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**J Madegowda**

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*Exploring Colonial Hangover's Other Side*

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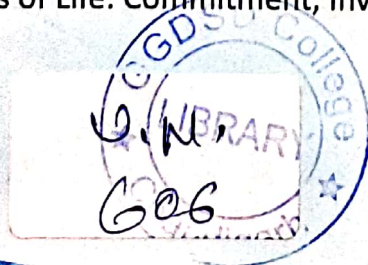
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*Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan*  
**Bill: Reimagining Higher Education Governance in India**

**Part-I#**

J Madegowda\*

The governance of higher education in India is currently at a critical juncture. Increasing global integration, rapid expansion, and rising diversity of institutions have intensified concerns about quality, accountability, and coordination. Therefore, policy debates have increasingly recognised that governance structures, rather than institutional performance alone, drive and shape system-wide outcomes. Against this context, the proposed *Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan* (VBSA) Bill represents an important attempt to reconfigure India's higher education regulatory framework.

**Background and Context**

Since Independence, India's higher education system has undergone a profound transformation. It has evolved from a small, elite system serving limited social constituencies into one of the largest higher education ecosystems in the world. In terms of enrolment, it is now the third largest in the world (Sethy & Mahapatro, 2025). However, this substantial quantitative expansion, predominantly over the previous two decades, has not always been accompanied by proportionate enhancements in quality, equity, or institutional effectiveness (Venkareddy, 2025).

Evolution of higher education regulation in India reflects a complex historical trajectory. From the colonial, Macaulay-influenced system to the post-Independent nation-building phase, successive policy interventions sought to strike a right balance between access, quality, and accountability (Saxena, 2025). Regulatory authority, in the early post-Independence period, was largely centralised through the establishment of the University Grants Commission (UGC) under the UGC Act, 1956. The UGC was entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating university education, including academic programs offered by the universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs), and maintaining academic standards (University Grants Commission, 1956). Over the years, discipline/sector-specific regulatory bodies emerged to address discipline-based quality concerns. These bodies include the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), and specialised councils governing medical and legal education (Damor & Patel, 2025).

Although these bodies contributed to system expansion and standard-setting, their parallel functioning gradually resulted in a

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