

COMMENT

Of Gates and Charity

BILL GATES IS NOT ONLY THE richest man in the world but also the biggest philanthropist. He has established the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation with a corpus of \$60 billion nearly equal to the total annual income of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh combined.

Gates' main source of income is from the Windows software sold by his company Microsoft. Gates has got the right to sell this software at monopolistic prices across the world under the TRIPS agreement of the WTO. 94 percent of the computers in the world use Windows software. The main competitor to Windows is the Linux software which is available free. President Kalam has suggested that free software is the way to go for India. But Gates has succeeded in persuading most consumers not to use Linux, which is available free, and to use Windows, from which he makes huge profits.

Andrew Colley of ZDNet Australia explains how Gates aggressively tries to kill the use of Linux. Commerce Minister John Della Bosca of NSW territory had made his intention known to end the state government's reliance on Windows software. Immediately Gates flew into Australia and announced a charity of 40 million Australian dollars for the spread of computer literacy among the poorer people. Gates' intention, says Colley, was to dissuade the government from using Linux. India's BJP Government had planned to encourage the use of Linux in 2002. Immediately Gates flew in and announced a charity of \$500 million. Of this \$100 million was to go for AIDS treatment and \$400 million of computer literacy. Thereafter the Government became silent on the use of Linux.

“Gates' charity is designed to create more addiction to Windows so that user becomes dependent on Microsoft for future software.”

There are problems with Gates' charities in the field of health as well. Gates is concentrating on development of vaccines for the prevention of diseases such as malaria and AIDS. But various studies have pointed out that the main problem of sickness among the poor is that of malnutrition. Rich countries are selling Windows software, computer chips, mobile phones and drugs at high prices.

Also, Gates often ties up health charities with computer education. In India, he gave \$ 100 million for AIDS and \$ \$421 million as investment in new software development, including a Hindi version of Windows XP. This was duly applauded in the *NY Times*. During his much publicised visit to India Chandrababu Naidu committed Andhra Pradesh state to use Microsoft products for all future computerisation.

Gates' charities are no different than the 'free' seed distributed by sugar mills to farmers in order to increase the sugar content of the cane produced. ≪≪≪ [Contributed]