

## **SCHOOLED INTO HINDU RASHTRA**

- *An Interim Fact-finding Report on the Trafficking of North-eastern Children by the RSS in Karnataka*

For the last couple of years, newspaper reports have appeared about a large number of children from the North-Eastern states of Meghalaya and Manipur being transported to the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. It is revealed that this migration of children is the initiative of *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)* and its associates. This operation is carried out at the behest of *RSS* by a number of individuals and organisations that contact parents belonging to tribal and backward caste communities in the North-East states who are eager to give their children a good education. Once the children are brought here, they are often enrolled in schools and hostels run by individuals and organisations having allegiance to *RSS*. With a view to finding out more about the work that *RSS* is doing with these children from the North-East, or in other words, the schools that they run, the kind of education they impart and the impact that this educational initiative continues to have on these North-Eastern children in Karnataka, two organisations in Karnataka, *PUCL* and *KKSV* decided to conduct a fact-finding investigation. The committee was formed, consisting of the following persons:

1. Ramdas Rao, *People's Union for Civil Liberties-Bangalore*
2. Swar Thounaojam, *PUCL-Bangalore*
3. Robin Christopher J, *Karnataka Komu Souharda Vedike, Karnataka*
4. Santanu Chakraborty, *PUCL-Bangalore*

In furtherance of the investigation, the committee visited a number of places and institutions in Mangalore, Mandya and Mysore, and met with the North-Eastern children studying in these institutions as well as the individuals running these organisations. This report is an outcome of this investigation.

### **Background to the issue:**

Pertinently this project of the *RSS* has been under the scanner of the Courts and the State Government. The issue came to light through a investigative new report "*A strange and bitter crop*" appearing in the *Tehelka*<sup>1</sup>, which reported that at least 1600 children from Meghalaya have been brought to Karnataka and lodged at various *RSS* – friendly schools across the State. This was also noted in the report of the Joint Director of Social Welfare, Government of Meghalaya in its report dated November 2009, pursuant to its visit to such schools in and around Mangalore.

The Supreme Court has seized of this matter in W.P. (Cr1.) No. 102/2007, wherein the State of Karnataka is also a respondent. Vide order dated 31/3/2010, the Supreme Court directed the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) to conduct an inquiry into the large-scale

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<sup>1</sup> Published in the *Tehelka Magazine*, Volume 6, Issue 26, dated July 4, 2009.

transportation of children from the North-Eastern States to other States. Pursuant to the said order, the NCPCR has submitted its report dated July 2010 to the Supreme Court, wherein the situation in Karnataka is also touched upon as seen below:

- 18 girl children (10 from Tousem, Tamenglong district of Manipur and 8 from NC Hills, Assam) were admitted to New Life Centre for Girls at Bharathi Nagar, Bangalore (pages 9 – 10 of the report).
- In its findings/observations the NCPCR has noted that the majority of the children from North-East who are brought to Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are put in Tamil or Kannada medium schools for study, and this is not easy for these children (page 14 of the report).
- Even prior to the order of the Supreme Court the NCPCR has been seized of the large scale migration of children from Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya to various districts of Karnataka, and in this regard had facilitated an inter-State meeting between the two States on 18/02/2010 and a further review meeting on 23/07/2010 (pages 16 – 17 of the report).

After the filing of the above said report of the NCPCR in the Supreme Court, State of Karnataka was directed to file its report vide order dated 1/9/2010. Inter alia, it was further directed that, *“b) The State of Manipur and Assam are directed to ensure that no child below the age of 12 years or those at primary school level are sent outside for pursuing education to other States until further orders.”*

Vide order dated 13/12/2010 the Supreme Court again directed the State of Karnataka to file its affidavit since it was one of the *“destination States”*. This order was reiterated on 1/1/2011.

On 7/2/2013, the Supreme Court passed detailed orders wherein it, inter alia, directed that;

*“... In addition to above, it is necessary that the States provide further detailed information with regard to the measures adopted and the action taken with regard to improving the conditions of children in various shelter homes etc. around the country, to eliminate trafficking of children under the garb of education and other promises like employment, etc...We are informed that in all States, children homes have been set up by the State as also by the non-Government Organisations. We are also informed that some individuals have also been permitted to open such homes. Therefore, it is necessary that each States conducts a detailed survey with regard to Government/NGO/privately run and controlled children homes and find out as to how many Children’s homes/Fit Institution/Observation homes/Shelter homes/Special homes are working in their respective States.”*

Vide order dated 11/11/2013, the States were required to file their Status reports or affidavits, if not yet done till that date. Thereafter in its detailed order dated 16/12/2013 the States were directed to file reports providing information regarding compliance of JJ Act and POCSO as also details of whether any unregistered institutions for children in need of care and

protection are being run and if so have they been shut down or taken over by the State Governments.

### **The Karnataka context of the RSS schooling initiative with the children from the north-east**

The RSS schooling in Karnataka received a fillip in recent years with the saffronisation of society and politics in Karnataka, especially the coastal belt where the RSS and its institutions have been able to operate with impunity and in utter disregard with the law. The coming to power of Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) in 2007 ensured a steady flow of government funds to RSS run institutions, including *mathas*, schools and hostels. The RSS school project directly benefited from the state sanction which enabled it to establish a network of RSS schools directly inculcating a communal ideology at its core. These institutions have not only proliferated but expanded in size (infrastructure and professional programs). These educational complexes impart simultaneously a modern professional education and brahminical pedagogy.

The trafficking of children from north-east to Karnataka under the grab of providing education must be seen in this light. The ideological ramification of this project came under the scanner of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) in Mangalore when it opened an investigation into the working of RSS affiliated schools in Dakshina Kannada and discovered a flourishing trafficking network.

According to Geo D'Silva, of the Child Welfare Committee, Mangalore, the committee functioning from 2007-2010 unearthed the flourishing racket of trafficking children from the north-east that existed across the four southern states. This system of trafficking was set up by the RSS and its affiliates, especially in Dakshina Kannada.

In Karnataka, the RSS affiliated schools are found in Arsikere, Shravanabelagola, Hassan, Koppa and Chikkamagalur. Tukaram Shetty, an RSS pracharak, has been bringing in tribal children from the north-eastern states. Tukaram got 180 children from the north-east and got a commission from *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP) for each such child admitted to the schools.

