in relation to real conditions of existence, invoking a sense of ideology as lived experience rather than merely thought.<sup>25</sup> This may be called 'practical ideology' which constitutes objective dimension in hegemonic activities. According to Althusser "practical ideologies are complex formations of montages (sets) of notions-representations-images, on the one hand and of montages (sets) of behaviour conduct - attitudes and gestures on the other. The whole functions are the practical norms which govern the attitude and the taking up of concrete positions by men with respect to the real objects and the real problems of their social and individual existence and of their history". The concept of practical ideology invokes a socially defined way of thinking and acting, a set of conventions and assumptions which make meaning possible and which phenomenologists call the 'taken-for-granted' world of everyday life. This concept is akin to what sociologists refer to as culture. But practical ideologies, in the Marxist sense, are not merely cultural but have a material reality. For example, every phenomena, which functions as an ideological sign has some kind of material embodiment. Joseph Femia rightly points out that 'largely because of Gramsci, Marxist view of

culture now understands symbolic or ideological representations of a given historical situation as an integral and defining part of the situation'.<sup>26</sup>

Thus every process in learning, cognition and acquisition of political consciousness is overshadowed by the complex dimension of ideology. In order to raise the political consciousness importance should be given to both the ideological and non-ideological systems of cognition. The distinction here between 'ideological' and 'non-ideological' is only a functional distinction drawn for methodological convenience.<sup>27</sup> According to Maurice Bloch, in Marxist theory, both the ideological and non-ideological systems of cognition are related to system of knowledge which legitimates the social order by building up schemes about the nature of the world which place authority at the source of all things. In non-industrial societies, it was religion (one of the most important process of which is 'ritual') by which ideology penetrated individually.<sup>28</sup> In this case the development of ideology depended upon the degree of heirarchy instituted. Ideology (here religion through ritualisation) institutes power by legitimising it. Instituted authority and ideology generally go together. Ideology is established image created by ritualistic practices. It first negates the basis of non-ideological cognition, an image put in an idiom which is very largely insulated from other interpretations of the world. In due process, ideology becomes powerful, because in more or less obvious manner it is enforced by the powers that be, precisely

because it legitimates their authority. It is powerful also because it offers a vague yet all encompassing scheme in which any and every event can be placed, if one is pushed to give teleological explanations. Ideology is powerful also because of the nature of the ritual process. In the end it is built on the apparent truth of non-ideological cognition both outside and inside. This gives ideology its most fundamental psychological strength. It both affirms and denies at the same time, rather in the way that the christian message of victory over death affirms by implication the finality of death. This is how ideology can mystify, invert and hide the real conditions of existence. This is never completely successful but it is often submitted to because it is sanctioned directly or indirectly by force/threat/punishment/consent (hegemony) or all of these.

Ideology is established by rituals. In the second chapter we observed how authority is established through symbols given in texts and stories. In most of the texts, as we saw, the mythical stories resolved the symbolic clashes of caste backgrounds by upholding a pedagogical ideal of pupil's obedience. Everyday ritualistic practices too, have an ideological message. For example the practice of freeing the child by removing the pre-puce from his penis and then blessing him by pouring water in a container prepared by elders. (This practice is held in Madagascar). It is this blessing containing both the mastered power of nature and of the ancesstors by way of the elders which

gives the child potency : sexual, procreative and social potency. This is a clear case of establishment of ideology, the creation of the world order. We can see that the source of all good things come from those in authority, in this case the elders.<sup>29</sup> A ritual like this is an ideal type of legitimising tool since it offers in its dramatic construction a role for those in authority in which they can appear as the source of all creative power. Non-ideological cognition is the result of an analytical process exercised on the partially (ritually) constructed environment. The product of this analytical process is then standardised by being brought into relation to the communicative code. This is not simply a reflection of natural conditions but is a product, the interaction of the mind and the environment.

The analysis of these propositions to reinforce the counter-hegemonic construction and the conception of historical moral-intellectual bloc is necessary. Cognitive map of popular beliefs and practices are the 'content'. Ideology is the 'form'. Both popular beliefs and practices and ideology constitute a cultural category in the reign of necessity (SPN:1971, p.377). The main point is that "cognition is the product of more than one process and that these processes must include on the one hand adaptation to the environment and on the other the legitimation of exploitation. It is this combination (contradictory common sense) which creates the complexity of the way knowledge is related to history".<sup>30</sup> This requires that we identify the potential fissures in peoples practical ideologies, the points at

which the inner contradictions in these formulations can be most easily brought to consciousness.

So far we discussed the relationship between ideology and power at the level of cognition, learning and knowledge through various social practices. Now we will examine the relationship between power, ideology and education. It must be cautioned here that any systematic account of the ideological function of education should locate education in a larger and more comprehensive theoretical framework which takes cognizance of the complex ideological mediations occurring within such institutions as the family, the media, the churches, the trade unions etc. While schooling, in general, tends to reproduce capitalist social relations, it does not follow that it can do no other function. The mechanisms and ideological forms through which this end is achieved are invariant, or that the process of ideological reproduction occurs without simultaneously reproducing or reflecting the contradictions which latently are inherent in any capitalist society.

It is largely through 'practical' ideology that the school manages to secure the conditions for continued capital accumulation and the reproduction of capitalist class relations. The manner in which schools, classrooms and knowledge are organised, the material practices and routines through which learning and teaching takes place, provide the socially significant context in developing concepts and theories.



'Practical' ideology is thus analytically and historically prior to 'theoretical' ideology. In the classroom, pupils are engaged in processes which legitimate and in the last analysis reinforce the concept of the teacher as the pivotal authority, having the power to structure the pupils' personality, define what is counted as knowledge, regulate the patterns of interaction by exercising control over classroom norms and regulations, as well as over the allocation of rewards and punishment. Within these overall constraints, however, democratic or permissive the teacher, pupils carry on their educational work individually rather than 'collectively' and are encouraged for their diligence, social conformity and deference to the teacher's authority. These social practices are ideologically legitimated by a variety of educational theories whose political context remains hidden from their adherents.

The social relations inside classrooms are an aspect of the overall organisation of the school. However democratic the form of decision making institutionalised in schools, there is always some degree of centralisation of control. There is an institutionalisation of hierarchy which, however weak the boundaries, tends to preserve a basic asymmetry of power between the administration, the teaching body and the students. The majority of the educational institutions and universities remain highly centrally and bureaucratically controlled. The teaching body and students are differentiated -- horizontally and vertically, where the explicit transmission of knowledge tends to

reinforce its arbitrary division into a number of discrete subject areas or disciplines, each with its own methodological presuppositions and principles of organisation. In spite of the movement towards more "integrated" and "interdisciplinary" studies and redefinition of traditional subject boundaries, school knowledge is still often characterised by dichotomies which parallel the hierarchical differentiations of pedagogical relationship : pure/applied; abstract/concrete; specialised/general; academic/vocational etc. "This crisis of the curriculum and organisation of the schools, i.e. of the overall framework of a policy for forming modern intellectual cadres, is to a great extent an aspect and a ramification of the more comprehensive and general organic crisis". (Gramsci: SPN:1971, p.26).

The political content of education is an 'absent' presence. Education is not related to actual life conditions (SPN : p.37). Politics is a fact of life, where struggle for scarce resources involves power relations. Politics studied formally in schools is constituted as segment of civics or social studies courses. Only few disciplines are given any ostensible political content and that content is thought to lie in the subject matter under study rather than in the practical value of the theories of methodologies. Norms in schools place significance on the students social background. "This indifference towards students' social backgrounds is characteristic of the overall conceptualisation of the curriculum as a body of 'received'

knowledge, a logical packaging of facts. How knowledge relates to a student's identity has no place in this conceptualisation<sup>31</sup>.

In the educational practices which structure the transmission of the curriculum, knowledge and life are arbitrarily separated. Knowledge is thought to have an ongoing objective 'facticity' which can be brought to bear in an ad hoc way on the problem of life in the movement towards a more relevant curriculum. Thus Gramsci writes : "Truly active participation of the pupil in the school can only exist if the school is related to life" (SPN, p.37). It is not so as desired but there exists a chaotic separation and differentiation. Through its working, the division between mental labour and manual labour, the fundamental attribute of a class society, is consolidated. It reproduces the dichotomies like thinking and doing, planning and execution, between those who produce, and those who organise and are sustained by the productive labour of others. The key elements of liberal ideology, beliefs in individualism and equality of opportunity are reinforced. The final content of the curriculum should be studied in relation to the social conditions in which knowledge is produced and reproduced over time and to the practical ideologies which these conditions generate. School knowledge is experienced as reified, fragmented and disparate collections of unproblematic facts. The grounds of such knowledge usually remain hidden, the procedures for arbitrating between different knowledge claims are rarely exposed to critical examination. For example, the history of

introduction of 'Science' into the curriculum especially at higher stages was as a result of productive forces. What was significant, however, was the specific mode of its incorporation and the quelling of its potentially radical implications for the working class. This occurred in such a way as to facilitate its appropriation by the bourgeoisie. It became a 'reified' knowledge presented as closed system of 'facts' or 'abstract' theory with no overt social and political relevance. Instead of science being a medium of emancipation, it was transformed into a mechanism for ruling class domination. Science helped to advance and complicate the organisation of work, rendering the labourer as mere instruments of machines. Similarly, the division between mental and manual labour excluded the working class from insights into scientific process. It deprived them of the esoteric knowledge on which the increasing control over their lives was based. Science elaborated theories and concepts which tended to rationalise and legitimize relations of domination and subordination. Psychological theories of intelligence, together with bourgeois sociology provide ample evidence of the appropriation of the social sciences to serve class ends. Michael Young's work on school science has exposed science as an ideological and value laden activity. Science was incorporated into the framework of the hegemonic class in a manner which virtually excluded its radical potentials.<sup>32</sup>

Education no longer involves the initiation of young into a broad and general humanistic curriculum as Gramsci desired. Even

at its highest levels, the emphasis is on training pupils in those specific instrumental skills required by a differentiated work force, through a range of practical ideologies which serve to reinforce and legitimise the social relations of production. The changes in the social role of the universities and the threats to its precarious autonomy illustrate the way in which specialised theoretical knowledge is appropriated to serve class ends. The demise of practical as opposed to technical, rationality renders the task of generating a genuine counter-hegemony much more problematic. However, the process is a contradictory one, just as Gramsci continually emphasised.

#### LANGUAGE, IDEOLOGY AND EDUCATION

Gramsci's 'Notes' on the significance of language in terms of cognition, communication, ideology and social change are very significant though quite brief. (See SPN:1971:p.325). According to him "every language contains the elements of a conception of world and of a culture". By anyone's language one can figure out the cognitive map of the complexity of one's conception of life. A poorly developed language 'is fossilised and anachronistic in relation to the major currents of thoughts which dominate world history'. It cannot be universal. Hence it is necessary to learn and develop the national language properly. A great national language based on its historic richness can be a potential transforming agent. So, it is necessary to study the ideological dimension of a language with helps from disciplines like

linguistics and semiotics. Since social and cultural phenomena are infused with semiotic meanings and ideology has been defined as a sign system, linguistics, as the study of verbal signs and the most theoretically advanced branch of semiology (the study of systems of signs), all these areas have become theoretically fruitful sources of insights into the working of ideology at more deeper levels.

