

# The Impact of New Education Policy 2020 in Catholic Education

## Introduction

The Church has always recognized the importance of education in its mission. By her divine mandate, the Church as the teacher and custodian of faith and morals directs people through the medium of education to wholesome morals and integrity of life in accordance with the revealed doctrine.<sup>1</sup> A true education empowers the totality of the human person in all its dimensions so that the human person can attain integrity for his/her life and for society at large. In accordance with the canonical tradition, education is broader than schooling.

The Church through the mission of education, are called to teach the values of equality, respect for the individuals and work for the common good. Such a mission also helps to break down barriers of race and caste, to avoid discrimination and to build up a just and integrated society. The Church has a great responsibility to create an atmosphere of gender equality in their educational institutions. The NEP 2020 partially takes away the freedom of minorities in the educational institutions given by the Constitution. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India opposed the stands of the NEP, but the central government approved it for the further process. Therefore, the CBCI called all Christian educational institutions to bring about a radical change in its pedagogical process, and bring about possibilities to explore, experiment, and strategize for better education in the future. Still the arguments are continuing to find a better solution.

## 1. Constitutional Rights in Education

The Indian Constitution makes special provisions for the well-being of the minorities. Art. 29 of the Constitution states, "the minorities have a right to preserve their culture and to secure admission to educational institutions maintained or aided by the state." Art. 30 mandates that all minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. *Hindutva* proponents have always objected to these articles that ensured special rights to minorities. They want to rewrite the constitution on the premise that the constitutional provision for minorities is discriminatory. The RSS booklet states that it is only in India that minorities enjoy more rights and privileges than the majority.<sup>2</sup> The *Hindutva* forces want to abolish even the existing concessions for Christians and Muslims, and they propose to grant reservations to Dalit Christians and Muslims if they reconvert to *Hinduism*.<sup>3</sup>

The most anti-Christian violence takes place in the states where *Hindutva* forces rule. They commit acts of violence against Christians accusing them of indulging in forced conversions.<sup>4</sup> They declare that when Christians give medicines to the sick or bread to the hungry or knowledge to the people, they should not exploit the situation by propagating their religion to those people.<sup>5</sup> Education in the Indian Constitution is an inalienable right of the citizens and minority religions, therefore, both Centre and States can legislate on this matter. Art. 26 of

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. LEO XIII, Encyclical Letter *Libertas* (20.06.1888), in P. GASPARRI (ed.), *CICFontes*, III, n. 600, 297.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. RASTRIYASAVYAM SEVAK, *Spearheading National Renaissance*, PrakashanVibhag, Bangalore 1985, 40.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. L. STANISLAUS, "Discrimination against SC, ST and OBC by the State and the Church", in J. MATTAM – B. GABRIEL, *Shadow of the Cross*, St Paul Publications, Mumbai 2002, 64.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. P.R. BRASS, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi 2003, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. M.S. GOLWALKAR, *Spotlights*, Sahitya Sindhu Prakashana, Bangalore 1975, 56.

the Constitution of India gives provision that every religious denomination or any religious section has a right to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes.

Even though the Constitution of India upholds the rights of minority religions to establish educational institutes and impart religious education, in reality, minority religions face many challenges and difficulties to execute them. The governments continue to infringe their limits, jurisdiction and interfere in the management of religious minority educational institutes. The present central government lead by pro-Hindutva wants to set up a regulatory body to have political and ideological control over the minority educational institutions. The NEP 2020 focused on encouraging academic talent and innovation and special efforts to strengthen education in rural and tribal areas but “overlooked” the rights and prerogatives of minority institutions. In this concern, the CBCI formulated an Alternative Educational Policy to affirm the minority rights. The NEP 2020 limits the freedom of minorities and takes away all the innovation and autonomy of religious education.

The Constitution of India is aimed at a sovereign, socialistic, secular and democratic Republic envisaging a just, equal and human society. The economic power created its parallel political system in which the rich and elite are at the top of the social pyramid. The economically powerless mass becomes also politically powerless. The election and parliamentary/democratic procedures are often riddled with corruption and unfair practices.<sup>6</sup> The fundamentalistic tendency growing in the political parties like the *Bhartiya Janata Party* attempts to distort the secular nature of the country and creates violent persecutions against religious minorities.