At the same time, tribal girls brought here are sexually exploited by *mathas*. On this matter, the Child Welfare Committee wrote to the home ministry which formed an enquiry committee to look into the matter. The Committee visited these institutions, many of which were not licensed.

As part of its work, the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) raided the house of a government official where a girl child had been put to work. When the Committee rescued her, the government official filed a case against them, forcing them to escape and seek shelter in Bangalore. *Bangalore Mirror* in the meanwhile found Sundaran, a member of an interstate mafia operating in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh which was engaged in trafficking and other crimes, including impersonation. He was finally jailed. The Committee brought an instance of child labour in the house of a government employee to the notice of the State Women and Child Department, the State Labour

Department and the District Commissioner. But no action was taken by any of these authorities.

It seems that there is an Anti-Trafficking Committee, comprising of District and Panchayat officials, to monitor cases of trafficking in all villages under the panchayat. But, the Committee found that these were dummy committees sending out dummy reports denying the existence of trafficking. Whereas in actual fact, a large number of children were bring brought from the North-East.

The Committee also investigated a *matha* run by Gurupurswamy, which had a lot of children trafficked from Meghalaya. When the media (Naveen Surinje, Sudipto Mondal, Sriram Diwan and Vishnu) exposed the racket, they were attacked by the Gurupurswamy's men. The *matha* also filed cases against the CWC members.

The CWC's investigation revealed that this system of trafficking violates both international conventions on child rights as well as domestic statutory provisions, such as:

- i) Parental consent is not obtained; parents are not in touch with children and visit them irregularly.
- ii) The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* says that children should remain with the parents till 8 years of age; where the child is in a residential school, the parents must be regularly visiting the school. Boys and girls after 6 years of age must be lodged separately in hostels.
- iii) Parents are often misled that their children are going to good English Medium Schools with good facilities. But, the schools don't get commitment letters from the parents; the parents don't visit the schools at the time of admission or later.
- iv) Children are brought here not for education, but, with a view to being trained and indoctrinated to become foot soldiers of Hindutva.
- v) The children have forgotten their own language and culture.
- vi) The CWC is not allowed to intervene in the institutional educational programme, decide about admissions, selection of schools for the children, shifting of children to other schools.
- vii) Parents are informed that their children are studying in English but education is in fact in Kannada. This is not only fraudulent, but also ends with the children not having any language skills to work in their home state anymore.

Given the state of affairs regarding the trafficking the north eastern children, the CWC officially wrote for an enquiry to the Department of Social Welfare in Meghalaya. The Joint Director of the Meghalaya came down and gave a report, which established that children are indeed trafficked. The CWC Mangalore 2007-2010 was pressurizing the Dept of Women and Child Development to take action against the RSS institutions involved in the trafficking of north-eastern children. However, according to the CWC, the Department was hand in glove with the RSS, especially Shakuntala, who was a Deputy Director and went out of her way to protect the RSS and its interests. In December, 2009, the Dept. of Women and Child Development

headed by the Joint Director Mrs. Fathima and Deputy Director Ms. Shakuntala barged into the CWC office of Mangalore and removed important files pertaining to the case of trafficking of north-eastern children by the RSS. A direct consequence of the intervention by the Department of Women and Child Development was to get the CWC suspended.

These developments as well as the Supreme Court case proceedings prompted us to take up an independent investigation into the affairs of such *mathas*, schools and hostels where such children from north-east are being kept.

### **Details and objectives of our investigation**

The fateful intervention by the CWC, Mangalore on the workings of RSS schools in Dakshina Kannada is significantly indicative of the secretive and unlawful nature of the RSS project, and at the same time, the impunity with which they have carried on their operations in Karnataka. For this reason, we decided to visit other places in Karnataka where RSS and its associates had set up schools and hostels and taken the North-Eastern children under their wings. We identified Mangalore, Mandya and Mysore as the three places where we had definite information of RSS having set up such schools. When we visited these schools, we explained that we were engaged in a project of cultural research studying the impact of a different cultural and linguistic environment on children from the North-East and their modes of adaptations. We felt it was important not to share our final objective with an unscrupulous organization like RSS where secrecy and illegality prevail. Here, we give brief accounts of four institutions we visited in Dakshina Kannada and Mysore.

*\*Names of children have been changed to protect their identity*

#### **a. Mangalore**

##### **I. Vivekananda English Medium School, Puttur**

According to the Head Master of Vivekananda English Medium School (VEMS), Puttur, Satheesh Rai, the school has around 60 students from the states of Manipur and Meghalaya. He makes a distinction between the children from the two states (which reveals blatant prejudice) and classifies them into two categories:

- a. According to him, children from Manipur come from well-to-do families who can afford the school and hostel fees. Their parents visit them regularly and the students visit their home states during holidays. They are well-cultured and disciplined; good in academics, sports and extra-curricular activities. They are not trouble makers unless provoked.

- b. As against this, children from Meghalaya come from lower middle class families and hence cannot afford the school and hostel fees. They are therefore given free education. They are unable to meet their parents regularly because they can't afford the travel expenses. "Due to genetic factors", these children are inferior to the Manipuri children and therefore 'dumb', and perform below average in the school.

Even though VEMS claims to be an English medium school, Rai reveals that the medium of instruction from 1<sup>st</sup> Standard to 10<sup>th</sup> Standard is Kannada. He asserts that it is a must for all the children from the north-east to learn Kannada. He was silent on the question of whether opportunities are given to these children to nurture their native mother tongues and cultures from which they have been alienated. He however said that these children are made to participate in events organised by Vidya Bharati, Karnataka to which VEMS is affiliated. He also volunteered the information that the school is run by the RSS. The children stay in a hostel which is one km away from the school and a school bus ferries them back and forth.