The significance of language as a central concern in the study of ideology must not be underestimated. Words are basic to any form of communication. Language enables sounds to mean and is the mediator of ideological signs. The limits of one's language mean the limits of his world view.<sup>33</sup> It is clear, by implication, that all experience is subject to at least the partial press of language. Language is a coding system which classifies and organises the external objective world in some kind of meaningful way. "Language itself...is a totality of determined notions and concepts and not just of words grammatically devoid of content" (SPN:1971, p.323). Language constitutes a significant element of 'spontaneous philosophy' (Gramsci's term) or of 'practical ideology' (Althusser's term). Words are not merely names for things 'out there' standing in a one to one relationship with them, as a nominalist might think, but derive their meaning from their embeddedness within a whole structure of language and possibly as a coding system which articulates and defines how events, phenomena and social relations are to be interpreted. Ideology cannot be reduced to,

nor thought of as identical with language, but the way in which men come to understand their world and act within it is a subject to the mediation of language. Language and thought both partially suppose each other. Language is not a mere tool for communicating thoughts, since what has to be communicated is already, at least partially subject to encoding potential of language. Linguistics in Marxist analysis of ideology has been influenced by structural anthropology in the work of Levi-Strauss (1966, 1973), semiotics in Barthes (1967, 1972), structuralist Marxism in Althusser and Poulantzas and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Materialist view of language, social and cognitive psychology are grounded in a theory of ideology. 'Individual consciousness is not the architect of the ideological superstructure but it is only a tenant lodging in the social edifice of ideological signs'. Language use, in Marxist view, should be studied in its social and historical context. The basic social category for understanding variations and difference in speech forms and themes is that of class or production relations. "Production relations and the socio-political order shaped by those relations determine the full range of verbal contacts between people, all the forms and means of their verbal communication of work, in political life, in ideological creativity".<sup>34</sup> The key to understanding ideology is thus language, and the unit of study for linguistics is the word. "The word is the ideological phenomenon par excellence".<sup>35</sup> Words in

themselves, are neutral, but they become partisan because of their central position within ideologies viewed as signifying practices. Three methodological prescriptions for the analysis of language and ideology are offered : (a) that, it should not be divorced from the material reality of signs; (b) the sign should not be divorced from the concrete forms of social intercourse; and (c) that, communication and its forms need to be related to the material base. Words themselves have no intrinsic meaning but are given meaning and context by their structured location within 'behavioural' ideologies. The emphasis on the 'context' is fruitful because a consideration of the fundamental social relationships between speakers and audience is an essential prerequisite for any imputation of meaning. The relationship between ruling-class hegemony and patterns of linguistic dominance lies in that, they always strive to make verbal and other ideological sign unaccented, or with a completely unambiguous meaning which serves their interests.

Gramsci's linguistic studies played a decisive role in the formation of the concept of hegemony. Even his early writings stressed the centrality of language in cementing a given group's prestige and cultural leadership. Cultural meanings emerge in various historical "texts", sermons, advertisements, folklore, popular ritual etc. Critics have complained that Marxists are too much preoccupied in unmasking mystifications and too little concerned with the utopian promises implicit in their ideology.<sup>36</sup> E.P. Thompson replies that coexistence of ideology and utopia can



be brought to a variety of cultural forms. For example, rule of law constitutes not simply a powerful hegemonic instrument but also a fund of beliefs and values from which the less powerful could draw sustenance. The meaning of law could be contested by conflicting social groups, this is what gives legitimacy to bourgeois legal system. Law also promises a reign of universal norm with utopian implications.<sup>37</sup> Emphasis on the dialectic of ideology and utopia helps us to get beyond one dimensional conception of cultural hegemony, as we remain in the world of binary oppositions : truth and falsehood, resistance and accommodation. Semiotic theory suggests one way out of the binary realm by drawing attention away from the static categories and towards the process by which meaning is constructed in particular texts. Ideology is less a product than a process in which different kinds of meanings are produced and reproduced through the space provided by different neutral attitudes. This space allows certain sign systems as necessary, natural, or inevitable ways of recognising meaning and suppresses or ignores other sign systems. This is how semiotic codes are constructed, whether they are scientific, legal, fictional or political. So instead of describing only ideological elements and evaluating their truth according to a preestablished canon of interpretation, we might more profitably ask how these codes establish the plausibility of their discourse. Semiotics leads us away from truth i.e. toward "truth effects" - the elements in a code that resonate "truthfully" with the subjective experience of a particular audience.

The problem of audience brings us beyond the binary realm i.e. towards communication theories that stress the reciprocal quality of meaning construction. To move beyond the binary realm of accommodation and resistance, we might ponder the Russian literary critic MIKHAIL BAKHTIN's (under the pseudonym Volosinov: 1973) emphasis on culture as many-voiced conversation - a common place idea. Bakhtin (Volosinov) imagined the 'conversation' part not only within the culture as a whole but also within each utterance.<sup>38</sup> "Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions, it is populated - overpopulated - with the intentions of others" he wrote. There are traces left by other speakers, by other rhetorical and discursive traditions. Language is marked by a plurality of value laden perspectives in challenging contact with one another. It is also by its very nature dialogical : each utterance implies a symbolic exchange with at least one other speaker. All these qualities are especially relevant to the language of a hegemonic culture. By virtue of its leader's effort to win popular consent, hegemonic culture becomes internally persuasive rather than merely authoritative. It preserves a certain indeterminacy and openness. As a result - so one can infer from Bakhtin - that, even the most successful hegemonic culture creates a situation where the dominant mode of discourse and each visual or verbal text within it - becomes a field of contention where many-sided struggles over meanings are constantly fought out.<sup>39</sup> These arguments parallel some of the

dominant tendencies in "post structuralist' literary criticism. If 'deconstructionists' like Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida have done anything else, they have explored with extraordinary virtuosity the "inter textuality" and multivalence of literary texts - the proliferation of covert encounters with other authors and works, the wide variety of ways a text can subvert its own apparent meaning. In the 'deconstructionist' view, as in Bakhtin, the text is an arena for a multiplicity of cultural struggles, not merely a dualistic class conflict<sup>40</sup> Bakhtin's approach cautions the cultural historians to avoid a kind of even-handed reductionism : first look for assimilation, then the protest. By insisting that texts can both reinforce power relations and contain a multiplicity of conflicting meanings, Bakhtin has opened an approach to language that was barely begun by Gramsci.

However the main challenging problematic in semiotic theory is its tendency to deny the human subject. (This antisubjectivism does not characterise the psychoanalytic semiotics of Jacques Lacan and Emile Benveniste). In Derrida's polemics, the 'self' is a symptom of the "metaphysics of presence" that has infected Western culture for centuries. In Althusser's structuralism, the sense of the 'subjective will' is an illusion called up by the master magicians of bourgeois ideology, The denial of the human subject is more generally present in the antisubjectivist view that language is not merely a tool to express a person's ideas but a system of signs that creates the precondition for notions like individuality and

subjectivity. We are cognitively available to ourselves and others only through the guise of language. In Foucault's case the rejection of "human agency" is rooted in an effort to capture the blankness and unintelligibility of twentieth century structures of domination - particularly the discourse of the "human sciences", which seems unspoken by human subjects. The assault on subjectivity has some salutary effects. It offers a reminder that everyone is a creature as well as a creator of his culture - imprisoned by his available idiom even as he seeks to use it as a tool for mastery. It illuminates the ways that notions of selfhood can be socially constructed. And it offer a healthy antidote to humanist ideology.

However, some notion of human subjectivity still seems necessary to historical understanding. A resolute antisubjectivian not only fails to account for resistance and transformation in "discursive practice" but also threatens to degenerate into monocausal and mechanistic a model as the 'economic determinism' which Gramsci criticised so effectively. Rather than insist on a system, the historian might acknowledge language as another of those structures that may appear immutable and objective but are constantly changing in fluid interaction with human subjects. Indeed, that was Gramsci's own view, which he maintained against the reductionist grammarian of his time.

Limitations of a linguistic view of cultural history brings us back to Gramsci. The focus on language can make us conscious

of the endless ambiguities involved in communication and remind us that most meanings are not reducible to any binary scheme, even though they may be shaped in part by the structures of power. The problem is that, once inside the labyrinth of inter-textuality, the historian often seems unable to hear the human voices outside. And that is part of our task as well, to listen to those voices (however dissonant and confused) and try reconstruct the human experience of history. That in the end, was Gramsci's greatest strength : his openness to the variety and contrariety of experience. Despite his rationalism and his concern to locate overarching patterns of culture, Gramsci recognised that the ground of all culture is the "spontaneous" philosophy absorbed and shaped by individual. Spontaneous philosophy is not sectarian but constitutes various levels. To repeat, it contains : (1) language; (2) "Common sense and "good sense", (3) popular religion. In this theory of the philosophy of language Gramsci gave primacy to its historical and social character.

#### HEGEMONY AND EDUCATION

Till now, we have discussed education, consciousness, common sense, ideology, language, etc. and have seen how they are constitutive of a hegemonic process. We observed that the 'theoretical' and 'practical' ideologies within which people live their everyday lives occur within specific relations of domination and subordination. Thus everyday practical ideologies

are structured, and intersected by the forms and themes of dominant meaning and values - what is called hegemony . Our aim, now is to totalise all our previous constructuions in relation to hegemony and see how educational activities are conditioned by hegemonic struggles.\* According to A.S. Sassoon (1980) any definition of hegemony is complicated by the use of the word in two diametrically opposed senses : first, to mean domination and secondly, to mean leadership, implying some notion of consent. But these two are not diametrically opposed, as Sasson considers. Domination can also be established by engineering consent through a kind of leadership. Even Perry Anderson (1976-77) in a brilliant analysis of Gramsci's work, has documented the ambiguity and shifting characterisation of the precise relationship between state and civil society, but he fully endorses the heuristic value of the concept, both theoretically and politically. In a reply to Anderson's interpretation of Gramsci, David Forgacs writes that 'Gramsci according to Anderson, reproduced the error of left social - democracy in overplaying the centrality of hegemony and civil society and underplaying the coercive role of the state with detrimental consequences for socialist strategies". This argument according to David Forgacs seems to be wrong. The concept of hegemony has been used by many earlier Marxists, but it was Gramsci who first expounded systematically the concept of hegemony and identify

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\* For differing intepretations of the concept of hegemony see A.S. Sassoon (1980), Perry Anderson (1976-77); David Forgacs (1989); Gwyn Williams (1960) and Buci-Glucksmann (1980).

its political significance, Most commentators agree that hegemony is the key concept in Gramsci's 'Prison Notebooks' and the most important contribution to Marxist theory. But there are varied interpretations of this concept. For example, to Gwyn Williams, hegemony implies "an element of direction and control not necessarily conscious". According to him, "this hegemony corresponds to a state power conceived in stock Marxist terms as the dictatorship of a class". A.S. Sassoon placed Gramsci's term in its larger conceptual field -- the idea of the state as 'hegemony fortified by coercion', the notion of 'historic bloc', the view of intellectuals as 'the organisers of hegemony', and the 'pervasive concern with the party'. Like Anderson, Buci - Glucksmann locates Gramsci's highly individual use of the term more precisely within the deeper ideological context of Russian social democracy (going back to Plekhanov) and in the contemporary use of the Comintern. According to Eric J. Hobsbawim ('Approaches to Gramsci', p. 30) hegemony constitutes a process and legitimation of revolutionary overthrow and their receptance as guides and leaders. According to Joseph V. Femia (1981) hegemony was "Gramsci's most impressive contribution to Marxist analysis - to help shift its focus away from economics and natural science to the terrain of culture - to philosophy and the intellectuals, to popular psychology, and to the manifold agencies of socialization."<sup>41</sup> The success of Fascism in Italy and BJP's and its allies in India during recent years are examples of hegemonic processes as the overarching pattern of culture.

In his early writings, Gramsci refers hegemony as working class strategy, i.e. in terms of building class alliances.<sup>42</sup> In his 'Prison Notebooks' Gramsci goes beyond this use of the term and refers to the way the bourgeoisie establishes and maintains its rule. In modern times, Gramsci argues, a class maintains its dominance not simply through a special organisation of force, but because it is able to go beyond its narrow, corporate interest, exert a moral and intellectual leadership, and make compromises within certain limits ) with a variety of allies who are unified in a social bloc of forces which he calls as historic bloc. This bloc represents a basis of consent for certain social order, in which the hegemony of a dominant class is created and recreated in a web of institutions, social relations, and ideas. The 'fabric of hegemony is woven by the intellectuals who, according to Gramsci, are all those who have organisational role in society. Thus, he goes beyond the definition of state as the instrument of class as given by Marx, Engels and Lenin. In their case, there is more of 'economic determinism' in the relationship between the ruling class and state. Although Gramsci makes a distinction between 'civil society' ('as web of institutions of hegemony) and political society' (areas of political institutions in legal constitutional sense), this division, for him, is purely a methodological division stressing the overlap that exists between the two in actual societies (SPN:1971:p.160).