## 2. The State Government of Tamil Nadu on Education

The State is one of the agents of education to protect the rights of the primary agent of education i.e., parents. Since the right and duty to educate primarily goes to the parents (cfr. can. 793 §1),<sup>7</sup> the conciliar document emphasizes that in exercising its rights, that State should respect the principle of subsidiarity.<sup>8</sup> The Catholic education have to promote the human development of the person<sup>9</sup> with the mutual respect and collaboration of the State.<sup>10</sup> The State provides the parents with appropriate assistance (cfr. can. 793 §2) and liberty of their choice of schools (cfr. can. 797)<sup>11</sup> and ensures the religious instruction (cfr. can. 799).<sup>12</sup> In implementing the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, the Government of Tamil Nadu hereby made the following rules:

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<sup>6</sup> Cfr. A. THUMMA, “The Social teaching of the Indian Church”, in *Indian Theological Studies* 28 (1991), 295.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. P.A. BONNET, “La ministerialita dei laici genitori”, in *Quaderni di diritto ecclesiae* 2 (1989), 343.

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (01.05 1991), in AAS 83 (1991), 852-854.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. P. CIARAPICA, “L’Obbligo gravissimo dell’educazione dei figli: dal can. 226 a una progettualia educativa genitoriale”, in *Apollinaris* 78 (2005), 765.

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millenium*, n. 53.

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. G. DAMIZIA, “La funzione di insegnare nella Chiesa”, in *Il nuovo codice di diritto canonico*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma 1983, 287-288; Parents must enjoy true liberty in choosing schools. The faithful must be solicitous so that the civil society acknowledges this right of parents and, observing distributive justice, it should also support this freedom financially.

<sup>12</sup> M. CATTERIN, “Aspetti politici e giuridici per un insegnamento della religione nella scuola dell’Europa interculturale”, in *Ius Ecclesiae* 27 (2015), 291-292. Can. 799 is an exhortation directed to all the faithful, who are to strive so that the laws of the civil society that regulate the formation of youth should provide that, in the schools themselves, the youth also receive religious and moral education in accord with the parents’ conscience.

1. Right of Children to free and compulsory education: Regarding children with special needs, the School Management Committee of the school shall identify the children requiring special education and organize it. The child upon admission to a class appropriate to his age after special education, shall continue to receive special attention from the teacher to enable him/her to successfully integrate with the rest of the class, academically and emotionally.
2. The area or limits of neighbourhood within which a school shall be established by the State Government is, a distance of one kilometer in respect of children in classes I to V; a distance of three kilometers in respect of children in classes VI to VIII; the government will make adequate arrangements for further inconveniences.
3. A child attending a school shall be entitled to free textbooks, writing materials and uniforms. The financial assistance for this will be provided by the Central Government.

Therefore, for the family to assist their children in education is supported by the State Government to some extent.

### **3. National Educational Policy 2020**

The National Educational Policy **2020** has been formulated by the Government of India to replace the Education Policy of 1986. It is the third educational policy of India of its post-independence. The first of this genre was promulgated in 1968 and the following was in 1986. The new policy introduced many reforms in the Indian education system beginning with reformation at the central level and entrusted the formulation of the new policy to the Ministry of Human Resources and development which in turn formed a committee chaired by Dr. K. Kasturirajan. The new education system entails education from pre-school/Anganwadi to higher education. The NEP 2020 aims to achieve universalization of Education from pre-school to secondary level by 2030. It proposes revision and revamping of the education structure, including its regulation and governance. The National Democratic Alliance Government, led by the *BJP* (A staunch Hindu Nationalist party), under the pretext of implementing the NEP 2020 proposing accessibility, affordability and equity in National education, subtly implemented the hidden agenda of fundamentalism.