From the website of Vidya Bharati, we learn that the aim of Vidya Bharati is the promotion of: *"...a national education system which will develop generations of young men who will have complete faith in Hindu values and ideals, will be nationalists to the core, be fully developed from the physical, mental and spiritual angles, who can successfully meet the challenges of modern life..."*

In an article written by Nandini Sundar titled 'Teaching to Hate: RSS pedagogical programme' and published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 17, 2004, she wrote:

*The Vidya Bharati educational mission is founded on the objective of training children to see themselves as protectors of a Hindu nation: "The child is the centre of all our aspirations. He is the protector of our country, Dharma (religion) and culture..... To relate the child with his land and his ancestors is the direct, clear and unambiguous mandate for education. We have achieved the all round development of the child through education and sanskar, i e, inculcation of time honoured values and traditions." The Vidya Bharati schools are funded through fees and private donations from rich trading families or other wealthy sympathisers, including NRIs. The RSS claims to take no government aid in order to maintain the spirit of voluntarism and avoid government restrictions. However, periods of RSS expansion certainly seem to show an uncanny correlation with having a BJP government in power.*

Rai the headmaster also mentioned a certain 'adoption' system the school runs informally. Its mechanism points to an attempt to achieve more complete indoctrination of the children from the north-east. In this 'adoption' system, school teachers and locals of Puttur who are associated with the school are 'encouraged' to have the north-eastern children live with them during festivals and holidays so that Hindu festivals and ethos can be

introduced to them. The school is required under law to inform the CWC as well as the parents of such movements of children but it is not clear if the school follows this requirement.

He also informed us that many of his alumni from North-east as well as fresh students from the region study at the various institutions run by Alva's Education Foundation, Moodabidri (<http://alvas.org/>). Alva's Education Foundation is an RSS-friendly institution. According to him, around 4000 north-eastern students study in these institutions at any given time.

We were not allowed to speak to the children. Rai revealed that a few years ago, at the behest of the UPA II government, his school was investigated for trafficking and exploitation of children from the north-east. Thereafter, he's received strict instructions from the RSS to not allow the children to talk to anybody unknown to the organisation.

We also met a student from VEMS who made two significant revelations about the school's *modus operandi*:

- 1) Students from Meghalaya have a minimum of three year contract during which they are not allowed home visits; this is with a view to ensure that the student's conversion to Hindu culture is complete.
- 2) Pushparaj is the main RSS agent for Manipur, who identifies children, contacts their parents and transports their children to Karnataka. He is the sole *liaison* between the parents and their children.

## **II. Sri Ram Vidya Mandir, Kalladka, Dakshin Kannada**

At this school, an office bearer showed us a register which had two hand-written statements from the following:

- Arindam Som, Commissioner & Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya
- Director, Department of Social Welfare, Meghalaya

Both these statements were explicit endorsements of the school, thanking them for providing good education to the children of Meghalaya and taking care of the welfare of the children. Under each statement, the official visiting card of the signatory was stapled. Such statements are worrying and betray the complicity of state representatives in furthering the agenda of the RSS.

The said office bearer allowed us to speak to three very young children.

1. Girl A (4 year old) who was brought to the institution when she was 3 year old
2. Boy B (6 year old) who was brought to the institution when he was 4 year old
3. Girl C (9 year old) who was brought to the institution when she was 6 year old

The children told us that they have to learn Kannada as it is the only medium of communication and instruction. The youngest girl who was

brought into Karnataka at age 3 had a highly traumatic time adjusting to the alien environment of a new language and culture and unknown people around her. She cried everyday for three months, according to Girl-C.

Girl-C, the most articulate of the three and oldest (she is 9 years old), told us that Tukaram Shetty is the person who brings students to Karnataka from Meghalaya. She said that her father took her out from the Christian missionary school she was studying in and decided to send her to Karnataka to pursue her education in a Hindu school as he didn't want her to study in a Christian school. She wants to go back home but is doubtful whether her father would allow her to stay in Meghalaya.

These children are provided accommodation in a hostel located in the premises of the school campus. She said that they sleep on mats, wake up at 5 am, bathe in cold water and wash their own clothes. They speak to their parents once a week during the weekend.

None of them have visited Meghalaya or seen their parents after coming to Karnataka. The three children are able to converse in Khasi amongst themselves. However, they have forgotten almost all of the Khasi stories, lullabies, songs they grew up with – their indigenous cultural memory is being wiped away rapidly in this process of forced assimilation and indoctrination. During vacations, they spend their time with Matajis – the lady teachers of the school – and it goes without saying how unhealthy it is for the growth of these very young children to spend all their waking hours with adults who share no common culture or language with them. Also, the term Mataji for lady teacher is indicative of an attempt to create a parallel family structure that can supersede the biological family of the children.

### **III. The RSS pedagogy at Vivekananda English Medium School (VEMS), Puttur, Dakshina Kannada and Sri Ram Vidya Mandir, Kalladka, Dakshina Kannada**

Both Vivekananda English Medium School (VEMS), Puttur, Dakshina Kannada and Sri Ram Vidya Mandir, Kalladka, Dakshina Kannada are run by RSS. The teachers employed by the schools are all members of the RSS and committed to the Sangh Parivar agenda. They reinforce the ideological training of the children in the Sangh system and actively prohibit the children from learning about other cultures. Sri Ram Vidya Mandir subscribes to only one daily newspaper – *Kannada Prabha* – which is well known in the region for its highly communal content. The school is also headed by the notorious RSS pracharak, Kalladka Prabhakar Bhat.

All the classrooms and offices are named after Hindu dynasties, pilgrimage sites, sages and Hindu Brahmin caste titles. Eg: Panchavati, Nandana, Aryabhata, Hoysala, Parthasarathy, Pullolava, Charaka, Bankim, Yadav, Brahman among others.

As declared in the calendars of each school, their objective is “*Dhiyoyona Prachodayath*” – the basis of learning starts with the objective of reviving,



rejuvenating and restoring the great ancient Hindu tradition. Learning of Sanskrit is given primacy, including spoken Sanskrit. The rituals and practices of reciting Saraswathi Vandana, Gayathri Manthra and Prayer, and Bhagavadgeetha followed by Panchanga, Subhashitha and Dhyana transform the school into 'a site for the transmission of Hindu cultural traditions' and do not allow the children to 'transcend their religious identities and begin to learn about other cultures or develop faculties for critical enquiry'; thus, 'the school becomes an extension of the kind of religious discourse that is imparted in temples.'

The extra-curricular markers of the Hindu identity are carefully imposed on the girl students – they have to wear the salwar-kurta uniform; red bindi and bangles are compulsory. It is made mandatory for girls from 5<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> std. to tie their hair in two plaits and fold the same with prescribed colour ribbons. From a very young age, the girls internalise the burden of upholding the Hindu tradition by monitoring their appearance.

As part of its disciplining regime, students are warned not to attend political rallies or activities. They will face temporary or permanent suspension if due decorum in their behaviour is not observed, and if they absent themselves from various school activities. Physical education, which includes martial arts, yoga and spiritual training based on panchamukhi, plays a huge role in inculcating a militaristic discipline.