Thus, hegemony refers to a set of assumptions, theories, practical activities, a world view through which the ruling class exerts its dominance. Its function is to reproduce, on the ideological plain, the conditions for class rule and the continuation of the social relations of production. Hegemonic beliefs and practices thus shape practical ideologies and penetrate at the level of common sense, mixing and mingling with ideological practices which are more spontaneously generated. The concept of ideological hegemony does not mean that non-dominant classes are ideologically manipulated through and through in some over-determined way. On the contrary, Gramsci, stressed that hegemony has to be fought against countervailing tendencies produced by the structural location of the working class in the labour process and elsewhere, e.g. education, religious practices, rituals, practical ideologies (norms) governing actual day-to-day activities. In fact, he emphasised the contradictory nature of common sense. Working class men, for example, often experience a fundamental discontinuity between the social relations in which they are involved at work and those they encounter within the family, the local community, the trade union and elsewhere. Each of these constitute relatively autonomous 'locales' which give rise to varying and competing tendencies in their practical life (ideology), the whole leading to a fundamental dissociation at the level of consciousness.

We observed that Gramsci illuminated the ambiguities of consent i.e. the conflict that sometimes arises between person's

conscious thought and his actions. The conflict points to the complexity of 'popular consciousness' under capitalism. Thus common sense, is never a simple and mechanical result of hegemony. It contains elements spontaneously generated, residual elements handed down intergenerationally (even though the conditions which produced them, may have disappeared by now) and borrowings from inter-class contact, as well as being intersected and moulded by the operation of hegemony into some kind of contradictory unit. Moreover, common sense responds to changes in the socio-historical process. Hegemony has to be viewed, then, as a dynamic movement continually responding to unresolved conflicts and new ideological tendencies. In practice, new ideological initiatives are continually emerging both within and without the dominant hegemony. From this perspective, the maintenance of hegemony doesnot require active commitment by subordinates to the legitimacy of elite rule or class rule. Less powerful people may be thoroughly disaffected. At times, they may openly revolt through strikes and mass movements. But normally most people find it difficult, if not impossible to translate the outlook implicit in their experience into a conception of the world that will directly challenge the hegemonic culture. The problem is partly one of language and here Gramsci anticipated Michel Foucault's emphasis on the role of "discursive practice" in reinforcing domination. Gramsci realised that "every language contains the elements of a conception of world" (SPN : 1971 p. 325). Hence the available

boundary helps mark the boundaries of permissible discourse, discourages the clarification of social alternatives, and makes it difficult for the dispossessed to locate the source of their unease, let alone remedy it.

The overall picture that Gramsci provides is not a static, closed system of ruling class domination. Rather, it is a society in constant process of interaction where the creation of counter hegemony remains a live option. As one of Gramsci's most thoughtful critics observed, hegemony is "a process of continuous creations which given its massive scale, is bound to be uneven in the degree of legitimacy it commands and to leave some room for antagonistic cultural expressions to develop"<sup>43</sup> Gramsci's vision of society involves not a mechanical model of base and superstructure but a complex interaction of relatively autonomous spheres (public and private ; political, cultural and economic) within a totality of attitudes and practices. And yet he remained faithful to the Marxist tradition in granting causal priority to the economic sphere under most conditions. The base does not determine specific forms of consciousness, but it does determine what forms of consciousness are possible. The process of interaction between various spheres is characterised by the formation and reformation of historical blocs, which, depending on their success in forming alliances and disseminating a coherent ideology, may or may not come to exert a hegemonic influence.

This vision is manifestly more complex than most anti-Marxist critics have realised : it rejects the economic determinism of the Second International. It broadens the notion of ideology, rooting it in 'spontaneous' philosophy, it redirects the obsession with objective determinants of class by introducing the idea of historical bloc ; it acknowledges the role of the state as a complex political entity, not merely a tool of the bourgeoisie, it points us towards cultural definitions of race, ethnicity and gender and towards an exploration of the ways those definitions justify or challenge existing power relations. In terms of cultural hegemony power is exercised and spread by the roles which include parents, preachers, teachers, journalists, literati "experts" of all sorts, as well as advertising executives, entertainment promoters, popular musicians, sports - figures, and "celebrities" - all of whom are involved (albeit, often unwittingly) in shaping the values and attitudes of a society. The "power" includes cultural as well as economic and political power - the power to help define the boundaries of "common-sense reality" either by ignoring views outside those boundaries or by labeling deviant opinions as "tasteless" or "irresponsible". Thus a fully 'extended' hegemony must rest on active consent, on a collective will in which various groups in society unite. Gramsci thus goes beyond a theory of political obligation resting on abstract civil rights to argue that full democratic control develops in the highest form of hegemony. Yet his analysis of various forms of

hegemony, such as that which came to dominate the Italian Risorgimento, shows that the limited nature of consent can lead to a weak basis for political order, which may come to rely increasingly on force.

Hegemony, it may be argued, cannot be reduced to legitimation, false consciousness, or manipulation of the mass of the population, whose 'common sense' world view, according to Gramsci is made up of a variety of elements, some of which contradict the dominant ideology, as does much of everyday experience. What a dominant hegemonic ideology can do is to provide a more coherent and systematic world view which not only influences the mass of population but serves as a principle of organisation of social institutions. Hegemony is not reducible to ideological domination in a perspective stressing the manipulation or social control deliberately exercised by a ruling class. Its basic characteristic is uncertainty, impermanence, and contradiction. In other words, hegemony is susceptible to change and negotiation. According to Geof Eley, hegemony "is not a fixed and immutable condition, more or less permanent until totally displaced by determined revolutionary action, but is an institutionally negotiable process in which the social and political forces of context, breakdown and transformation are constantly in play".<sup>44</sup>

Hegemony is a dynamic process of construction where different circumstances may help or disturb its radical

transformation. In the Gramscian scheme, the 'civil society' provides sufficient space for contestation and negotiation while securing the legitimacy of the system. It involves both limits (compromises) and systematic contradictions. It is this dynamics, contradictory and negotiable aspect of hegemonic construction which also opens the space for counter - hegemonic potentials.

With this space for counter - hegemonic potentials Gramsci defines the special historical project of the proletariat as the creation of a "regulated society" in which hegemony and civil society, or the area of consent, is fully expanded; and political society, or the area of constraint, is diminished in their favour. This implies that the proletariat must create continuous expansion of consent in which the interests of various groups come together to form a new historical bloc. In developing a strategy towards this end, the new hegemony must harness and systematise elements of popular ideas and practice. The concept of hegemony is, thus, the basis of Gramsci's critical analysis of folklore and popular culture and his discussion of religion and of the relationship between the systematic philosophy of the philosophers and the 'unsystematic philosophy' or 'world view' of the mass of the population. And it is here, that education (in the broadest sense) comes i.e. education as the medium of hegemonic/counter - hegemonic expansion in moral, intellectual and political leadership. Even the task of "spreading the scientific temper" cannot be the mere transmission of scientific

knowledge alone which would make little sense unless systematically incorporated into existing idea system or unless it is incorporated into common sense' knowledge by being purposefully incorporated into "practice" or "technique", ideally directly into production processes. The use of science, not simply transmission of its ideas, must be central to this endeavour ; strengthening 'common - sense' perception through incorporation of science into 'practice' or 'production', expanding it's range and scope so as to "reflect back" upon "ideas and traditions" and form a social basis for the generation or strengthening of a critical, scientific attitude. In this endeavour spread of general literacy among the population becomes important. Literacy constitutes not only the ability to decode a text with the help of one's familiarity of script, but also implies the power to project meanings and to share them with a scattered audience. This is vital for the intellectuals to work out an alternative hegemony. For example, let us take up the case of the rise of BJP/ RSS/VHP phenomea associated with Hindu revivalism in India. Symbolically they cashed on the search for 'self-identity'. "Search for 'self-identity' was an important part of the vision of the freedom fighters for an Independent India, and in this revivalist movements played a key role. Hindu Revivalism proved highly relevant to the development of Hindi as a medium of modern education. This was the major function that Hindu revivalist forces assigned to themselves. They appropriated a mass

language, and in the name of education and national development, turned it into a class dialect".<sup>45</sup> The Indian left did not learn lessons from these revivalists nor could they develop the language of the masses i.e. the 'common sensical' symbolic systems.

Even otherwise, the idea that pedagogic styles may influence the cultural forms and values of a society has received very little attention in India.<sup>46</sup> This idea has found wide popularity in Soviet Union in the writings of psychologists like Luria and Vygotsky who held that the child's pedagogic experience plays a significant role in his psychological development. Paulo Freire (1973) too emphasised that the style of communication used for teaching shapes the function of knowledge and skills in the child's life. Empirical studies conducted in the liberal framework by A.C. Purves (1974) point out a similar view on the results of diversity of emphasis in curricula and in teaching styles. He says that, "the schools do indoctrinate students to become the kind of reader, the kind of critic if one prefers that term - that the "establishment" approves".<sup>47</sup> It is in the concept of hegemony that these educational exigencies which are national in character are knotted together. Hegemony or "direction" is associated with the power of educational and cultural institutions in society.



## NOTES

1. Robert C. Tucker (ed.) (1972) : 'The Marx-Engels Reader' p.13, (New York, Norton & Co.)
2. For a discussion on base and superstructure see George Larrain (1983) : 'Marxism and Ideology'.
3. Active dimension of superstructure has been emphasised by Marx in 'Theories of Surplus Value', Vol.I, Ch.IV). Also see Stuart Hall (1977). 'Rethinking the "Base and Superstructure" Metaphor : in J. Bloomfield (ed.) 'Class, Hegemony and Party' (London; Lawrence and Wishart 1977).
4. See, for instance also, Raymond Williams, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', New Left Review 1973, p.82.
5. See S. Kaviraj in Seminar March, 1990 p.15 (Kaviraj locates the autonomy of state in the interstices of class conflict).
6. H. Entwistle - 'Antonio Gramsci - Conservative Schooling for Radical Politics', p.2, (1979, RKP).
7. Rachel Sharp (1980) 'Knowledge, Ideology and the Politics of Schooling - Towards a Marxist Analysis of Education' p.161, (London; RKP).
8. See Rachel Sharp - Ibid., p.158.
9. See Michael R. Matthews (1980), : 'The Marxist Theory of Schooling', p.190.
10. See Gramsci, SPN: (1971) : p.34.
11. See George Larrain (1983) 'Marxism and Ideology'.
12. Marx and Engels (1976) : 'The German Ideology' pp.36-37; Moscow, Progress Publishers.
13. Levels of identity are theorised into various concepts by Laclau i.e.'articulation', 'popular-democratic ideological interpellations' and 'people - power bloc contradictions' see Laclau and Mouffe - 'Socialist Strategy - Where Next?' in Marxism Today, January 1981.
14. See Gramsci, SPN: (1971), p.263. Here the notion of an objective core common interest has economy as the key determinant, as "no type of state can avoid passing through a phase of economic - corporate primitivism".

15. See David Forgacs - in New Left Review No.176, July/August 1989, p.84.
16. J.V. Femia (1981) : Gramsci's Political Thought : Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process, p.65 (Clarendon Press, London). According to Femia, here Gramsci emerges as a 'realist' neo-Crocean a Marxist working within a voluntarist subjectivist, idealist framework, totally opposed to any form of economic determinism.
17. A reference to the 11th of Marx's 'Theses on Feuerbach', which Gramsci interprets meaning that philosophy (and, in particular, the philosophy of praxis) is a socio-practical activity, in which thought and action are reciprocally determined.
18. James M. Freeman (1979) : 'Untouchable : An Indian Life History' p.397.
19. See George Larrain (1979): - 'The Concept of Ideology'.
20. Ibid, pp.7-90.
21. David Forgacs - New Left Review July-August 1989, No.176, p.88.
22. Eric J. Hobsbawm (ed.) (1984) : 'History of Marxism' Vol.I, p.47 (Selectbook Service Syndicate, India). See Chapter 3, 'Marx and the Concept of History' by Pierre Vilar.
23. See George Larrain (1983) : 'Marxism and Ideology'.
24. See George Larrain (1979) : 'The Concept of Ideology'.
25. L. Althusser (1971) 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' in 'Lenin and Philosophy'.
26. Joseph V. Femia (1981): Gramsci's Political Thought : Hegemony Consciousness and the Revolutionary Process, p.254.
27. M. Bloch : (1989) : 'Ritual, History and Power' pp.106-136.
28. Ibid, p.122.
29. Ibid, p.132.
30. Maurice Bloch (1989), p.135.
31. Krishna Kumar (1989) : 'Social Character of Learning', p.68. (Sage Publication, New Delhi).