#### **Advantages of the Policy:**

The NEP tries to situate school education in the present context and envisages making school education responsive to the challenges of modern times. It takes into consideration: the Declaration of the United Nations General Assembly 1948 that everyone has the right to education; the full development of the human personality through learning; a holistic education paying attention to the Indian heritage; the right of children to free and compulsory education act 2009. The NEP wishes to transform the current curricular and pedagogical structure based on children's cognitive and social-emotional development.<sup>13</sup> The curriculum will be integrated and flexible with equal emphasis on all subjects and fields. There will be no separation of curricular, co-curricular or extra-curricular areas with all in a single category of equal importance. Vocational and academic streams will be integrated and offered to all

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<sup>13</sup>Nt. tre;jpNjtp>fy;tp Xu; murpay;>ghujpGj;jfhyak;>nrd;id 2018> 51-52. (V. VASANTHIDEVI, *Education-A Politics*, Bharathi Publications, Chennai 2018, 51-52).

students. It envisages all children between age 3 and 18 as being to be in school by 2030.<sup>14</sup> The examination systems will be radically changed to assess real learning, making them stress-free and aiming at improvement instead of being judgemental. The flip side of such an examination system cannot be overlooked. It wants to ensure that teachers are given the highest quality training in content, pedagogy and practice by moving the teacher education system into multidisciplinary colleges and universities and establishing a four-year integrated bachelor's degree as the minimum qualification for all schoolteachers.

### **Disadvantages of the Policy**

#### **A) Threat to Minority Institutional Rights**

Minority rights, guaranteed in the constitutions of India, and facilities granted to the minority communities to establish and administer educational institutions are very much overlooked and seemingly brushed aside when the NEP 2020 deals with appointments of staff, fee fixation, and the administration of the institution. It suggests appointing the school complex, social workers, volunteers and counselors who will proactively meet the dropout students and the parents and work out the strategies to eliminate the causes of dropouts and facilitate attendance or enrolment in the school. Even though it appears to be a praiseworthy suggestion, the government adds a worrying provision to the appointment of social workers and Counsellors.<sup>15</sup> The RSS cadres are likely to be appointed for this 'service' to disseminate the *Hindutva Agendato* the young minds and elders. NEP declares that volunteers will be appointed to teach III standard students. *Akila Bharatiya Vidya Bharathi*, the educational wing of RSS will be employed to teach the students. This will be a threat to the secularity and sovereignty of our nation.<sup>16</sup>

#### **B) Transfer of Competence of Education Commission to Central Government**

As per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, every State has the competence to design the curriculum of school education. NEP has not respected the competence of each State on Education and conveniently transferred its competence to the Central government. With the dawn of the *Rashtriya Sishya Ayok* commission, the Central government assumes the competence of forming of curriculum, appointments of teachers and educational policies. The states will eventually lose their competence in the education of their subjects.<sup>17</sup>

#### **C) Early Childhood Education and Care**

Early childhood education, beginning with pre-school at the age of three, does not consider the varying learning abilities of rural and urban children. The NEP advocates pre-primary school (*Anganwadis*) at the age of three where children learn through the play method, 5-6

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<sup>14</sup> Cfr. CONSORTIUM OF CHRISTIAN MINORITY HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, *Our Observation, Feedback, and Recommendation on Draft National Education Policy 2019*, New Delhi 2019, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Cfr. ARCHBISHOP A. PAPPUSAMY, *New Draft National Education Policy* (01.08.2016), Tamil Nadu Bishops Council, Madurai, in [www. http://matters India](http://mattersindia.com). Accessed on 10.01.2023.

<sup>16</sup> [h.k. ,d;gFkhh;>Njrpa fy;tpf; nfhs;if -2019: kWgf;fk;>n[a;gPk; gjpg;gfk;> NtYhu; 2019>22-23. (J.J.M. INBAKUMAR, *National Education Policy-2019: The Flip Side*, Jaibeem Publications, Vellore 2019, 22-23).

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. CONSORTIUM OF CHRISTIAN MINORITY HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, *Our Observation, Feedback, and Recommendation on Draft National Education Policy 2019*, 5.

years of age through the discovery method, 7-12 years through the critical and discussion method and then 13-18 years by learning subjects.<sup>18</sup>

#### **D) Three-Language Formula**

The NEP promotes local or mother tongue, it advocates multilingualism from the age of 5 to 8. The three-language formula (mother tongue, English and Hindi) is imposed by the central government. The imposition of this three-language formula will certainly affect the mental, social and psychological behavior of each individual and it does not consider the disparity of learning or intellectual capacity of each child. There is also a worrying hint from the central government that the *Sanskrit* language will be imposed on the schools in the future.