Examination and tests conducted include Ramayana and Mahabharata; Bhagavadgeetha Quiz, Shanthiavana Trust, Samskrith Jnana Parikshe and Moral Exam.

Given that RSS is an organisation known for conducting its activities with utmost secrecy and illegality, instruction given to student like this takes on an ominous tone:

*Pupils should neither meet nor speak to strangers, should not receive anything from them. They should inform the teachers immediately about suspicious characters entering the school campus.*

In the name of security and protection, it is also possible that the schools are priming the children to think it is normal to snoop for the authority.

## **b. Mysore**

### **I. JSS Institution, Suttur, Mysore**

Tripuranthaka, the administrative officer of the education complex of JSS institution in Suttur, met us in his office. He initially agreed to allow us to meet some of his students from Meghalaya and Manipur but later refused to give us permission until an official letter detailing the purpose of our visit was given to him. The reason he gave was the incident of being interviewed by a *Tehelka* reporter under the deceptive assurance of publicizing their

mission but which ended up with a scandalous account of how their school was indoctrinating tribal children from the North-east.

We however still managed to engage him in a conversation that revealed new and important aspects of the involvement of the Pejawar Matha Swami in the RSS-inspired and RSS-friendly initiative of giving education to north-eastern children for the purpose of creating purposeful citizens of a Hindu Rashtra.

The school has approximately 200 girls from Meghalaya and Manipur studying in it. There are no boys from these states studying here although the school is run as a co-educational centre. The medium of instruction is both English and Kannada. The students from the north-east are not brought by JSS directly. They themselves do not advertise for admissions in the north-east. There are organizations in the north-east that select these students and bring them here. In a candid and alarming admission, he said that JSS does not take any responsibility for the north-eastern students. In fact if anything happens to these students, it is the responsibility of the organizations that have brought the students to the school.

On the question of fees, he said that the school provides free education for all. But since students from Manipur belong to higher income group, they charge some amount of fees from them since they do not want the girls to 'mispend their money'. This arbitrary fee structure does not apply to the Meghalaya students since they cannot afford them. The institution sponsors the fees, uniforms, books and other facilities for the Meghalaya students. The youngest of the students are in the 3<sup>rd</sup> std. and the oldest in the 10<sup>th</sup> std.

According to him, during holidays, only the Manipuri students tend to go home or have parents visit them since they can afford travel expenses. The Meghalaya students often stay back as they can't afford to travel. The students however were not going home for the Dussera holidays and some of them would be joining a camp in Mangalore called *Meghalaya Milan* where students from Meghalaya studying in schools across Karnataka are brought together to showcase their 'Sanskriti' learnings.

Local students invite these north-eastern children to their homes during Hindu festivals. It remains to be investigated whether CWC as well as the parents are informed of the movement of the children.

Though he was visibly proud of the sporting talents of the girl students from the north-east, he was also quick to label them as 'masculine'.

He was open about the daily routine of the students in the campus: Yoga lessons in the morning, prayer sessions in the morning and afternoon where they chant Sanskrit slokas. He showed us a video on his mobile phone where students *en masse* were wearing saffron shawls and chanting slokas.

He said all the students including Hindu, Muslim and Christian take part in these prayers.

He gave us information about a Pejawar hostel for north-eastern boys in J.P. Nagar, Mysore called *Vijaya Vithal*.

Throughout our conversation with Tripuranthaka, it became quite clear that even though the JSS institution is not affiliated to the RSS, they do share a similar ideology of creating an education system for the Hindu Rashtra and follow an identical pedagogy. The institution also benefits from the networks of RSS in the north-east and it was quite apparent that students admitted to the institution were sourced by the RSS network.

## II. **Pejawar Sarvajanika Uchitha Vidyarthi Nilaya (Boy's Hostel), JP Nagar, Mysore**

The most significant fact about this hostel is that it was started by Pejawar Swamy with a view to 'rescue North Eastern boys whom the Christians have converted'. It is run by a group of Vishwa Hindu Parishad activists who have striven to impart an overtly Hindutva pedagogy to children from Meghalaya and Manipur.

The warden of the hostel is one Keshab. Located in an isolated corner of JP Nagar in Mysore, the hostel is a one-storey building and lies across the road from the Vitthala Dhama Temple.

We managed to speak to the warden, the secretary of the hostel, and some of the students from Meghalaya and Manipur.

Based on interviews with the boys, we found that the hostel provides the barest minimum facility to them. A small room houses 6 boys. Only mattresses are given to sleep on. No bed, table, chair, almirah are given. Food consists of a fried rice item for breakfast and ragi mudde or rice and sambar for lunch and dinner. There is half an hour prayer session in the morning and in the evening. If any of the boys misses the prayer, no food is given to them as punishment. The warden regularly beats up the boys. There is no proper medical facility available to the boys. There is no facility for sports or any form of entertainment.

We also found that there is another hostel in Chunchunakatte near Mysore where north-eastern boys stay. The living conditions in the hostel are worse than in this boys' hostel. The boys are also forced to work in the field for half an hour each in the morning and in the evening. They also face racist physical and verbal abuses from their hostel warden and local boys.

Our conversation with the hostel warden Keshab and hostel secretary Suresh gave us the following information that reveals many biases and assumptions the VHP activists make about the children and where they come from:

1) The hostel is currently hosting 52 children from Meghalaya and 2 PUC boys from Manipur. The Manipur PUC students were sent to study in Karnataka by their parents so that they don't fall in bad habits.

2) According to him, north-eastern boys and children from Manipur and Meghalaya have feeling of separatism and they turn out to be terrorist, falling into bad habits of drugs, which is why this project was launched to bring them into mainstream India. The secretary explained it by giving the example that when a child is asked what is his country, his reply was Manipur, not India. So the secretary went on to say that this is the problem in such students from Manipur and Meghalaya, having such separatist feelings, students associations asking for separate country, etc. So the program was started to get students from Manipur and Meghalaya to give them education and cultural education in Indian values. The program is in its 14th year now.

3) VHP has been running this program in Manipur and Meghalaya through one Juwai based Association. This Association is in charge of sorting the students based on their socio-economic background. In Meghalaya while selecting students they tend to focus on students from poor background, having single parents. The persons who are in touch with the children or who deal with the children are known to the children, are from the same village that the children are from. For example Boy-D told us about one Maslan, who is a Meghalaya boy in his village having RSS affiliation, who got him admitted here in the hostel.