32. See Michael Young (1972) : 'On the Politics of Educational Knowledge' in Economy and Society, Vol.I, No.2.
33. See Antonio Gramsci : 1971; SPN, p.325).
34. V.N. Volosinov (1973), 'Marxism and the Philosophy of Language', p.19, London, Seminar Press (Volosinov is the pseudonym for Mikhail Bakhtin).
35. Ibid, p.13.
36. Frederic Jameson (1981), 'The Political Unconscious' See Chapter 6 (Ithaca, New York).
37. E.P. Thompson (1975) : 'Whigs and Hunters', pp.258-269.
38. Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) : 'The Dialogic Imagination', translated Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin, Texas), pp.299-315.
39. Volosinov (1973) (or Mikail Bakhtin) : 'Marxism and the Philosophy of Language', p.23.
40. See Derrida (1981): 'Dissemination', Translated, Barbara Johnson (Chicago).
41. Joseph V. Femia (1981) : 'Gramsci's Political Thought : Hegemony, Consciousness and the Revolutionary Process' p.254.
42. Madan Sarup (1983) : 'Marxism, Structuralism and Education' (p.141) (Falmer press)
43. Walter L. Adamson (1980) 'Hegemony and Revolution : Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory', p.174 (Berkeley : Univesity of California Press).
44. Geof Eley - 'Reading Gramsci in English' p.463 in European History Quarterly Vol 14 (1984)
45. Krishna Kumar - 'Hindu Revivalism and Education' in 'Social Scientist' Vol.18, No.10, October 1990.
46. Krishna Kumar (1989) : 'Social Character of Learning' p.128 (Sage Publications, New Delhi).
47. Ibid.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE AGENTS : THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF EDUCATION : EDUCATION AS AN ACTIVE DIMENSION OF POLITICS

In the last chapter, we discussed education as a part of superstructure. We discussed the relationship of education with other elements of superstructure like consciousness ideology, language and hegemony. Thus education, as we observed, is also an active dimension of politics at various levels. Here, in this present chapter we will discuss the role of various agents through which education becomes a potent factor in hegemonic struggles. Marxism, as Gramsci described it is a 'philosophy of praxis'. While the insights of this concept are intellectually satisfying, they are not visible in the political practices of the 'Left'. Active politics is necessary to overcome oppression. Active politics in Marxist sense does not entail an 'essentialist' view of human nature or man's 'essence'. It involves a recognition that human subjects are constituted within the ensemble of social relationships. Two rival sets of "historical laws" exist side by side in any particular society : the "laws of historical development" as "laid down by the property-owning class organised in the state" and the laws which are "inherent in the living conditions and historical experience of the exploited working class" (Gramsci (1977): Selections from Political Writings 1910-20, p.73). Laws of society involve human activity, they are not 'god' ordained. It is necessary for men

to act through various agencies like state, party, classrooms, texts, media etc. to usher in a new society as perceived by Marx. Marx gave us an ideal of a "society which would be superior to capitalism in three respects : in productive terms, in distributive terms and in political terms. It is a picture of a society which is non-repressive in the most literal sense".<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, our main concern is the question of how mass consciousness, could undergo an effective change through various agencies and consequently how the lives of the masses become a part of ideological hegemonic struggle. In other words, how democratic consciousness can be expanded to help accelerate socialist revolution. The obvious implication is the need to examine the role of main agents like state, intellectuals, party, factory council, media, text and symbols. In the previous chapter, we examined the ideological content of common sense, its contradictory elements and potential weak points to elucidate the positive content in the semiotics of common-sense language and other sign-systems. The content of these findings constitute the substance with which various agents have to work. The task of persuading other people depends adequately upon apprehending the ideological space within which they live. Their life is crossed by multiple of agents in society. Hence, a socialist transformation of society requires that they firstly try to win over and penetrate inside various agents. Then these agents need to clarify the everyday assumption and practices which inform the people's outlook. The agents have to avoid alienating all those

who can be potential allies. Essence of every revolution is the seizure of state and hegemonic power for only when the workers and their popular allies become the new ruling class, can the basis of society be transformed. "Worker's control" is only progressive when they form part of an overall political strategy which aims to wrest state power from the hands of ruling class. (John Hoffman : 1978).

The problem with the Indian 'Left' has been that they have not been able to creep inside various institutions of state and 'civil society' where as their 'Right' wing counterparts, namely, 'Hindu-Nationalists' have made inroads to capture the state power. While there are many breaks with the past in their nationalist and democratic aspirations, the growth of 'Hindu-Militancy', (e.g. BJP/RSS/VHP/BAJRANG DAL/SHIV SENA) during last few years lay in the way they capitalised upon deeply felt populist, nationalist and religious sentiments which pervaded the consciousness of the Hindus who constitute the majority of population in India. After the receding legitimacy of the Congress Party and the state's inability to cope up with the masses dissentment, Hindu revivalists won the elements of subordinate class. The struggle for 'BJP' kind of alternative hegemony and wining over of the subordinate classes during the decades after 1947 was similar to fascist lines. Their workers penetrated everywhere and formed many institutional groups e.g. Shakha Systems, DAV organisation etc. Krishna Kumar writes that "the main overt instrument used by the RSS (Rashtriya Sawyam

Sevak Sangh) to spread its ideology was.... the Shakha, an open area evening class, for socialising male adolescents into quasi-military form of brotherhood..... In all there are about 3000 RSS-affiliated schools".<sup>2</sup> The DAV organisation runs hundreds of schools and colleges in the north and central India. The "Hindu Militants' and revivalists have been able to penetrate deeply in the civil society and work out their own hegemonic systems.

The task of the 'Left' is to articulate and appropriate the various agencies and institutions of 'state' and 'civil society' to foster progressive ideological change. They must generate discontinuities, work out an alternative hegemony, while simultaneously maintaining crucial continuities with the past. It must not neglect the positive and transcendent aspects of 'common-sense' consciousness. Moreover, working class must create its own organic intellectuals, social and cultural institutions and the party. According to Gramsci, the working class, like the bourgeoisie before it, is capable of developing from within its ranks its own organic intellectuals, and the function of the political party, whether 'mass' or 'vanguard' is that of channelling the activity of these organic intellectuals. (SPN: 1971:p.4). Gramsci was right in stressing the importance of 'activity' or 'practice' and the importance of subjective factors - a "state of mental preparedness", (Selections from Political Writings : 1910-20, p.12), determination, a passion for freedom and autonomy - in the class struggle, but these

factors, vital as they are, are not sufficient. It is the developments in the material world which are ultimately decisive.

#### THE STATE

The bourgeoisie state is the greatest agent of cultural modernization because of its ideological universality in modern times. In this context, we observed that there is a double dynamics of ideology (e.g. contradictory common sense) in the Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Gramsci distinguishes between a 'bastard form of hegemony' and 'successful hegemony'. The former produces a passive consensus and leads to a 'passive revolution', successful hegemony, on the other hand, rests on an active and direct consensus arising from authentic absorption of the interests of the various subordinate classes. Even though Gramsci does not explicitly say so, it is obvious that for authentic absorption these interests must be potentially universalisable. In other words, a successful hegemony (or state) must become a genuine blueprint for the future, incorporating the dreams and aspirations of all the deprived classes. Since, the state fails to do so, bastard form of hegemony comes and in authentically absorbs a range of interests and neutralises those of the masses so as to put them to use for reasserting ruling class dominance. (Mouffe : 1979, p.182). It produces a coalitional politics of various classes and historic blocs and this is where actually, a relative autonomy of state lies - a space which provides the agents to work for strategic mediums in an alternative hegemony.



Existence of pre-capitalist forms of exploitation in a bourgeois state necessitates coalitional politics which would enable the ruling bloc to extend its control beyond the confines of the ruling classes. Thus the state provides a terrain for political contestation among various classes, where as in the civil society, hegemonic struggles provide for contestation and negotiation. The locales between these interstices of class conflict provide the communists a promising space in hegemonic struggles. It is here that the working class organic intellectuals and party workers penetrate into and work simultaneously for an hegemonic reconstruction.

According to Gramsci, "State as an continuous movement of assimilation of society comes to a halt and state returns to its conception of "force" when the bourgeois class is "saturated". It ceases to expand and starts to disintegrate and starts losing part of itself" (SPN : 1971, p.260). It is here again, that in such moments of crisis, the socialists (working class organic intellectuals) have to make inroads to expand their hegemonic assimilation. Though in normal times, the state itself functions as an educator, where the 'will to conform' is generated among the masses. The state constructs organic passages/links with all other classes, that is, it enlarges its own hegemonic class sphere 'technically' and ideologically. According to Gramsci, "every state is ethical (or cultural) in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great masses of the population to a particular cultural or moral level, a level (or

type which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes. The school as a positive educative function, and the courts as a repressive and negative educative function, are the most important state activities in this sense : but in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities, tend to the same end - initiatives and activities which form the apparatuses of the political and cultural hegemony..." (SPN:, p.258). Thus the state provides the terrain on which ideological struggle take place both within and without state, but it is without the state i.e., the working class should contest more from outside than from inside. It is crucial to emphasise that Gramsci did not believe that the capitalist state could be reformed. He constantly asserted the imperative necessity for the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state (See Mouffe (ed) : 1979).

Gramsci extended the concept of the state to include its function as an 'educator' (SPN : p.260) and as the site of the exercises of intellectual and moral leadership via the medium of the articulation of private association/civil society. It should nevertheless be noted that this change in definition implied no abandonment of the classical Marxist-Leninist theory of state, for in Gramsci's work the 'leadership' function remains irrevocably tied to the function of domination/coercion. No hegemony could fully exist without coercion. Gramsci's invocations to construct within political society a 'complex and

well articulated civil society' (SPN : 1971, p.238) as a revolutionary element, as well as his call to develop 'an unprecedented concentration of hegemony (SPN : p.268) are well known. It is less well known that their contexts make it perfectly clear that in both case, these were situations in which powers had already been seized. The first reference concerns the general theory of state in the transition period, the second to specific measures for the consolidation of the regime in the USSR against the opposition. For all that Gramsci wrote on proletarian hegemony as an object of pre-revolutionary struggle, it is clear that completely effective hegemony cannot be attained by a class unless it is coupled with exercise of domination over enemy classes. Thus counter-hegemony may be facilitated by the formation of political alliance between forces under communist party's leadership, and persuaded to follow as a result of ideological struggle.

Gramsci's own conception of proletarian hegemony involved the mobilisation by the working class of other classes or class fractions, in the first instance on the grounds of these group's immediate demands and grievances but ultimately on the grounds of their common interest as collective exploited or oppressed classes in overthrowing the capitalist order and installing socialism. For example, Gramsci (1971, p.263) writes : "The content of the political hegemony of the new social group which has founded the new type of state must be predominantly of an economic order". And at other place (p.161) he writes : "though

hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity". Gramsci's concept of transition, although it involved, in conditions of a strong civil society, a long war of position, also indicated the capture of state power as a pre-condition for the withering away of the state-as-coercion. Moreover, in Gramsci's conception of post-revolutionary development, a phase of coercive state control is necessary for the building of socialism, because it serves for the defence of socialist legality and the construction of a planned economy.<sup>3</sup> Thus, existence of state outlines that educational activities in hegemonic sense have a secondary place. It builds up the basis for further political strength to capture state power.

#### THE INTELLECTUALS

The creation of organic intellectuals among the working class is the most instrumental concept running throughout in Gramsci's writings.<sup>4</sup> He defines intellectuals very broadly to include all those who have 'an organisational function in the widest sense' (SPN:1971:p.97). All human beings, he argues, have rational or intellectual capabilities, although only some at present have an intellectual function in society. Thus he emphasises on the need to create an intellectual order, through the development of critical thinking and creating a new culture. The main role of the intellectuals is to bridge the distance

between socialist ideology and spontaneous consciousness, between the 'ascribed' consciousness and psychological consciousness of the working class. The intellectuals in general and the working class organic intellectuals in particular must renovate and critically reconstruct all the existing intellectual activity. These intellectuals who form an intellectual and moral bloc cannot substitute much for a deficient consciousness, hence they must form all kinds of alliances and articulate their collective will as a result of the historical orientation present in the class.