#### **E) Higher Education for the Underprivileged - An Optical Illusion**

An obligatory examination of NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test) for admittance into Higher education especially in the field of medicine, and entrance exams conducted by the National Testing Agency for Bachelor studies in Art and Science will turn Higher education into an unrealizable dream for students from rural and underprivileged social sectors. Such entrance exams undoubtedly promote the mushrooming of Coaching Centres for entrance exams. Exorbitant fees for special coaching classes will not permit economically poor students to profit from them and over the years higher education will be the monopoly of the privileged and the rich.

#### **F) Common Examination-A threat to Rural Students**

The NEP proposes that students, having completed VIII standard should choose subjects for their High School, which is from IX to XII standard.<sup>19</sup> However, it is beyond the capacity of many VIII standard students to choose subjects for higher secondary schooling. For example, it is a challenge for rural students if their parents are illiterate. This system will be an obstacle to higher education.

#### **G) Fundamentalism and Hindutva Ideology**

India is the center of Indian religions and has been the gracious host to many other religions for centuries. Thus, the charm of India is multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, etc. In the past century, we have seen a persistent move to convert India into a Hindu *Rashtra* (Hindu nation). There is an organized and constant campaign by the *Sangh Parivar* (proponents of Hindutva ideology), to change the situation in India by interfering with the constitution, altering Indian history and the structures of governance,<sup>20</sup> attacking the religious minorities,<sup>21</sup> etc. Evangelization is often criticized by fundamentalists as a cover for

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Generally, the students will choose their special subject materials after the completion of X Std, which has a government board exam. The selection of subjects after completing VIII std is too early and difficult to choose them as they are not exposed to many things.

<sup>20</sup> Cfr. F. GONSALVES, *Challenges and Possibilities of the Indian Church*, Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore 2009, 73-84.

<sup>21</sup> The minorities are any religious community or linguistic community which is numerically less than 50% of the total population of the state or the country. Therefore, the word minority cannot be applied to a class or a

conversion. Though their allegations are baseless the Church deals with them in good faith and for the sake of the Lord.<sup>22</sup>

#### **4. Catholic Education**

Catholic education is considered a holistic undertaking focusing on the integral formation of the whole human person, forming the human person to grow not only physically, but also morally, intellectually, culturally, socially, civilly and spiritually, thus, helping the individual to reach his/her potential and become a worthy instrument for society through a witnessing life (cfr. can. 795). Apart from being integral, education promotes fraternal relations with other nations, traditions, and cultures in order to promote true unity and peace in the world (cfr. *GE*, 1). True education required parents' cooperation in fulfilling their rights and duties (cfr. can. 796 §1) as well as of the other collaborators. Parents especially have the vital responsibility of creating a family atmosphere, which will foster the integral education of their children. The role of the State is to protect and foster the primary right of the parents to provide their children with an integral education and to safeguard the rights of children (cfr. cann. 793 §2, 797, 799). In this context, the State should provide a suitable education, adapt to their ability, sex and culture and then, promote true unity and peace in the human family. It must safeguard and promote the rights of children and be vigilant about the ability of teachers and the standard of teaching.

#### **5. Response of Tamil Nadu Catholic Educational Association to NEP**

The NEP Policy is against Secularism and Pluralism. It idealizes the so-called *Vedic* system of education and the *Gurukul* system of education which are based only on the source and knowledge of the *Guru*. The document categorically states that Sanskrit has contributed to the growth and development of Indian languages and to the cultural unity of the country. The proposal to introduce a centralized Midday meal scheme throughout the country and constitute uniform education Tribunals throughout the country etc., does not predict well for the plurality and diversity of the country. Nothing more is left to the power of the state, or to the innovation of the people except the duty to fall in line at the whistle blow of the central regime.

#### The Catholic Christian Community in Tamil Nadu submitted the following demands:

Regarding the minority educational institutions, the policy does not seem to be sensitive to the constitutional protection given to these institutions under Art. 30 (1) of the Constitution. The introduction of Yoga, Sanskrit, Vedic system of education and values will seriously compromise the identity and the image of Christian minority educational institutions.

The Central Government must give up its efforts to impose the *Brahminical* and *Vedic* educational systems along with their cultural values. The draft must respect the constitutional rights conferred upon the minority educational institutions, in the light of the various

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section of the Hindu. The minority is entitled to protection. Here the Hindu fundamentalists do not establish laws directly against minorities but indirectly attack through the policies of different commissions. Cfr. F. GONSALVES, *Challenges and Possibilities of the Indian Church*, 73-84.