4) While talking to Keshab, he showed us a letter from Vivekananda Youth Movement. The letter was addressed to the hostel, thanking them for taking children under the Vivekananda Scholarship program. Under the Scholarship program, children from backward Hindu caste are given scholarships and enrolled in schools to study science and mathematics. The letter also mentioned that since 2007 to 2013, 397 students have passed out of schools because of the scholarship program. Some other programs are also being run by them.<sup>2</sup>

5) The Secretary also spoke about some of the future plans of the schools, like collaborating with Rotary Club to provide education to local out-of-school students in Karnataka.

6) The original idea by Pejawar Math Swami was to have an education facility with 50-50 ratio of children from north-east and local children. They are constructing computer rooms in the hostel, so as to collaborate with Rotary Club next year to provide education to local out-of-school students. The focus will be on out of school students who have dropped out of PUC as far as local students are concerned. North-eastern students fall in the category of students from 3-4 std. to PUC. The North-eastern students are currently studying in Val Udyan and Wagh Devi School in J P Nagar, Mysore (where the focus is on boys) and JSS, Suttur, Mysore (where the focus is on girls).

7) The role of RSS and Viswa Hindu Parishad in getting the students from Manipur and Meghalaya was emphasized. The facility itself was over a

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<sup>2</sup> For further details visit the following links - [www.vild.edu.in](http://www.vild.edu.in), [www.vils.in](http://www.vils.in), [www.graam.org.in](http://www.graam.org.in)

year old and the Warden has taken in charge only for past 9 months He has a background in automobile engineering.

8) The Secretary also mentioned that there are Christian students and their parents have sent them, so they get a proper cultural upbringing. We asked them whether they are converting these Christian students to Hindu, they said no, they are only giving *samskruti* training to the students. This includes yoga lessons, morning and evening prayers, teaching them Sanskrit slokas and *hanuman chalisa*.

9) In terms of challenges, the Warden and Secretary said that it was very tough initially, as the students did not know Kannada, Hindi or English. They only knew Khasi. So students who knew both Khasi and Hindi spoke with them and now they have picked up some Kannada words.

10) The impression given to us about the children by the Secretary and Warden is that they come from hilly terrain, having accustomed to a certain kind of lifestyle. The children when they came here, used to go around wrecking the place, throwing stones in window panes, making a nuisance. Over a period of time, they have become refined and they don't use swear words, nowadays they only talk about Rama and Krishna.

11) They also mentioned that one of the students kept crying for days when he was brought here. After a point the students realized that there is no point, as they will be here, so they came around.

12) They also said that three years training period is required to give them the personality training and after three years they get to go home for a month. The children know when they go back for a month, that they would have to come back and they have the fear factor, which ensures they do not revert back to their old system.

13) We asked them, whether these students get absorbed in RSS, they said no they get jobs or become social servants.

14) So the program has three stages. First stage is staying in Meghalaya, second stage is coming here and the third stage is when they go back, if they go back.

15) Manipuri parents prefer to send their children here because they get into bad habits from the point of view of the parents, whereas the school thinks they have to be socialized into becoming patriotic, recognizing India as their true country and that they can be fit for the market, meaning they take up professional work, study computers and get into service sector.

16) As Manipuri parents are better off, they can come and visit the children here and then they go back. The two PUC students we spoke to said that they have visited Bangalore with their parents. Manipuri students have far more freedom in travelling, meeting their parents and making career choices.

17) Meghalaya students come from a different socio-economic background. They have restrictions over going back. It's a kind of severance they have from Meghalaya. The kind of personality development programs run in schools ensures that they do not want to go back. Only one boy who went back for health reasons, otherwise hardly anyone goes back (from the one year experience of running the hostel)

18) As part of their cultural education, they have been teaching them Sanskrit slokas and *hanuman chalisa*. Teaching them drama has been

difficult because of the language. The secretary mentioned about one woman dancer who combines *Bharatnatyam* with *Janapada* to teach these students. This would be a program that would be implemented soon.

19) Schools for North-eastern children in Karnataka are spread out in Mandya (JSS), Chitradurga, Gulbarga, Mysore and Mangalore.

The foregoing description of the educational set up, living conditions and pedagogy of RSS run schools in Mangalore, Mandya and Mysore reveals a highly developed system of recruiting children from the North-east by the RSS and transporting them to various schools in Karnataka.

### **Modus Operandi**

Based on limited interviews with a few children from Meghalaya, the *Tehelka* report and other news reports, and CWC Mangalore report (**Annexure-A**), we found that the RSS operation of identifying and transporting children from Meghalaya is masterminded by one Tukaram Shetty. His name has come up in many reports and in all the interviews we have conducted with the children in Kalladka and the boys in Mysore. It is established that he often uses the *Lei Synshar Cultural Society*, Jowai, Meghalaya and various other RSS-run cultural organisations in order to contact parents from low income backgrounds and induce them to send their children to Karnataka for free education. Amongst these parents, “there is a strong desire for education as a means to challenge existing social inequities and to lay claim to the attributes of citizenship that the state promises” and the educational fronts of RSS in Meghalaya manipulate this desire to identify and transport children to Karnataka for their Hindu Rashtra education project. It also exploits the cleavage that exists between the Christian tribals and non-Christian tribals in Meghalaya by making conversion of non-Christian tribals as the RSS pet project. The conversion is done discreetly by appropriating and conflating native tribal beliefs with Hinduism. Nitin Sethi has written an in-depth report<sup>3</sup> of similar rampant conversions happening in Meghalaya’s neighbouring state Arunachal Pradesh. This report is very important in understanding the overt and covert operations of the RSS in the north-east.

RSS affiliates thus create RSS-friendly and Hindu-sympathising tribal communities in Meghalaya who often willingly hand over their children, as young as 3 year olds, to the RSS agent Tukaram Shetty for education and future career prospects in Karnataka.

These children are not allowed to visit their home for their first 3 years as per the unwritten contract of RSS. According to RSS affiliated activists and children interviewed by us, this period of 3 years’ alienation is important for

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<sup>3</sup> ‘RSS turns Arunachal tribals towards Hinduism’, April 29, 2014, *Business Standard* | ‘Hearts open, options closed’, April 29, 2014, *Business Standard*

the successful conversion of the children to the RSS system of Hindu Rashtra education. Over and above this unwritten contract, the children and their parents cannot make any decisions pertaining to their movements without the permission of the Meghalaya RSS agent Tukaram Shetty.