Just as ruling class intellectuals organise the web of beliefs and institutional and social relations, the working class intellectuals also must proceed in the same manner towards counter-hegemonic direction, that is, towards expansion and creation of an alternative hegemony. Thus Gramsci writes : "One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards domination is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer "ideologically".....but this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious if the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals (SPN, p.10). Hence the basic political function of intellectuals in any counter-hegemonic activity is 'directional'. The intellectual has to be an active participant in practical life as constructor, organiser and permanent persuader (Ibid, p.10) and at each step it consists in critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development. Gramsci suggests that whereas professional

philosophers develop the skill of abstract thought, all human beings engage in a philosophical practice as they interpret the world, albeit often in an unsystematic and uncritical form. In this sense Gramsci talks of philosophy becoming a 'material force' (a phrase used by Marx) with effects on the 'common sense' of an age. According to him, the intellectuals must place all philosophical systems and common sense systems in a historical perspective. As a 'philosophy of praxis', Marxism can help the masses 'become protagonists in history as more and more people acquire specialised, critical, intellectual skills, and a coherent world view).

According to Gramsci, a successful ruling class is one which has already established its intellectual and moral leadership before capturing political power. In this process the role of the intellectuals is all important, since the achievement and maintenance of hegemony is largely a matter of education : "Every relationship of hegemony is necessarily a pedagogic relationship" (SPN:1971:p.350). The degree of success of such an educational process will be shown by the extent to which a new consensus, a counter-hegemony is reconstructed. The intellectual must remain in close contact with the masses and problematise their actual life condition and give a personality to the amorphous mass element (SPN p.340). However, Gramsci emphasised that the intellectual, organically linked to the revolutionary class should be a member of a political party which provides the leadership for that class. Political parties elaborate and

diffuse conceptions of the world and are the crucibles where the unification of theory and practice takes place. "The political party for some social groups is nothing other than their specific way of elaborating their own category of organic intellectuals directly in the political and philosophical field ....(party) is responsible for welding together the organic intellectuals of a given group - the dominant one....". This brings us to an analysis of party's role in elaborating an alternative hegemony.

#### THE PARTY AND THE FACTORY COUNCILS

Gramsci believed that the "party cannot lead the working class through an external imposition of authority....either with respect to the period which precedes the winning of power, or with respect to the period which follows it". It could only lead if it really succeeded, "as part of the working class, in linking itself with all sections of that class" (Gramsci : Selections from 'Political Writings' 1921-1926; pp.367-8; 1978). Later, in his 'Prison Notebooks', Gramsci wrote of the role of initiator of political change lying with "the political party - the first cell in which there come together the germs of a collective will tending to become universal and total" (SPN : 1971, p.129). For Gramsci, the party was like a 'Modern Prince', which must be able to forecast the weather for working class struggles against the state. For the working class, it was "communist party which must organise and express a 'national-popular' collective will (alternative hegemony), in other words, must be a "Jacobian"

force bidding the peasants beneath the hegemony of the proletariat and rejecting all forms of economism, syndicalism, "spontaneism" (SPN, p.123). The relationship between the class and the party is not passive and mechanical but rather, the party should work "energetically upon them in order to develop, solidity and universalise them (Ibid. p.227).

Thus the starting point of the party is the development of critical attitude in each individual and creation of an 'elite of intellectuals' in order that human mass becomes independent with their help through the organisation's platform. The political party, apart from assimilating the working class in the culture of revolution in particular, it must elaborate and diffuse the various conceptions of the world held by masses in general. They must "work out the ethics and the politics corresponding to these conception and act as it were as their historical "laboratory". The parties (must) recruit individuals out of the working mass, and the selection (be) made on practical and theoretical criteria at the same time". (SPN, p.335).

Gramsci, in his clearly periods, held his belief in the working class militancy through the role of factory council and not through the party. It was only after the defeat of Turin general strikes of 1920, that he came to realise the necessity of a 'vanguard' party. Nevertheless, factor councils were still supposed to be schools in the training in proletarian democracy. He saw the factory councils as the local model for the future of



dictatorship of proletariat. The constitution of the councils was inspired by this rigorous conception of proletarian democracy. Gramsci's emphasis on this principle is an affirmation of the autonomy and creativity of the working class. Factory councils teach political militancy in the working class against capitalism. It held a vision in an incipient reappropriation of work and its product within the factory. It thereby, rediscovers itself, acquiring consciousness of its organic unity and counterposing itself as one united whole to capitalism. Gramsci here clearly introduces the theme of 'alienation' and its supersession, at a time when Marx's early writings were unknown in Europe; apart from him only Lukacs was to develop a comparable theory - a year later. Gramsci thus constantly emphasises "the joyous consciousness" of "work for use and disinterested production of social wealth" whereby the working class affirmed "its sovereignty" and "its power and freedom as a creator of history", (SPN:1971:pp.201-202).

Gramsci, not only stressed the socialist revolution as a triumph over 'alienation', he also explicitly identified the working class as fundamental 'productive force' which is imprisoned by capitalist relations of production. Factory councils performed a role which found expression in Gramsci's conception of a 'new order'. The proletariat had to accomplish 'two revolutions' - one destroying the bourgeois state, the other constructing a liberated social system. The latter task is more difficult, as recent tragic happenings in Eastern Europe,

USSR and China bear witness. The working class must, therefore, start to train itself as the future governing class, architect of a society without precedent, here and now.

The factory council was its apprenticeship. It was a system of 'workers' democracy that should be a magnificent school of political and administrative experience, which would give a permanent form and discipline to the masses. The experience of power, thus had a cultural function, in the deepest meaning of the word, preparing and educating the working class to its immense future responsibilities. Detonation of revolution, reappropriation of labour, liberation of productivity and rehearsal of power exercise - the council united all these moments. Gramsci's programme was an original and powerful one, though it was soon subjected to a searching criticism by the facts.

The failure of Turin factory worker's movement in 1920 subjected Gramsci to realise its dialectical temporality. He no longer believed in an immediate accentuation to from factory council (however powerful & strong it may be) to the socialist state. He came to realise the importance of party, which alone could make the revolution. The role of the peasantry was reformulated in his later work in the notion of a new historical bloc. The creativity and autonomy of the working class were resituated in the concept of party and historical bloc which was absent from his early writings. All of these ideas were integrated under the aegis of a general theory of party

"Gramsci's conception of party alliances was one in which the mass party itself was a central site and vehicle of alliances. It rested to quite a large extent on a totalising notion of the party and a totalising conception of the 'intellectual and moral reformation' in which ways of thinking and acting compatible with the 'philosophy of praxis would themselves become a foundation of a popular common sense, the theory of contradictions in class society and the practice of their transcendence and elimination".<sup>5</sup>

#### MEDIA, TEXTS AND SYMBOLS

It must be admitted that Gramsci's absence is felt as regards his full treatment of these subjects. He simply gives passing attention to these subjects. Post-Gramscian era saw significant developments in the field of media, texts and symbols. The growth of mass media and other forms of communication has an influence whose ideological content is mediated by the varying forms of social consciousness of its audience and the structured material and social processes conditioning its reception. These agents (media, texts and symbols) have indirect politico-educative function concerned with subjects as culture of everyday : the refinement or the coarseness of people's relationship with each other, the conceptual baggage or apparatus with which they pick their way through the social world. The whole educational process, the process of influencing and being influenced is a part of the

general cultural fabric of the society which has various agents and medium helping each other in a totality of systems. Thus Gramsci writes : "The schools, at all levels, and the Church (Church was the main ideological state apparatus during medieval times, according to Althussee) are the biggest cultural organisations in every country, in terms of the number of people they employ. Then there are newspapers, magazines and the book trade (and now the electronic media) and private educational institutions, either those which are complementary to the state system, or cultural institutions like the Popular Universities. Other professions include among their specialised activities a fair proportion of cultural activity. For example, doctors, army officers, the legal profession. But it should be noted that in all countries, though in differing degrees, there is a great gap between the popular masses and the intellectual groups, even the largest ones, and those nearest to the peripheries of national life, like priests and school teachers" (SPN : 1971, p.342).

Gramsci contends that all these agents do perpetuate this gap between the 'high culture' and 'low culture' marked by many others levels in between the two, as an organic necessity of capitalist hegemonic expansion. This they do as a result of their medley of experiences and social knowledge thrust upon by the hegemonic systems. Each individual possesses and develops a personality of his own, not independent but as a unit in the matrix of social transmission. Unlike functionalist theory, Gramsci's approach does not try to match all cultural

manifestations with the demands of the 'social system'. He allows one to analyse the 'systemic' features of a society characterised by inequalities of power without reducing that society to a system. Nor does Gramsci reify society into a being that has needs and interests apart from human agency; rather, he stresses the 'human creators' of culture. Further, Gramsci's approach allows one to integrate the insights of 'symbolic interactionism' and cultural anthropology with an awareness of power relations. People indeed create their own symbolic universes (e.g. spontaneous philosophy) to make life understandable and tolerable, and those symbolic universes do come to have an apparently "objective" validity, particularly over generations as they spread from scattered individuals to broad social groups. But a given symbolic universe, if it becomes hegemonic, can serve the interests of some groups better than others. Subordinate groups may participate in maintaining a symbolic universe, even if it serves to legitimate their subordination. In other words, they can share a kind of half-conscious complicity in their own victimisation.

All relationship of hegemony, to an extent, necessarily involves an educational relationship. Educational relationships, in a sense, are not restricted to the field of the strictly "scholastic" relationships alone. But in general, it connotes a means by which each generation historically comes to exist and matures (SPN:1971, p.350). In the second chapter of this project, we came to know that all educational activity makes use

of texts which mediates between the teacher and the pupils, between the masses and the elites and between the ruler and the ruled. With the growth of technology, new forms of communication have appeared, though some of them suppress the text. Radio and television, for instance, use texts that the audience mostly cannot see. These media create the impression of a direct dialogue between the audience and the person whose image or sound is being disseminated. They also create an impression of being purely oral media. The impression is misleading, for the dialogue has a text as tangible and significant as the textbooks used for conventional teaching in the classroom. The difference is that the text on which such dialogue is based is not visible. It is suppressed. But it can be retrieved, and it can also be reconstructed. Reconstruction is usually the only way to analyse the texts used in the modern media. Mass media, implicitly denies class or group conflict. It presents a picture of competitive strivers within a benevolent nation-state. Rather than engage in indoctrination, the media and texts have perpetuated values that do not aid the working class to interpret the reality it actually experiences. In other words, values rooted in the worker's everyday experience lack legitimacy. As Gramsci understood, the media and text culture depend not on the brain-washing of the "masses" but on the tendency of public discourse to make some symbols (forms of experience) readily available to consciousness while ignoring or suppressing others.

Education in modern times is not quite separable from the media that promote ideologies, opinions and consumer goods. As a state apparatus, education is in fact a prime agency of propaganda although its instrumentality is more complicated than that of state-owned media or advertising. With the emergence of the modern state, with its instruments of self-analysis and remediation fairly refined after the two world wars, the use of education for propaganda has entered into a more mature stage of which, though Gramsci could foresee but could'nt elaborate details. Corrective procedures are working all the time to minimise the clues that indicate the propagandist nature of education through its various agents and symbols.

For examining the role of media, texts and symbols, thus we need to go for its content analysis. Content analysis is essentially a means to probe propaganda which hegemonic/counter-hegemonic system indulges in. All stories generally involve interaction between two or more than two men, but this interaction denies any connection between their economic conditions or actual life conditions in which these characters live. The general depiction in a story for the general audience or reader doesnot provide an adequate model the structure of relationships embeded in a text. Hence there is a need to relate the symbols used in the text to the actual life conditions under which the particular text is read or seen. In most of the texts, the interaction is imbued with a pedagogic dimension. For example, in many of the stories having two characters rich and

poor, the poor are shown as submerged in their own defective culture and it is the rich who comes to help him out. Such stories offer the reader/audience a model of economic pedagogy that denies any conflict between the rich and the poor. Such stories generally socialise children to perceive poverty as a consequence of certain personality traits rather than as a consequence of social and economic relationships. This agenda fits in nicely with the role that the middle class - the creator of texts - has, that of mediating between the aristocracy/riches and the large population of the poor. The story places the rich on a new, modern pedestal, that of being guides of the poor. Thus, the conflict between the poor and the rich is resolved in a pedagogical relationship.