<sup>22</sup> Cfr. P. CHUNGATH, *Cross and Mission: Challenges and Priorities in Evangelization among the Indigenous People of North India*, ISPCK, New Delhi 2010, xi- xiii.

judgements of the Supreme Court.<sup>23</sup> It insisted on usurping the powers of the state, to implement subjects, languages and cultural identities to educational institutions.

## **6. The Constitutional Right of the Minority Institutes – Government Policies**

The State laws and the policies of the government should always be consistent with the constitution. Laws and policies framed to discriminate the minorities educational institutions about its establishment and administrations is not in consonance with the Constitution. The Government has the right to regulate the minority institutions, but any regulations framed in the national interest must protect the constitutional rights of minorities. The policies should be applied to all institutions whether administered by a majority or minority.<sup>24</sup> However, the government regulations are not so absolute to the right of minorities mentioned in clause 1 of art. 30 of the Indian Constitution. Any policies or rule or regulations framed in such a way as to put the minority institutions in a disadvantageous position can be challenged before a competent court of law. In the history of the minority educational institutions, it had been always an unending struggle to establish the rights of minority institutions.

## **7. Educational Policies of CBCI to Protect the Right of Catholic Education**

The Church has the right to establish Catholic schools (cfr. can. 800 §1)<sup>25</sup> and to transmit discipline to all the students hailing from various cultures and faiths.<sup>26</sup> This right is expressed in the 1917 Code which stated in can. 1375, that the Church has the right to establish Catholic institutions of every grade. According to the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference Office of Evangelization, education is the key to well-being and the solution to the many problems that afflict indigenous peoples. Through holistic education, the Church can help preserve and express their identity in the face of modernization, exploitation, and keep alive and promote their cultural conditions. They can improve their economic and social status to work for total development of people and to defend their rights in public.<sup>27</sup> The CBCI (cfr. can. 447) has overwhelmingly contributed to the country's development in areas of peace, justice and women education.<sup>28</sup> Sometimes, it is perceived as an agency for proselytizing rather than for nation-building.<sup>29</sup> The mentality of the people about Christianity should have a changing face in order to understand the services rendered by the Church.

The All India Education Policy should be revised or supplementary or substantial guideline be issued keeping abreast with the new legislations from the Government as well as from the

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<sup>23</sup>TAMIL NADU BISHOPS' COUNCIL AND TAMIL NADU PONDICHERRY CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS CONFERENCE, *Circular A Critique of the Draft National Education Policy* (16.07.2016), Tamil Nadu Catholic Educational Association, Santhome, Chennai 2016, 5.

<sup>24</sup>Cfr. J. KURIEN, "Educational Rights of Minorities", in *The New Leader* 132 (2019) 23.

<sup>25</sup>Cfr. Can. 800 §1: "Ecclesiae ius est scholas cuiusvis disciplinae, generis et gradus condendi ac moderandi."

Can. 1375 of 1917 Code: "Ecclesiae est ius scholas cuiusvis disciplinae non solum elementarias, sed etiam edias et superiores condendi."

<sup>26</sup> Cfr. J.Y. ATTILA, *La Missione: Insegnare il deposito della fede dovunque e sempre*, Marcianum Press, Venezia 2020, 213.

<sup>27</sup> Cfr. S. CANILANG, "Doing Mission in Asia", in *Religious Life Asia* 5 (2013), 114-115.

<sup>28</sup> Cfr. CBCI, *Gender Policy of the Catholic Church of India*, CBCI Commission for Women, New Delhi 2010, 16. The CBCI recognizes the fact the education can be a double-edged instrument which can be used to reinforce gender role stereotypes or to facilitate critical questioning of discrimination forms of behaviour and practices. It focuses on at least 25% of seats in all Church run and Church related institutions to the first-generation learners, especially women from SC and ST and backward communities.

<sup>29</sup> Cfr. M. PERIA, "E-Church: Cast Your Internet for a Catch", in L. STANISLAUS – J. JOESPH (eds), *Communication as Mission*, ISPCK and Ishvani Kendra, New Delhi 2007, 262.