While all the institutions we visited claim to give free education to these children, there are hidden bills involved for the parents. In the boys' hostel in JP Nagar Mysore, we saw parcels of clothes sent by parents from Meghalaya to their children through the postal service. This contradicts various claims made by all the institutions that food, clothes and shelter are provided for free, for the children. We are also yet to investigate information given to us by some students that parents give commission to Tukaram Shetty for taking their children to Karnataka for education.

The *modus operandi* of the RSS in Manipur for identifying and transporting children to Karnataka was newly revealed to us by the students we interviewed during our fact finding. All the students belong to the Meitei Hindu community from the valley districts of Manipur. According to them the RSS has been operating in Manipur for more than 10 years.

The children were introduced to the RSS by their fathers and uncles in Manipur. They used to accompany them to RSS camps when they were as young as four years old. The RSS runs 2 training camps in Manipur: ITC (Initial Training Camp) in December and OTC (Officers Training Camp) in April. The ITC has a 3-day and 7-day camp and after its due completion a trainee can proceed to OTC. The ITC is now called the Prathamika Shiksha Varga. The OTC is now called the Sangha Shiksha Varga. These training camps are held all over the country every year during April – June.

The OTC has 3 levels:

1. Prathama Varsha Shiksha Varga (First year training camp) – Duration is 21 days.
2. Dvitiya Varsha Shiksha Varga (Second year training camp) – Duration is 21 days.
3. Trutiya Varsha Shiksha Varga (Third year training camp) – Duration is 30 days.

At the ITC in Manipur, the trainees are introduced to the RSS objective of a united Bharat Mata. The young boys we interviewed said that the RSS pracharaks in Manipur never mention about religion but only stress the importance of building a united Bharat Mata. This points to the covert nature of the RSS operation where it masks its Hindutva agenda and stresses a nation-building project for mass appeal. The Manipuri RSS

trainees and sympathisers are told that *RSS* camps can be found anywhere in India, however remote the place is. An *RSS* camp will help them out when they get lost while travelling or have nowhere to go. It is their temporary home where they will be taken care of for free. The boys said their fathers and uncles have been helped by *RSS* camps when they got tired or lost during travels. This benign version of the *RSS* is highly appealing to a population that has been wracked by state violence and failed by their leaders.

At the OTC, the boys said that they are taught combat and yoga. Discipline is highly stressed upon. They also said *RSS* does good work and refuses to take anybody's side. The OTC camp usually trains 50 students at a time. Many well known MLAs and professors from DM College (a well known college in Imphal) participate in these camps along with other professionals and businessmen. The camp features *RSS* speakers from Maharashtra and Delhi who come and speak to them. According to the boys, one such speaker's name is Bhaskar from Maharashtra.

Seva Bharati and Sanskar Kendra are the recognisable *RSS* organisations run in Imphal by one Ashok, an 85 year old Sangh activist from Kerala who has lived in Imphal for 15 years. The main influential *RSS* agent who identifies and transports students from Manipur to Karnataka is Pushparaj. He is married to a Meitei woman from Ningthoukhong. He lived in Manipur for five years and keeps coming back to Manipur often. All these non-Manipuri *RSS* pracharaks learn the local language Meiteilon. Many places in Manipur also have smaller *RSS*-affiliated organisations run by trained locals. Tribals, Muslims, Nepalis are also part of these camps.

*RSS* agent Pushparaj signs written agreements with parents and take the children to Karnataka. One Newton Sapam from Leimaram, Bishnupur district is a regular companion for the Meitei Hindu students during their transportation from Manipur to Karnataka. The parents have to pay Rs. 10,000/- per month for each child. No two siblings are allowed to study in the same school.

Contrary to claims made by various *RSS* institutions and *RSS*-friendly institutions that Manipuri parents are well off and can afford to pay tuition fees, interviews with students from Manipur reveal the reverse. Their parents are more often than not daily wage farmers, auto drivers, unemployed school workers, anganwadi workers, shamans, barbers etc. who work very hard to make ends meet as well as save enough money to pay for their children's education. Their reasoning for sending their children to *RSS* affiliated schools in Karnataka is to take advantage of the vast network of higher education facilities available in *RSS* institutions. They also believe



that these schools are English medium institutions which will help give better career prospects to their children. The latter turns out to be often fraudulent since many schools are Kannada medium and north-eastern children are forced to communicate and be instructed in Kannada.

### **Living Conditions**

In the 2008 CWC Mangalore report, it is stated that the children were given only nylon mats to sleep on in a destitute home they were forced to live in. There were no proper dormitory facilities; no study room was made available and children had to study in the prayer hall which was also used as a sleeping hall for the boys; no desk and benches were made available for the students.

Six years after the Committee's report, we visited the boys' hostel in Mysore and heard about the lack of facilities in the Chunchunakatte hostel. Based on interviews with the boys, we found that the hostel provides the barest minimum facility to them. A small room houses 6 boys. Only mattresses are given to sleep on. No bed, table, chair, almirah are given. Food consists of a fried rice item for breakfast and ragi mudde or rice and sambar for lunch and dinner. There is half an hour prayer session in the morning and evening. If any of the boys misses the prayer, no food is given to them as punishment. The warden regularly beats up the boys. There is no proper medical facility available to the boys. There is no facility for sports or any form of entertainment.

We also found that there is another hostel in Chunchunakatte near Mysore where north-eastern boys stay. The living conditions in the hostel are worse than in this boys' hostel. The boys are also forced to work in the field for half an hour each in the morning and in the evening. They also face racist physical and verbal abuses from their hostel warden and local boys. (Details in their interview in Appendix 4)

### **Hindu Rashtra Project**

The most sinister aspect of the RSS project of bringing North-Eastern children into Karnataka and enrolling them in its schools is that it is a part of its larger *Hindutva* project of cultural nationalism designed to inculcate certain exclusive notions of citizenship and identity. Schooling is in fact one of the modes by which nations imagine and reproduce themselves. Seen in this light, schooling is central to the *Hindutva* project of producing/fashioning future citizens out of disenfranchised sections of society, including but not limited to dalits, tribals, advasis, backward castes, lower castes and minorities of a lower socio-economic background. Its ultimate purpose is to inculcate a kind of national identity that is assimilative, majoritarian, Hindu and upper caste.