Stories and texts, like play have a socialising function. Through language (which we have already discussed) and play, a child locates himself in the world he sees. He enhances his participation in the world around him by coming to terms with the role available in a play. He sorts them out, chooses among them, and tries out the one he chooses. The process is both vocal and quiet. If we compare this process with what happens through exposure to texts, we are likely to be struck by the similarity of the two processes. Listening to a story or reading one, the child takes on different stances towards the world depicted in the story. The stances are those of the characters involved in it and that of the narrator who may or may not be visibly present in the text. A story forces us to see the world from viewpoints



other than our own. It forces us in the sense that it leaves us with no choice once we agree to pay attention to it. We would fail to see the point of an action narrated in it if we do not at least momentarily take on the position of the persons engaging in the action. Narrative texts engage us in a sequence of symbolic participation in the world. By agreeing to participate in this way, we place ourselves in the roles attributed to the characters and thereby extend our acquaintance with these roles. The experiences of these characters, to some extent, become our experience. The process of involvement in a text differs from that of involvement in a social situation mainly because it permits us a safe distance from the emotional tangles facing the characters depicted in the text. The distance protects us from the responsibility of taking decisions and acting, it allows us to be 'spectators' in the sense in which Britton (1970) uses this term<sup>6</sup>. As spectators, we are both in the situation and out of it; our emotions are stirred by it, and at the same time we can appreciate, if we care to, the means by which our emotions are being stirred. This aspect of encounter with texts, however, does not prevent the formation of collective patterns of response.

Recurrence of certain types of characters, styles of narration, choice of incidents, and choice of locations in texts may act as a pattern forming force on individual reader's/audience's responses. In principle each reader/audience may be free to reflect upon texts as a unique spectator, with his own repertoire of experiences; yet readers/audience may act as

collectivities whose responses are similar and predictable. This may be the result of accretive exposures as through the presentation of texts in the modern media and in institutions of mass education. These systems specialise in the preparation, assembling and transmission of texts in a systematic manner. Patterning of symbols under the auspices of mass education is not altogether different from what happens in the folklore of a culture on which Gramsci gave a lot of emphasis. It is only more accentuated because formal educational arrangements involve conscious, sophisticated and carefully monitored organisation of symbolic resources. This choice of symbols and their patterning occurs in a hegemonic space placed anywhere on a continuum from "closed" to "open". In the closed version, the subordinate group lacks the language necessary even to conceive symbolic meanings towards concerted resistance; in the open version, the capability for generating meaning and resistance flourishes and may lead to the creation of counter-hegemonic alternatives. But this depends mainly on the replacement of kind of text and symbols and by a concerted effort of the intellectuals to validate the ideas, values and experiences in an alternative symbolic pattern through public discourse. The line between dominant and subordinate cultures is "a permeable membrane, not an impenetrable barrier". By developing the notion of "contradictory consciousness" Gramsci opened possibilities for more complex approaches to symbolic systems and popular culture in order to initiate counter-hegemonic activities effectively. Thus, we find that

Gramsci's attempt towards an understanding of educational process and of subaltern consciousness in hegemony system is thoroughly historical, consistent and systematic, though at times, he doesnot give much technical details. Now, we will go to the next (last) chapter to discuss his contribution to Marxism in the context of what we have discussed so far in previous chapters.

## NOTES

1. Sudipta Kaviraj : 'Perestroika : 'Reflections on the Theory of Power' in 'Social Scientist', p.53, Vol.17, No.7-8, July-Aug., 1989.
2. Krishna Kumar : 'Hindu Revivalism and Education' in 'Social Scientist' Vol.18, No.10, Oct.1990, pp.15-22.
3. See Christine Buci-Glucksmann (1980): 'Gramsci and the State' (pp.282-90). (London; Lawrence and Wishart).
4. Perry Anderson considers theory of intellectuals as the greatest achievement of Gramsci's thought in 'Prison Notebooks'. See New Left Review, No.100, p.44.
5. David Forgacs - New Left Review No.176, July-Aug.1989, pp.86-87.
6. J. Britton (1970) : 'Language and Learning' (London: Allen Lane)

## CHAPTER 5

### GRAMSCI'S CONTRIBUTION : (CONCLUSION)

#### (A) IMPLICATION OF GRAMSCI'S IDEAS ON EDUCATION FOR REVOLUTIONARY PRAXIS

As stated in previous chapters, Gramsci's treatment of the subject of education is only one aspect (though quite a significant one) of hegemony. Gramsci's 'whole-system' view provides a way of conceptualising the relations between economic conditions, political institutions, social and cultural forms which allows for specific descriptions of the formal constraints and determinations at work in the system. It does not see the outcomes of particular political struggles and educational practices as pre-given. The idea that 'nothing is pre-given' refers to the Marxian concept of 'praxis' which emphasises the role of practice, work, politics and struggle as the mechanics of social transformation.<sup>1</sup> The power of correct thinking lies in its ability to intervene successfully in the causal mechanisms of the world and to create or embody its own conceptions. More specifically, Marxism sees 'practice' or 'conscious' human activity as mediating factor between 'mind' and 'matter' between 'subject' and 'object'. Education and consciousness arise out of and are shaped by practice, and in turn, should be judged in and by practice. This constitutes the crux of a Marxist epistemology and a theory of science.

Gramsci's resistance to Mussolini, his stress on the active role of intellectuals, articulation of a popular consciousness and thought in history, creation of working class cultural and political institutions, symbols, sign systems, language etc. - all these make him an appealing figure. His relevance lies also in the analysis of failure of communist movement in the present day world capitalism. He offers a more comprehensive, successful Leninist but anti-Stalinist revolutionary strategy. The main concern of this chapter will be an examination of the analytical uses of Gramsci. There are two sections in this chapter. One section will focus on the strategic aspects of revolutionary politics and the other on the epistemological status of Gramsci's ideas on education.

When one talks of Gramsci's ideas on educational politics, one cannot ignore his revolutionary vision. It must be critically recognised that his educational and political ideas contain some remarkably suggestive insights into the question of symbolic domination and subordination in capitalist societies. Eric J. Hobsbawm has brought us two significant points from Gramsci's political theory.<sup>2</sup> (a) The first concerns the possibility that a 'passive revolution' within capitalism might reabsorb a failed revolutionary initiative from below. "On the one hand the ruling class (or the world capitalist system) might grant certain demands to forestall and avoid revolution; on the other hand, the revolutionary movement might find itself in practice (though not necessarily in theory and principle)

accepting its impotence and might be eroded and politically integrated into the world capitalist system". (b) The second concerns the Machiavellian emphasis that the basic problem of hegemony is not how one comes to power, but, how one comes to be accepted in power. These two points, in a major way explain the events that have taken place in USSR and Eastern Europe during last few years. They also explain the structural crisis facing the Indian Left movement along with the rise of 'Hindu- Hindi' revivalism in recent years.

Gramsci's political thought, as it has been demonstrated in previous chapters, provides an alternative to Stalinism. He attempted to articulate issues in a general Leninist framework, though he differed from him at many issues. For example, for Lenin, "Marxist science came from without, carried by the party in order to overcome a deficient consciousness" whereas in case of Gramsci it consisted "not in overcoming a deficient consciousness but in providing a "collective will", a historical orientation already present in the class". (George Larrain : 1979). It was party with the assistance of intellectuals, which could provide direction to the historical orientation present in the class. 'It is proletariat itself which produces its organic intellectuals'<sup>3</sup> Gramsci could bridge the gap between socialist ideology and spontaneous consciousness of masses through the role of organic intellectuals. According to Gramsci, Marxist ideology doesnot substitute for a deficient consciousness but expresses a collective will, a historical orientation already present in

embryonic form in the class. Lenin's scientific ideology had to struggle against spontaneous consciousness whereas Gramsci's philosophy (marxism) expresses a historical spontaneous direction which doesnot exclude the possibility of direct political action. EDUCATION DOES NOT SUPPRESS BUT PURIFIES SOCIAL REVOLUTION. Emphasis on educational and hegemonic activities doesnot turn Gramsci into a reformist, rather than he still remains a revolutionary, he doesn't believe that road to socialism was a parliamentary one. (See Mouffe : 1979, Carl Boggs: 1976, Lucio Colletti : 1977). Gramsci is celebrated for his place in a revolutionary pantheon of 'non-stalinist' tradition and also for the singularity of his own intellectual contribution. Gramsci is regarded as materialist who does in a sense uphold the primacy of the economic factor. He is not a determinist since this primacy allows for an interaction between the base and superstructure such that the productive forces determine only what forms of consciousness are possible, rather than determining the actually existing forms<sup>4</sup> (Femia). Gramsci developed Marxism in the Leninist tradition in so far as he rejected elitism and bureaucraticism and to the extent that the party had cultural and social tasks and not just political ones. He also believed that the industrial proletariat should form alliances with peasants and even with members of the petty bourgeoisie. His commitment to the proletarian cause is really a commitment to all oppressed groups.



In a methodological discourse, at times, Gramsci is brought nearer to the position of Western Marxists. In Perry Anderson's account, Western Marxism becomes more a syndrome of the objective conjuncture in the non-revolutionary years after 1923, when the major Marxist theoreticians mostly retreated from practical politics and moved to abstract philosophical modes of thought sharply distinguished from the materialist concerns of the classical Marxist tradition before 1914. In this sense, according to Perry Anderson, Western Marxism becomes more the philosophy of defeat than of unrealised libertarian potentials.<sup>5</sup> However, one can say that Gramsci fits very poorly in the 'Western Marxists' framework. His marxism was far away from any bloated theoretical enterprise. He was both more practical and more historical than the Western Marxists. Gramsci's emphasis on the study of history, tradition and philosophy, his repeated emphasis on the role of intellectuals to remain in contact with masses, and the task of giving a historical direction to the masses constitute the real concerns in the 'philosophy of praxis'. The problem with many structuralists (like Althusser) is that they tend to neglect the problems of 'praxis' and social change.<sup>6</sup> Structuralists, though they are very consistent in their writings, their self-indulgence in abstractions is not correct. Structuralist solution to the relations between ideology and science leads to overrating of the role of science and underrating of the role of revolutionary practice (George Larrain:1979). Gramsci is an antidote to this Western Marxists

tradition, for him theory is justified only when translated into action.

Another important significance of Gramsci is that his ideas on language, common-sense, spontaneous philosophy, historic blocs and hegemony are so immensely rich in content that he came to influence 'cultural', linguistic and anthropological studies. Gramsci has drawn our attention to the importance of interdisciplinary study in various fields like cultural and social history, social anthropology, semiotics, linguistics etc. apart from the purely formal study of political economy and comparative governments. His emphasis on the study of 'cultural hegemony' addresses the relationship between culture and power under capitalism. He suggests some starting points for rethinking some of the fundamental issues in classical Marxian writings. His work was an effort to loosen the rigidities of orthodox Marxism. By clarifying the political and educational functions of cultural symbols he was trying to show how ideas reinforce or undermine the existing social structures, the apparent contradictions between the power wielded by dominant groups and the relative cultural autonomy of subordinate groups. Gramsci has contributed to immense development in 'revolutionary praxis' for understanding historiographical problems faced by the communists.

