

edition of the *Indian Express* (29 May '94). K. V. Subanna wrote, the decisions will be taken at Delhi. The people at Delhi may graciously hear our suggestions. But they are not bound by them. But we are bound by their decisions and programmes. Those decisions and programmes are authoritatively imposed upon us, on our soil. Thus, in the long run NSD's decentralization move is bound to encroach on cultural territories of the other. The decentralized programme is bound to become anti-democratic.'

Citing the example of Kannada Sahitya Parishat's decentralization programme Subanna feared that, 'This kind of decentralisation becomes a strong administrative system which binds the component units together and controls them. This is in fact not decentralization, nor is it democracy.' The Approach Paper on Culture Policy has actually cautioned the policy makers against giving 'any single direction or ideological orientation or prescrib(ing) any standards in culture...' The Haksar Committee has also observed:

'In several states the chairpersons of the Akademis are political personalities, and there are also other factors which tend to encroach upon the freedom of the institutions. Though constituted as autonomous bodies, many of them seem ... to be functioning as limbs of the state governments.'

This politicization of autonomous bodies, along with the bureaucratization of culture, will eventually subvert the most liberal of institutionalized initiatives. This confirms what art policy expert John Pick has observed: that 'art policy constantly alludes to arts management practices as if they are an entire substitute for art' (*The Arts in a State*, Bristol, 1988). One of the options suggested in the Comments on the Approach Paper is not to build 'gigantic edifices'

unleashed by economic change, particularly with the spread of consumer ethos, in isolation from economic policies.'

However, the Approach Paper on a National Culture Policy prepared in 1992 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development's Department of Culture was one of the rare occasions when the government showed an interest in formulating its policies towards culture. But it has never become an official document. It has never reached the public. One might argue that this signifies the government's unwillingness to debate its cultural policies in concrete terms in a public forum. The Paper showed that despite various efforts, government funding in culture remained much lower than expected: around 0.11 per cent till 1992. Yet, the Approach Paper attempted to delineate 'a blueprint for areas which need urgent attention and public support'. The NSD decentralization programme is apparently in line with the Approach Paper, which stated: 'The old notion of patronage should be replaced by that of public support and there should be an effective coordination between the activities of various agencies in the states and the Centre with a clear recognition that more than anything else decentralization is a key factor in cultural promotion.'

The regional centre at Bangalore is at present working on a 'pilot project' with an annual budget of rupees 25 lakhs, and according to Mr D. Ankur, director of the centre, in the first two years it would like 'to study the requirements of the southern region and also potential talents in the area, through short term training courses in Drama of six to ten weeks. Such a study would help decide what type of training could be introduced for a two-year foundation course' (*The Hindu*, 27 Dec. '93). This sounds like a very simplistic method of assessment and as we can see,

semantics, history, because word is sound, word is meaning and word is also history. And part of the reason why one is worried about the nationalization of the Indian languages, this makeshift kind of writing, is because it is happening everywhere. It is a certain attitude towards the word which our eyes don't see, our ears don't hear. Blindness cannot create any theatre. And the national has now become the prerogative of the blind. And part of the reason why this is happening to our languages is because the blind have taken over. It is only the theatre which can save it. In other words, it is a paradoxical situation, and that is where I will conclude: that national theatre is not possible because the provincial theatre has become impossible. And the day provincial theatre will become possible and prosper and retrieve the languages you will see the great glory of Indian theatre. It will be a Vishwaroop *darshan*, as in the Bhagavad Gita. It will be a theatre of a thousand faces, a Bengali face, a Maharashtrian face, a Tamil face etc. It is only then that we can come close to a National Theatre.

*This is a slightly revised text of a lecture delivered by G. P. Deshpande at the Utpal Dutt Foundation seminar held in Calcutta on 20 August 1994. Printed courtesy the Utpal Dutt Foundation, Calcutta.*