In the above said context, this project aims at expanding the base among dalits, backward castes, adivasis, tribals and other subaltern groups in order to absorb them into the larger Hindu fold. This is simultaneously followed with the use of violence against the same groups to strengthen the existing social order.

The question naturally arises as to why this exclusivist project marked by coercion and violence is so successful in the North-eastern context. The most important factor that pushes these children into *RSS* schools is the abject condition of state schooling which is marked by rampant teacher absenteeism, poor infrastructure and discrimination against children of lower castes. The poor quality of state schooling is complemented by the strong parental motivation to send their children to 'good schools' even if it means sending them out of their state and consigning them to the care of external agents and agencies like the *RSS*. Underlying the parents' motivation is a genuine desire to use schooling as a means to break existing social iniquities and to lay claim to the attributes of Indian citizenship that the state promises – but does not deliver. In the public perception in the North-East, *RSS* schools fare well on examination results and at the same time are affordable for the lower middle class. For example, for the Maitei Hindu community, it is a question of tapping into the network of *RSS* run colleges for career opportunities in order to secure livelihood. The Indian system of education is also perceived to be competitive and exam oriented, thus offering career opportunities. The schools thus manage to attract a range of children whose parents are not necessarily committed to the *Hindutva* agenda, or for that matter, not even Hindu. However, the children who graduate from these schools end up with a strong orientation towards *Hindutva*. This gap is filled by schools like those run by the *RSS* that play a twin role of cultural interpellation and professional advancement.

Moreover, the prolonged conflict between the Indian Army and insurgent groups in the North-east has created conditions of unrest and insecurity due to many instances of encounter deaths and enforced disappearances of people, mass rape of women committed by the security forces and atrocities committed by the insurgents on the local communities. Many ordinary people fear for the security for the lives of their children and prefer to protect their children from the pervasive violence by sending them away from their region to distant schools. It is also to be noted that insurgency has created a certain disillusionment with the cycle of violence even among the Meitei Hindu communities in Manipur. The *RSS* has exploited these factors to draw parents into their ideological fold making it easier for the *RSS* to further its long term ambitions through education.

According to Nitin Sethi, journalist, who has studied the RSS operation in the north-east, especially Arunachal Pradesh, the RSS also taps into the conflict points like the cleavage between the Christian community and indigenous communities in the region. In its process of cultural interpellation, the RSS has also been able to appropriate indigenous Gods by producing literature and idols which are a hybrid of the tribal gods and gods of the Hindu pantheons. Such a hybrid construction of indigenous beliefs is used by the RSS to demonstrate how indigenous beliefs and Hindu beliefs are complementary in nature.

(We are indebted to Nandini Sundar's study of *Hindutva* educational project in Chattisgarh for many of our insights in this section.)

In the context of Karnataka, the RSS schooling project has 2 dimensions: ideological content and pedagogy. A number of studies have dwelt on text books which are based on the ideology of *Hindutva* which propagate a majoritarian identity. This ideology is also propagated in its institutions such as Saraswati schools and Bal Vidya Mandirs. But a more insidious dimension of this ideology is the pedagogical practices that prevails in these schools and instills in the consciousness of young minds certain notions of majoritarian citizenship quite at odds with the constitutional framework of equal citizenship and the ideal of fraternity as espoused by Dr. Ambedkar. The ideology can also be described as assimilative as the purpose of the pedagogy seems to be to capture young minds to the project of *Hindutva* by emphasizing upper caste Hindu practices and rituals rather than an overtly communal ideology.

The teachers of schools run by the RSS and its affiliates which we visited were all proud of the fact that the school inculcated *Samskruti*, which is usually seen as a process of character formation through moral education. This is the stated mission of the RSS schools: 'achieve the all round development of the child through education and *samskar* [read Hindu *samskar*] i.e., inculcation of time-honoured values and traditions.' However in this case it becomes a very powerful notion that encompasses various practices of the school such as the celebration of Hindu festivals, observances of anniversaries of great Hindu heroes of the past, a persistent invocation of Brahmanical motifs, a prescription of vegetarianism as practiced by Hindu upper castes, an insistence on clothing that conforms to notions of Hindu propriety, extra- curricular markers and makers of identity (wearing a shawl, sporting a tilak), spending Hindu holidays at the house of Hindus, obligatory recital of prayers and *shlokas* etc.

The most objectionable feature of imposing this elaborate construction of Hindu culture is that it flagrantly denies the socio-cultural experiences and

identities of children coming from a region that is anything but majoritarian. In this mode of education, in accordance with the tenets of Golwalkar, Indian civilization becomes synonymous with Hindu civilization, which in turn is synonymous with Vedic civilization.

The point to be noted is that the version of culture which is produced is exclusively Hindu and upper caste, thereby eliding other religious identities such as Christianity, Islam and tribal and lower caste identities.

Equally significant in this process of Hindutva acculturation is the emphasis given to learning Kannada (regional language) and Sanskrit (language of Vedic culture), two languages that are far removed from the child's linguistic-cultural universe, and hence most likely to intensify the child's alienation from the world around him.

The point of the *Hindutva* schooling is to project the school as a sacred space of learning which is reinforced by daily rituals which to mark transitional points of the day such as evening, before dinner, nightly prayers, rich display of images of Gods and Goddesses and so on. So the school literally becomes a temple of learning, not about diversity or developing critical inquiry but a space for imparting religious discourse. This Hindu ethos is imposed on the children through a fascist mode such that the child only understands one identity. The militaristic nature of training imparted to the children emerges from the networks of summer camps to which many of these children are sent. The camps impart training in arms in tune with the militaristic ethos of *Hindutva*. In the ultimate analysis the children are schooled to become warriors for the Hindu nation.

## **Conclusions**

### **a. Legal dimensions of trafficking**

According to the NHRC<sup>4</sup>, the *“migration of a child not accompanying parents entails many other undesirable consequences such as (a) dislocation of home and family life (b) the child is deprived of the love and affection of parents as also of emotional security (c) he/she is deprived of the excitement and joy of childhood which once lost cannot be regained”*, and further, *“a migrant child could additionally be a victim of forced labour, sexual abuse, cruel, degrading and dehumanized treatment”*.