To manipulate educational, religious and other ideological apparatuses for the production of popular compliance, Gramsci linked hegemony with the domain of 'civil society' which is

relatively independent of direct state interference. It is true that, Gramsci didnot succeed in finding a single, wholly satisfactory conception of 'civil society' or the state. The state is, at times, defined as "political society + civil society", and elsewhere again as a balance between political society and civil society. In yet another passage, Gramsci stresses that "in concrete reality, civil society and state are one and the same" (SPN:1971, p.208). However, this distinction between 'civil society' (web of institutions of hegemony) and 'political society' (arena of political institutions in legal - constitutional sense) is purely a methodological division. (Ibid. p.160). The heuristic value of this methodological division lies in that the working class must not only overthrow the state, but must also demonstrate its claims to "intellectual and moral leadership", in order to establish an alternative hegemony. This requires a continuous labour of creative ideological activity. The capacity 'to articulate different visions of the world in such a way that their potential antagonism is neutralised' rather than simply suppressing those visions beneath 'a uniform conception of the world' is the essence of hegemony and revolutionary praxis in Gramscis's sense.<sup>7</sup>

To be sure, Gramsci's 'Prison Notebooks' are far more concerned with the mechanisms and modalities of hegemony under capitalism than with the problem of how a successful counter-hegemonic challenge might be mounted or the question of how working-class hegemony under socialism might be democratically

guaranteed. As Bob Lumley says, "the concept of hegemony in the 'Notebooks' is used primarily to explain the ways in which the ruling bloc maintains its power".<sup>8</sup> But, his ideas are suggestive of effective counter-hegemonic practices. Of course, he also had much to say about the "Modern Prince" - his conception of revolutionary party which was capable of organising "the national-popular collective will" (i.e. alternative hegemony) into the potential for a new state and a "new historical bloc bound together by a broadly extended hegemony", as Showstack Sassoon puts it<sup>9</sup>, might simultaneously help in the transition to socialism. Gramsci also believed in the radical potential of factory councils -- as agencies of direct as opposed to representative or parliamentary democracy (e.g. Trade Unions role), as media of mobilisation, and as instruments of working class self-education ('Schools of propaganda' as Gramsci put it), and their fundamental political importance, as institutions which raised the workers to a sense of their full capacity to dominate production and thereby society itself. As Davidson put it, Gramsci's "experience with the factory councils taught him once and for all that the fundamental mode of creating class consciousness was through the practical activity or organising the workers in a "conciliar activity" through which their possibilities would become "visible" and theory "realised"<sup>10</sup>.

Gramsci's all these concerns were linked to "whole system" view of social formation. These concerns are also linked to Gramsci's famous distinction between the "War of movement" and

the "War of position", where the latter was meant to characterise the needs of the West European Left in the circumstances of later 1920s and 1930s. The "War of position" was not conceived as a 'parliamentary road' and was developed in quite different conditions from those of the Second International. These conditions included a defeated and divided left, inter-war capitalist regulation and fascism. 'War of position' cannot be equated with the concept of "passive revolution". A "war of position" is a trench warfare, while the "war of movement" is frontal attack which was successful in the very different circumstances of tsarist Russia, is only a particular tactic. "War of position" is not identical but is related to the concept of "passive revolution". Classes do not choose the "war of position" but are imposed by the overall relation of forces of conflict. "War of position" is a tactic, a trench warfare in the conditions of near equilibrium of political forces. "Passive, revolution" is a strategy of the bourgeoisie in the "war of position" phase for absorption of antithesis (Gramsci:1971, p.100). That is, it is a modified form of "restorationist" bourgeoisie politics. "War of position", though like "war of movement" does not imply frontal attack, it still necessarily implies the differentiation of the proletariat as an independent force.<sup>11</sup> It is not that "war of manoeuvre" or "war of movement" is excluded as a possibility by the "modern state", but that the balance of forces dictate that it must be preceded by a different form of struggle which will "create the possibility" or

serve as "the indispensable premise" (Gramsci : 1971, pp.232, 110) for "war of manouvre" or "war of movement". This preceding different form of struggle is "war of position". A large part of Gramsci's discussion of war of position is solely concerned with distinguishing the strategy of the proletariat from that of passive revolutions in this phase. What Gramsci was seeking to oppose in the concept of "war of position" was the adventurism and putschism of the line of CI ultra-left, which tended to insist upon the insurrectionary character of proletarian tasks even under the most unfavourable conditions.

Gramsci's concern for active political intervention at all levels (i.e. educational, cultural and politico-military) maintains crucial continuities even while generating discontinuity simultaneously. It must not neglect the positive and transcendent aspects of previous tradition, history, philosophy, belief systems and culture. As we have seen in the previous chapter that like functionalists, Gramsci's approach doesnot try to match all cultural manifestations with the demands of the 'social system'. He allows one to analyse the systemic features of a society characterised by inequalities of power without reducing that society to a system. Nor does he riefy society into a being that has needs and interests apart from human agency; rather he stresses the human creators of culture. The field of education provides an excellent example of why this is important. There is a need to continue search for the elements of our educational history, to rediscover those social

movements which in their various ways tried to go beyond the constraining features of the status-quo. Educational institutions are not ahistorical in the sense that they have never existed in the same form. Their educational purposes have always changed historically but have been little and rarely questioned. Recent historiography of education sheds a very different light on the course of educational change. Schooling has always been the site of conflicting social and ideological pressures, the present embodying the result of past struggles and compromises which have never been finally resolved and hence they are always open to new initiatives. Indeed people engage in struggle and creation of various 'symbolic universes' in a particular cultural space or different 'cultural space which come to have an 'objective' validity, particularly over generations as they spread from scattered individuals to broad social groups'. And when, it becomes a homogeneous identity, it becomes hegemonic also. This is evident from our study in the last chapter, of Krishna Kumar's article which traces the relationship between Hindu revivalism and education in north-central India.

Thus Gramsci calls for a political practice from educators, intellectuals and students to intervene from inside in the formal schooling and also beyond purely educational issues which takes place in a broader political arena. One of these concerns is related to the practices and rituals which pervade schooling both in regard to teacher-pupil relationship and with respect to the even more critical relationships between educators and those who

hold the power which affects them at the micro level. While constraints emanating from the system are very real which cannot be just wished away, some autonomy at the local level for schools and staff is possible. A democratisation of decision making procedure must be fought by the teachers and students. Without a struggle for democratisation by teachers and students, there will be little chance of gaining control over such issues as the appointment and deployment of teaching personnel, the content of the curriculum, and styles of pedagogy. Autonomy of educational institution is not freedom from all social responsibilities nor it is in the sense of autonomy being granted to some public schools by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in India.<sup>12</sup> All we know at present is that these eight schools are also private schools and five of them are in Delhi. These schools will have autonomy in curriculum and examinations. The CBSE's role will be limited to approving the syllabi and scheme of examination. It is argued that state control on curriculum and examination prohibits the students from rich and elite homes to realise their full potential. This autonomy in Gramscian sense is an outcome of the general crisis of the system "The crisis of the curriculum and organisation of the schools, i.e. of the overall framework of a policy for forming modern intellectual cadres, is to a great extent an aspect and a ramification of the more comprehensive and general organic crisis" (Gramsci:1971, p.26). Hence autonomy of educational institutions should not be brought about in the sense of policy makers (as the



representative of the ruling class) but in the Gramscian sense which we discussed in the second chapter. It consists in the space providing for an active teacher-pupil relationship, high self-esteem among teachers, a curriculum fitting well into the peoples actual life conditions, their history and their struggles and general basic equitable physical facilities in schools. The curriculum, the textbooks and the examination which are links in the cycle of oppression and in which the the teachers participate unaware must be broken.<sup>13</sup> This is the essence of Gramsci's emphasis on the role of intellectuals in the specific area of education. First of all they should not accept the culture of petty bureaucratic rituals as the only proper framework of teaching. Gramsci (1971:p.36) writes that, "it was right to struggle against the old school, but reforming it was not so simple as it seemed. The problem was not one of model curricula but of men, and not just of the men who are actually teachers themselves but of the entire social complex which they express".

Thus, the struggle for hegemony takes place beyond the school as well as within it and needs to be engaged in at every level where hegemonic meanings penetrate : in such contexts as the family, social services, trade union, community organizations, political parties of state and local level, the media, and various cultural activities. It is important that working class intellectuals donot remain isolated from other social movements such as feminist movements, peasants movements, students movements, ecological movements, theatrical and media

movements, because in the last analysis, it is only through a strong mass movement that class domination can be transcended. The obstacles against building such a mass movement should not be underestimated. "Intellectuals should never be tired of repeating their own arguments for an alternative hegemony. Repetition is the best didactic means for working on the popular mentality - to work incessantly to raise the intellectual level of ever growing strata of the populace, in other words, to give a personality to the amorphous mass element" (Gramsci:1971, p.340). This is how theory is transmuted into action (praxis).

#### **(B) DEVELOPMENT OF MARXISM - A SCIENCE OF SOCIETY AND CHANGE**

So far we have seen that Gramsci elaborates on three concepts: (i) Science (Critical thinking and technical knowledge); (ii) Common sense ('spontaneous philosophy' and 'contradictory consciousness'); and (iii) Hegemony (domination, direction, leadership, and consent). Gramsci's political and cultural writings are based on these three basic pillars on which all historical struggles move. We have already established their relative cognitive and 'constitutive' status in the third and fourth chapter respectively. Now, Gramsci's contribution to Marxism as a science of society and change in the context of previous chapters will be elaborated briefly here. Within the general frame of Marxism, science is perceived primarily at two levels. (a) Firstly, in terms of involving Marxism as a theory of knowledge; (b) Secondly in terms of historical sociology. Under

(a) science is a value of norm; under (b) science is a topic of research and investigation, as something that sets out to explain (and perhaps even change). "Many of the problems associated with the concept of science in Marxism arise from the failure to reconcile and sustain both these aspects of science. Thus emphasis on (a) at the expense of (b) leads to scientism, the dislocation of science to an expression of the historical process and consequent judgemental relativism"<sup>14</sup>. In Althusser, we find a general dislocation of science from the historical processes whereas in Lukacs science has been reduced to an expression of historical process. In Gramscian scheme, the "whole-system" witnesses a counterpoising of historical materialism to science. Thus Gramsci was a little near to a kind of Hegelian historian i.e. he was to some extent a Crocean. But nevertheless he was perfectly aware of the creative and 'idealist' element in scientific investigation.

Gramsci was anti-positivistic but not anti-science.<sup>15</sup> This is evident from his mature political writings like 'Prison Notebooks'. A proper historiography sanctions the attempt to extract from a given text ideas that have some internal coherence and contemporary relevance for the investigator. His notes on 'Italian History', and 'State and Civil Society' constitute an implicit rejection of some of the theoretical ideas of the Comintern Marxism. Though Comintern Marxism was right in pointing out the indispensability of theory, generalisation, construction of norms for historical analysis, its manner of

constructing these involved a kind of unintended error. Instead of a theoretical search for a constructed universal (norm) it went into a bureaucratic sanctification of an historical instance. Gramsci broke out of this enveloping and stifling narrative of "Comintern" style of history. Gramsci asserts two points: First, he asserts such a simple thing as the specificity and 'irreducibility' of the Italian history into any other rhythm than its own. Rhythms of its past, present and probable future are irreducibly different, and not convertible into such metaphors masquerading as historical general concepts. Secondly, this was a part historical, part theoretical indictment because it showed the necessity of construction of truly theoretical universals, as norms of historical enquiry; and implicitly demonstrated how Comintern practice had actually deviated from the theoretical practices of Marx and Lenin.<sup>16</sup> Refreshingly, what appeared powerfully in Gramsci's writings was fundamental in both senses - of being crucial and also being simple, easy, and assertion of the simple but miraculously forgotten a fact that the punctuations of Italian history had to be theorized 'internally' in terms of theoretical identification of its own significance, and in terms of the causal significance of each event. He provided a conception of causal delays, without ensuring any periodisations of culture wholly coincident with those of political economy and eventually politics.

Against any tendency of aggressive simplification, Gramsci provided a doctrine of an authentically complex history. His arguments broke away from those inflexible moulds of the Comintern Marxism. He defied these mandatory symmetries, denied these compulsory steps of the march of revolution on earth. Vocabulary and concepts which carry transparently on the surface of a discourse in history, showed a shift of emphasis in Gramsci's writings. Against the central concepts of the earlier theory - i.e. causality, class struggle, base and superstructure, determination, symmetry, laws, rules, uniformities, national and comprador bourgeoisie, conscious and unconscious proletarians, false consciousness etc. Gramsci's theory and history uses a whole new set of words and emphases. In his writings, history was considered now as a realm of 'dislocations', 'delays', 'misunderstandings', constructions, exceptions, asymmetries, superstructures, 'common-sense', group identities etc. In his scheme, structures came to be crossed by cultural configurations, even such formerly neglected unities as those of language, imagery, myths, common errors. In politics, the long moving logic of structures was crossed by the fast logic of situational compulsions. Under his influence, Marxist theory could regain its original complexity, move forwards to its origins in Marx and Lenin (Kaviraj: *ibid.*).