Church.<sup>30</sup> The CBCI final statements and the National Educational Policy reveal the lack of a common policy on the theological principles, objectives and content. In the present socio-economic context of India, the Gospel must determine a system of Christian education which will promote justice and peace. Therefore, Christian education is envisioned as a liberative dialogical process of creating reality. “An urgent intervention of all Catholic stakeholders is required in this turbulent time in Tamil Nadu. Some adaptations and modifications required for the present socio-political situation must be incorporated in the existing policy.”<sup>31</sup> The Catholic educational policy has not been implemented in its every aspect and strategies. Literacy for all Christians, one of the objectives of the policy has not been achieved even though missionaries had begun the educational institutions three hundred years ago.

The minority institutions are established primarily to cater for the education of minority communities. The minority institutions denying admission to the minority students on the grounds of lack of merit or intellectual capacity is not unheard of in India and especially in Tamil Nadu. Many Christians from backward classes and rural and remote villages are still illiterate. A policy must be put in place to make all Christians literate. A restored committee or grievance committee should be established in each diocese or region to ensure the admission of minorities in our catholic educational establishments. A monitoring committee is to be established in each region to supervise the implementation of educational policy and assuring everything possible for the literacy of all Christians.<sup>32</sup> The Catholic students and their education is the priority of Catholic Educational Institutes. The Catholic Church of India (CBCI) always intended to secure the future of the young generation and thereby to contribute to the development of the country. The educational institutions of the Church should be at the service of the nation in safeguarding the principles of democracy and the spiritual fabric of our nation.

## **8. Emphasis on Dialogue and Collaboration between the Church and the Government**

In relationship with the State of Tamil Nadu, the educational mission is carried out in accordance with a proper application of the principle of subsidiarity. There need to be mutual Church-State reservations in educational policy to facilitate the forming of productive partnerships which will advance the cause of the common good in education by utilizing the

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<sup>30</sup> Cfr. <https://www.business-today.in/union-budget-2020/news/union-budget-2020-fm-nirmala-sitharaman-allows-fdi-in-education-sector-skill-development/story/395201.html>; The Financial Minister of India Nirmal Sitharaman while presenting the union budget for 2020 on 02.02.2020 said: “By 2030, India is set to have the largest working age population in the world. Not only do they need literacy, but they need both job and life skills.” She accented that with the coordination of education ministers of various states and members of parliaments soon the new education policy will be launched. This shows the non-consideration act of central government to minority educational institutions. There are number of suggestions, protests, memorandum about the NEP 2020 which have been submitted by the CBCI and TNBCI to the state and the nation in raising the voice of the minority institutes. The national authorities still wanted to implement the NEP 2020. Thus, impartial attitude towards the Catholic educational institutions are revealed.

<sup>31</sup> Cfr. S. MULLICK, “Christian Education in a Changing India Towards and Education Policy from Christian Perspective”, 29.

<sup>32</sup> Cfr. T. D’SOUZA, “The key-note address given by Archbishop Thomas D’Souza (12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Nov 2018)”, in *Report, CBCI National Education Consultation*, CBCI office for Education and Culture, New Delhi 2018, 3.



strengths of Catholic institutions for the service of the most disadvantaged students and communities.<sup>33</sup>

Despite opposition and persecution from the Government and others<sup>34</sup> the Church has continued with her mission of service to the people in the field of education and empowerment of its weaker sections. In its humanitarian services, the Church does not discriminate based on caste, creed or race. There is no doubt that over the years the Catholic Church has contributed to the building of the nation and to the upward social mobility that has changed the lives of people, such as the Dalits and Adivasis.<sup>35</sup> The former President of India, Pranab Mukherjee expressed appreciation for the Catholic Church's good work in the fields of education and social services. There were millions of children, irrespective of religion, educated in Church educational institutions.<sup>36</sup>

The dialogue and collaboration calls to explain our Christian identity and Indian authenticity through writings, symposium and dialogues. We need to establish a National Information Centre to spread the good deeds done by the Christian community in India towards the people of other faiths. In this connection, the Christian community should enter into the civil society, the public space where people meet and interact, exchange views and conduct discussions and debates and become aware of mutual obligations, promoting the values of freedom, equality and justice through communicative action, debate and publicity. This is much more obligatory today when there is the danger of majoritarianism and with the anti-democratic totalitarian tendencies that are cropping up in our country. It is by increasing the interaction among the individuals and various groups and by creating a mood of mutual accommodation and tolerance that the State can be prevented from going into any excesses. It is by building up a strong civil society that the state can be checked from imposing its worldview, values, symbols and vision.<sup>37</sup>