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<sup>4</sup> “A Framework for an Action Plan to implement the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act in North-Eastern States in the Context of Migration/Trafficking of Children”, Dr. Lakshmidhar Mishra, Special Sapporteur, NHRC, August 2011.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) in its Approach Paper<sup>5</sup> (**Annexure – B**) argues that there exists only a thin line of difference between forced migration and migration under distress and trafficking. This is because most often, an impression is given to migrants before obtaining their consent that the migration will benefit them in terms of enhancing their earnings through decent job opportunities. However when they do migrate, they are handed over to other contractors/agents where they suffer a loss of agency and loss of freedom as far as their work is concerned, thus leading to exploitation.

The NCPCR in the above mentioned report also followed up the cases of children trafficked from North-east (mainly Manipur and Meghalaya) under the garb of education and records the following findings:

- a) Commercial exploitation of these children by orphanages/homes in Karnataka by way of raising donations and funds in the name of providing education
- b) Physical exploitation of such children in hostels/homes where they have to stay in crowded rooms, housed in buildings lacking in sanitation facilities and amenities, they are not provided with proper food, health care or education and also subjected to physical abuse. Such homes/hostels are unregistered as far as provisions of Charitable Homes (Control and Supervision) Act, 1960 and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 are concerned and therefore operate in complete secrecy, non-transparency and with impunity.
- c) Cultural exploitation of such children whereby they are not allowed to meet their parent/s for over two years, losing all connection and touch with their mother tongue, culture, community and belonging.

From the conversations we have had with the North-eastern children here in Karnataka, like any other migrants, they and their parents were also promised a better and a secure future in terms of education and livelihood before being transported to Karnataka. However upon reaching Karnataka, they were similarly not allowed to visit their parents; in fact there is a strict mandate for the children to not go back home for three years; they are given education in an alien language, forcing them to adopt to a singular Hindu culture irrespective of their original religious or tribal identity. They are provided only with vegetarian food, irrespective of their food preferences or nutritional needs and are physical abused with beatings and punishments to instill fear in the minds of such children, among other things.

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<sup>5</sup> Monitoring the Rights of Vulnerable Migrant Children with Trafficking Point of View, NCPCR

From the above mentioned *modus operandi* of the RSS front outfits in the north-eastern states, we can also see how such outfits have taken advantage of the years of conflict that have left parents of such children in fear for the lives of their children, how their desire for identity and cultural acceptance has been preyed upon and moreover how the inactions of the local administration has resulted in such unchecked trafficking.

The *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act* was enacted in 2009 in order to provide legislative authority that gives effect to a positive duty of the state, to ensure the fundamental right of the children to education. Section 6 of the Act casts a statutory duty on the appropriate Government and local authority to establish neighbourhood schools. Subsequent provisions and rules provide for the administrative powers and funds to achieve these within three years. The 14 year old project of the RSS has clearly taken advantage of absence of neighbourhood schools in setting up their trafficking operation. The role of the local administration in violating statute-mandated duties thus have resulted in functioning of such trafficking operation and if immediate steps are not taken to comply with the statute, the trafficking of these children will go on unchecked.

The Indian Penal Code has been amended in 2013 to understand trafficking as a case of recruiting, transporting, harbouring, transferring or receiving children by practicing fraud, or deception or by abuse of power or by inducement, including the giving or receiving of payments or benefits, in order to achieve the consent of any person having control over the person recruited, transported, harboured, transferred or received. This wide definition of the *modus operandi* of effecting transport of children for exploitative purposes applies to the *modus operandi* of such RSS outfits; however little to no application of such laws have been made to address such violation.

Moreover the fundamental right of every child to receive education is enshrined in Art. 21A of the Indian Constitution. The Indian Government has also ratified the United Convention of the Rights of the Child (commonly refers to as CRC). Articles 17, 29 and 30 of the CRC refer specifically to the individual rights of indigenous and tribal children. Article 17 promotes access to media and information in indigenous and tribal languages. Article 29 emphasizes the need for education to respect cultural identity, language and values in a tolerant environment.

Furthermore, Article 30 specifically notes that:

*In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with*

*other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.*

The unchecked trafficking of north-east children by *RSS* outfits in the garb of providing education and livelihood is reminiscent of the colonial project of the Australian Government wherein children from Australian Aboriginal communities were removed from their families under state sanctioned law during the period of 1909 and 1969 resulting in breaking up of families, massive loss of community and indigenous culture. Indian Constitution guarantees Cultural rights as fundamental rights and guarantees free and compulsory education by way of legislation wherein the concept of neighbourhood schools is incorporated as statutory duties of administration. It is therefore a sovereign duty of the Indian administration both at the central as well as local level to immediately address the several issues that emerge out of the findings.

#### **b. Problematics of the Hindutva Project**

Considering the deeply problematic nature of the Hindu Rashtra Project on the fabric of nation, culture and secularism, there is an urgent need for imagination to counter the hegemonic discourse of the *RSS* along the following dimensions:

- i. Secularism – The Hindu Rashtra project forces only one prism of education onto children through a pedagogy of displacement and severance of the children’s cultural roots. As against this, the movement for the Right to Education has the potential of providing access not only to education *per se* but to an enabling environment of secularism which is hospitable for the child’s growth. Such an environment respects multi-cultural identity and allows for such identities to have equal access to common and shared knowledge.
- ii. Nationality – The Hindu Rashtra project is an outcome of a majoritarian system of deceit and coercion and is driven by a logic of necessity and coercion, driving parents to send their children to an alien environment at one end and practice of coercion and violence on the children on the other end. The logic is driven by a compelling need to build a unified nation that irons out or extirpates all differences. As against this, one needs to conceive of a conglomerate of republics that co-exist as equals.
- iii. Culture – As against the idea of a monolithic culture propagated by *RSS*, there needs to be an alternative vision of culture as a marker and respecter of differences. Instead of culture as conflative of nation, language and religion, an alternative vision of culture

should embrace differences of language, beliefs, region, identities, age, food, people, clothing, habit and habitat.

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**\*\*Important Note**

We have collected a number of testimonies given by children from the north-east which are highly sensitive and contain incriminating information about the violence that they have been facing, since the beginning of their stay in Karnataka. We fear for the safety of these children and hence have not included these testimonies in this public report. We are producing them separately for the perusal of the Hon'ble Court and we humbly pray that their identities be kept secret.