Gramsci emphasised on differences, on the complexity and contrariety of a specific historical juncture. For example, his theory of 'contradictory consciousness' has hermeneutical

significance by suggesting on differences and incoherency. The consciousness of masses suffers from incoherence : at the conscious, explicit level, they may be said to believe in the basic values and principles by which such a society is organised, but at practical, implicit level, their concrete life situation is such that alternative values and principles manifest themselves. The relatively conscious consent yields what Gramsci calls the 'hegemony' of the bourgeoisie over the working class, whereas the dissent implicit in proletarian practice points in the direction of a new social arrangement where the working class would hold the ideological hegemony. It is the task of the revolutionary intellectual to draw out and make coherent into an explicit philosophy the conflictual tendencies inherent in the behaviour of proletarians, and also to make them more aware by teaching them this philosophy and give them a historical orientation. Gramsci's theory, here again we see, is an alternative to standard 'consensus and conflict' models of social order and power. "Gramsci's conception of contradictory consciousness is more valid empirically than either....(and) rests on a sounder theoretical underpinnings" (Femia: 1981, p.224). Largely because of Gramsci, Marxist view of culture now understands symbolic or ideological representations of a given historical situation as an integral and defining part of the situation.

Gramsci was indeed a methodological Marxist, in the sense that he used the 'dialectical' way of thinking in the field of

politics which Marx practiced in the domain of economics and which Hegel elaborated in metaphysics. Gramsci used 'dialectics' to avoid one-sidedness. That structures should be seen not only as uniformities and patterns but also in a different sense. They should also be seen as imposing limits on the logic of political possibilities. The openness of Gramsci's theory is due partly to this admission that political boundaries around philosophical systems are peculiarly ineffective, that Marxism must exist in a transactive relation with the surrounding world of theory. He allows critical theories, even theories like elitist sociology of Mosca or historicist theories like Croce's, to set questions for Marxist theory to solve. In seeking to answer these problems coming from outside, he became conscious of 'empty' regions within Marx's general system, and tried to work out Marxist solutions to these problems. Quite obviously, a major concern in Gramsci's Marxism was to allow hermeneutic and historicist theories to set questions to Marxist social theory, but the problem is that his name has been used to justify all kinds of further constructions in theory. A part of the problem is also the nature of Gramsci's texts. His texts are insufficiently constructed or constructive - a genuine theoretical under-determination on crucial points. For example, he sketches the idea of 'passive revolution' but forgets to insert it into available trajectories. He argues energetically that Marxist materialism is non-ontological, a change of terrain, but does not pursue it further. He adds elements to the idea of social

formations displacing its earlier balance, but it is just a sketch, leaving its logical relations within surrounding concepts unnegotiated. However, Gramsci had political limitation of any further elaboration in his theoretical constructions. Theorists like Althusser, have seen in this underdetermination an invitation for further construction of theory. Gramsci's Marxism gives us a sensitivity to kinds of differences, but it tells us little about what to do with them, that to only in a suggestive methodological manner. Other difficulties involve the ambiguities surrounding certain key implications: the relative autonomy of spheres and the variety of ways that hegemonic/counter-hegemonic values can affect different cultural texts. All these raise a more serious question which is left unanswered by Gramsci - the question is that, if science is part of the superstructure, how is its relative autonomy to be conceived? And can there be a proletarian natural science or merely a proletarian social science? It is still debated whether his thought are local or international. However, despite all these ambiguities and incompleteness, the greatest strength of Gramsci lies in his openness to the variety of experience. There is nothing as 'pre-given' in his scheme. The problem is that, once inside the labyrinth of intertextuality, theoreticians often seem unable to hear the human voices outside their own theory permits. Gramsci provides a "whole system" view of the social formation to reconstruct the human experience of history and in the present disorientation of our socialist culture,



assimilation of Gramsci is a key aspect in the renewal of the 'Left'.

And now, finally, I must bring out the silences in this work where lie some more fruitful areas of future research. I have elsewhere, confessed in this work that though Gramsci ideas on education constitute a theory of education and hegemony, they are not complete in every sense. Gramsci did not live to see many complex problems. Which are faced in the modern media age. Secondly, his views on education, language, consciousness and symbols are intelligible only in relation to the immense theoretical revolution involved in his enlarged concept of the state, hegemony, 'national-popular', 'historic bloc', 'war of movement', 'war of positions', and passive revolution. There can be no theory of education without a theory of hegemonic state apparatuses and their articulation with the integral state in their historical specificity.

Hence, one area of research, which has been excluded from this project is the discovery of possible tensions between the levels of mediation analysed by Gramsci. If education and intellectuals are to effect change in mass consciousness, there is the problem of ensuring perpetual coherence between the self-consciousness of the mediator and that of the mediated. This returns to the question of interests and needs. Does the mediator have the same interest and need as the mediated. And even if, the working class creates its own organic intellectuals,

does their interest cement the interests of their masses, because of the technical superiority gained by them. Though the theory of 'contradictory consciousness' and 'spontaneous philosophy' has many hermeneutic novelty for the scholars, but does it not create blank space for the practical activists himself, the 'inner-self' of the mediator. This problem is reached in Gramsci's resolute effort to coordinate all the positions necessary for the emergence of "collective will" and for a direction to the "historical orientation" already present in the class. This frontier presses on the need to fill up a critical gap in the approach to mediation. The frontiers are significant. They present problems which are not fully resolved by Gramsci. But he sufficiently reveals the main issues to emphasise the new tasks of Marxist praxis in its revolutionary struggles against the capitalist order. But again Gramsci could not see the present world of 1990s where technological advance in production, media, communication, warfare and organisation can be directed to create powerful obstacles to working class unity and more so for the composition of hegemonic alliances between the workers and the rest of unprivileged masses.

The second area of research could be to 'historicise' or contextualise Gramsci's ideas on education and hegemonic struggles (in terms of bargaining and negotiation) in the specificities of 'national-particular' whether Italian or Indian or more universal - international. In these work I have attempted albeit insufficiently. We reckon with the historical tendencies

(like the Hindu revivalism and education in post 1947 India, autonomy given to top eight elite private ('public') schools during the current year; problem of 'backward class' identity, education and Mandal Commission Report, 1990; etc.) towards passive revolutions in many conjunctures of transition from both developed and under developed capitalism. In the contemporary world, such a passive phenomenon emerges as the general experience of capitalism.

Finally, there is an urgent priority to examine the epistemics and the heuristics of 'Gramscian' education which he sets as 'critical thinking' - 'the fundamental power to think and ability to find one's way in life' (SPN:1971, p.26). In Gramsci, the essence of education is both i.e. the process of scientific enquiry and also the information that scientific enterprise generates (ibid, p.36). But there is an uneasy tension here again at the two levels of education i.e. the enquiry process and the so called 'banking knowledge' in education. This tension is revealed in Gramsci : "In reality a mediocre teacher may manage to see to it that his pupils become more informed, although he will not succeed in making them better educated; he can devote a scrupulous and bureaucratic conscientiousness to the mechanical part of teaching-and the people, if he has an active intelligence, will give an order of his own, with the aid of his social background, to the "baggage" he accumulates (ibid). Hence, there is a silence in Gramsci, whether teaching science essentially involves initiating the learner into the scientific

process or whether the learner (despite all his poor cultural background) is himself tuned to a self 'enquiry' process. Further research is required to know how much Gramsci's theory of cognitive development of child would yield result in the light of empirical constraints of working class subordinate culture.

As it has been demonstrated earlier, the real problematic lies in the need to rearticulate Gramsci's ideas in the contemporaneous context of education. Gramsci's entire scheme of education cannot be thought in one singular, unilinear whole. One has to discern various subtle points of departure. Our findings in this regard are:

1. Gramsci's theory of education is essentially a theory of practice - to change the 'nature', 'society' and the 'man'.
2. Education consists not only in schools and universities but is considered broadly in terms of development of cognitive status of the individual through the entire cultural edifice-beliefs, rituals, language, media, texts, symbols, clubs, associations, party etc. However, Gramsci is primarily concerned with working class education, especially through the mediating role of intellectuals.
3. Educational system is considered as relatively autonomous superstructure allowing space for dynamic changes in the structure of social consciousness. Education becomes a cultural input, an active dimension of politics to raise the working class consciousness. Education provides a terrain for contestation and struggle.

4. Gramsci sees education not only as a part a 'global' dimension of oppression, but contends that it must be analysed in its own right. It was designed to develop in each individual a general culture - 'the fundamental power to think and ability to find one's way in life' (SPN:1971, p.26).
5. The purpose of schools is to develop a critical consciousness and self identity in its historical totality to participate in the mainstream national life (politics). Participation in the mainstream national life was a democratic necessity. For this reason, development of national language, its expansion among the masses and mass literacy programmes were essential to Gramsci. Change in the consciousness of masses was, again, a democratic necessity which is supposed to go concurrently with political, revolutionary struggle.
6. Gramsci approach to socialist construction is based on the 'continuity' with the past, simultaneously generating 'discontinuities' with the present. That is, in order to built up a socialist culture, the past culture is not to be rejected, rather, it should be reworked.
7. Democracy in education doesnot merely mean that all unskilled workers becomes skilled. It means that every 'citizen' can govern, even abstractly (at least in principle) every citizen is in a general condition to achieve this (SPN:1971, p.40). This means that the role of

education lies beyond the boundaries of purely formal educational institutions.

8. Thus Gramsci has a theory of 'education' which is explicit in this passage of 'Prison Notebooks' (p.27) : "a common basic education, imparting a general, humanistic, formative culture; this would strike the right balance between development of the capacity for working manually, technically, industrially and development of the capacities required for intellectual work. From this type of common schooling, via repeated experiments in vocational orientation, pupils would pass on to one of the specialised schools or to productive work".

Gramsci had developed his ideas on education with his experiences in Italy in particular and Europe in general, within the context of peasants and worker's struggle for land-ownership, factory ownership, political and economic rights. In his writings, he presented 'mass illiteracy', growing 'vocationalisation' and 'autonomy to schools' as a 'general crisis' or as a structural problem caused by oppression of the masses by the capitalists. According to him, the problem could be solved only by a socialist revolution. His purpose, however, was to inspire intellectuals and the progressive groups to use educational communication, and various other institutions and associations of the 'civil society' and the 'state' as a tool in struggles against oppression.

## NOTES

1. Michael R. Matthews (1980) : 'The Marxist Theory of Schooling', p.84.
2. Eric J. Hobsbawm in 'Marxism Today', July 1977, pp.210-11. Also, see his essay on 'Gramsci and Marxist Political Theory' in A.S. Sassoon (ed.) 'Approaches to Gramsci'. Writers and Readers, London, 1982.
3. George Larrain (1979): 'The Concept of Ideology', pp.70-140.
4. Joseph V. Femia (1981), 'Gramsci's Political Thought : Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process', p.121.
5. See Perry Anderson (1976) : 'Considerations on Western Marxism' (London).
6. For a lively discussion on the structuralist appropriation of Gramsci (e.g. Althusser, Poulantzas) see Stuart Hall, Bob Lumley, Gregor McLennan, 'Politics and Ideology : Gramsci' in 'On Ideology' (London, Hutchinson, 1978).
7. Ernesto Laclau (1977) : 'Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory', p.161 (London).
8. Bob Lumley; 'Gramsci's Writings on the State and Hegemony', p.27. Quoted in Geof Eley's (1984) essay in 'European History Quarterly' Vol.14, pp.441-78.
9. A.S. Sassoon (1980), 'Gramsci's Politics', p.153. (New York: St Martin Press).
10. A Davidson (1977) , 'Antonio Gramsci : Towards an Intellectual Biography', p.155 (London).
11. See Peter Gibbon : 'Gramsci, Eurocommunism and the Comintern in 'Economy and Society' Vol.12, 1983, pp.350- 351.
12. See Krishna Kumar's article : 'Autonomy no Remedy for Bad Education in The Times of India (Indian Daily) dated 20.4.1991.
13. Ibid.
14. Roy Bhaskar in 'A Dictionary of Marxist Thought' (1983), p.435.

15. Joseph V. Femia (1981) 'Gramsci's Political Thought : Hegemony, Consciousness and the Revolutionary Process', pp.111,112,244.
16. An unpublished paper by Sudipta Kaviraj titled 'Gramsci and Different Kinds of Differences'. This paper was collected from him personally. Kaviraj is an Associate Professor, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.



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