The State has the noble duty to ensure that all its citizens have access to an adequate education and are prepared for the proper exercise of their civic rights and duties. It should be vigilant about the ability of the teachers and the standard of teaching.<sup>38</sup> The formation and development of a harmonious personality as enunciated in can. 795, require a peaceful atmosphere, fruitful understanding, reciprocal trust and collaboration between persons in charge. It is obtained with mutual respect for the specific competence of the various members of the educational staff, their responsibilities and the choice of the differentiated means at their disposal. More directly as an agent of education, the State has the right and duty to educate its citizens and prepare them to be useful members of society.

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<sup>33</sup> Cfr. G. GRACE, "First and foremost the Church Offers its Educational Service to the Poor: Class, Inequality and Catholic schooling in Contemporary Contexts", in *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 13 (2003), 39.

<sup>34</sup> We have studied about the Union government of India and the implementation of Education system in schools in chapter two titled n. 2.1.1.

<sup>35</sup> Cfr. P.R. JOHN, "Catholic (Jesuit) Education: A Service to the Nation", in *Vidyajyoti* 83 (2019), 373.

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.ucanews.com/news/intolerance-in-india-a-temporary-phase-says-nations-former-president/84117>, (accessed on 06.12.2019).

<sup>37</sup> Cfr. J.K. PULIKAN, *Challenges of Religious Nationalism in India Today*, 174.

<sup>38</sup> Cfr. J.J. PARDO, *The Application of Ecclesiastical Legislation to Religious and Moral Education in Gibraltar: A Historical-Canonical Study*, Pontifical University of Gregorian, Rome 1998, 76-77.

## **9. Suggestions to CBCI**

1. In the present multicultural and multi-religious context, the CBCI needs to uphold the minority rights of Catholics guaranteed by the Constitution of India in order to safeguard our religious identity. The minority rights are needed in order to ensure peace, freedom, equality and justice in a pluralistic society.<sup>39</sup> At the same we need to examine and analyze how the minority rights are used for the development of the poor and the marginalized to increase their educational quality.
2. The CBCI could create a common forum of dialogue with other religious educational institutions (Hindu, Muslim and others) and liberative action with other Non-Governmental Organization groups (NGO). The discussions may destroy mutual misunderstanding, hatred, discord and discrimination between all, and we could together build up a nation with justice, peace and harmony. This is the real challenge; to create a peaceful society.
3. The CBCI could emphasize on the promotion and spread of a comprehensive counterculture in the campuses to oppose the dehumanizing culture, materialistic consumerism, politics of communalism, violence, etc. The counterculture here will be person-oriented and other-oriented. This will integrate human rights and individual duties into community concerns and group sharing. It will create a healthy social climate where equity and equality will dissolve the divisions between caste, class, gender and race.
4. The CBCI would insists that the Catholic institutions are urged to have close collaboration with families especially when treating sensitive issues such as religion, moral or sexual education, orientation towards a profession or a choice of one's vocation in life. It needs to be carried out as a partnership based on faith.

## **Conclusion**

Each person of the society must be educated to become a citizen who is responsible for the common good, who is able to build a new cultural model through formal and informal educational projects by overcoming walls and barriers. Education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature. Therefore the bishops, priests, religious, teachers, and non-teaching staff have to act with prudence in any situation, which arises in their educational ministry. The goal of the salvation of souls should always govern the authorities in exercising their teaching office. Catholic institutions are the cornerstone for the community's integral development and preservation of secular identity of our country. Therefore, values and character formation and respect of every religion is to be emphasized and uncompromised in the education of the young minds. Imposition of Fundamentalism in any form be it in the educational policy or the state laws or the change of national constitution to destroy the secular identity of our nation should be challenged and rebuked.

**Date: 24.01. 2023**

**Rev. Sr. Martina Alphonse Mary FSPM**

**Place: Coimbatore**

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<sup>39</sup> Cfr. INDIAN THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, "Toward a Theology of Christian Minority in India Scenario Today", in *Vidyajyoti*81 (2017), 32-34.

