"I also believe that Globalization is another form of Colonialism, yet there are possibilities for countries like us. Also, one must understand the circumstances in which colonialism occurred. It is with all this in view that you can protect yourself against further Exploitation. One should be fair, balanced and most importantly self-critical. Only by constantly subjecting ourselves to self-criticism, will we be able to gain self-confidence that, in my opinion, is integral for a sustained Social Change."

**SN:** What do you think about the policies and actions of the present government in regards with educational development?

**AGA:** The present government has changed the general attitude towards the development of education standards and programs with reference to the province of Sindh. For example, if you look at the Annual Development Program budget allocation for education, it is a shade better than last year's and this must be considered in view of the financial crunch we are currently undergoing. The government is aware of the needs of educational development given the resources at its disposal.

**SN:** Since you were a student what are some of the major declines in the education system you have noticed?

**AGA:** The first thing is that unfair means in examinations have generally increased by leaps and bounds. Previously if there was a person who was cheating, he/she was singled out, nowadays students who do not cheat are the odd ones out. This has led to a serious breakdown of norms in education generally and an insensitivity to perform. Also, it has resulted in the demoralization of students who work hard and expect reward for their hard work.

**SN:** Do you think that the administration should be blamed, instead of just student's behavior patterns?

**AGA:** Yes, there is no doubt that there has been a slow but persistent decline in teachers' ethics as well, in a broader sense that is. To me whoever is involved and related to the education field, should be considered as a teacher. You do not have to be a professional educator to be a teacher or a senior administrator, to be a role model for the youth. In my opinion the ever-declining moral and ethical values amongst teachers have played a central role in this demise.

**SN:** We all hear of the weaknesses of the system, are there any strengths as well?

**AGA:** Certainly. For example, there is an enabling environment, which inspires us to continue to work with dedication. There is also an understanding towards working for common goals between various departments such as education; social welfare and most importantly, across the board there is a growing understanding now that we must work closely with the community to achieve, not only what is sustainable but also to create leadership and ownership by the community and for the community.

**SN:** Do you think that is really happening?

**AGA:** Yes. This morning there was a seminar about introducing the concept of health consciousness, in the same way as the anti-drug campaign and anti-smoking campaign. The environment awareness campaign has been very successful. All this is being done through education and is of concern to the government, which in turn is making various departments cooperate and assist each other in implementing these programs forcefully.

**SN:** There is a general stereotype or perhaps an idea, that the Department of Education is sidelined in terms of policy and allocations?

**AGA:** Yes, this has been and continues to be a common perception. During my term in this office, I have not felt it to be that bad. Instead, I feel it depends on how interested and how far the department puts itself out to become 'achievers'. That will help change this perception. The Department must work as an action oriented team.
SN: To what extent do you think the demise of the current educational system is related to a lack of intellectual thought process and discourse?
AGA: To a great extent, certainly. I remember that student debates in colleges and universities, compared to the time I was a student, took place on more delicate and sensitive issues. Student leadership and serious young intellectuals are in disarray, I find this very disturbing indeed.

SN: Why do you think it is missing, is it because of a general lack of indifference?
AGA: Yes definitely...students need to know that some one is listening to their concerns and they need to be prompted and encouraged to engage in such discussions.

SN: Under the paradigm of educational development, we see an overwhelming emphasis on implementation and practice and serious denouncement of intellectual discourse. What do you think could be the repercussions of such disparities?
AGA: Both practice and intellectual discourse need to go together. Basically, I think there is either more talk than action or just action and no talk, in both the public and private sector. I believe that there has to be a sort of understanding amongst the intellectuals and practitioners that we all have to work together towards a common goal, only criticizing will not help. We have to develop a culture of critique, which will allow the intellectuals and implementers to agree to find a common ground for understanding and collective efforts.

SN: You passed a very intriguing statement at a recent seminar, that even though teachers and educationists read the papers, they prefer the gossip columns rather than page 2, which is education related? Do you think this is because of severe intellectual inabilities that have settled in or have we collectively become indifferent?
AGA: I think that people do not want to face the truth and avoid uncomfortable situations, in both the public and private sector. The only thing they are really interested in is the promotion of their own needs and desires. Until we can get together to complement individual needs with collective demands, quality and dedication will elude people and the system.

SN: Do you think this is because we have become disillusioned and apathetic in general?
AGA: Yes, people who are easily daunted, because they have continuously suffered from frustration, but then again what difference is there between the thinking of an educated person and anybody else’s? So, you expect people to always be up and fighting, facilitating and trying to do what they can and not letting depression or disillusionments get the better of them.

SN: What do you think should be the definition of a free thinker and an intellectual?
AGA: Nobody should consider themselves an expert in any particular field. In education, I do not think a free thinker should restrict the expression within certain ideologies. The other important thing is that if there is something on which you are committed and on which you have certain strong opinions, one should articulate them at the time the debate or argument is raging, instead of expressing it years later. One needs to speak at the opportune moment.

SN: Now we are launching Educate! a quarterly magazine, radical in content and intellectual in approach. Do you think that the print media is strong enough to convey our message in the midst of an overwhelming onslaught of media and technology?
AGA: That is a real tough question to answer but I still believe that the written word is what really sustains one’s intellectual appetite. Television is changing opinions and cultural values although they might impinge on people who do not have strength of character or who have not had the education in which moral, ethical and cultural values mean something. There is reason to believe that audiovisuals have effectively changed thought processes.

SN: Do you feel we have enough of such endeavors in terms of print material?
AGA: No, I think there needs to be much more. There has been a decline over the years.
SN: The magazine is clearly launching an intellectual challenge to unveil the myths of global efforts for education and development in the developing countries. What kind of response do you think will be generated by such an effort?

AGA: The response will be positive if people write sensibly and are knowledgeable. My advice is don't just be rhetorical; ask questions and provide solutions as well. If you do not have the solutions then, there is a need to discuss these things with people and EDucate will hopefully provide that forum.

SN: There will be a section in the magazine titled “The Real Story of Development”. This section will be an effort to reveal the historical atrocities based on empirical evidence. It will also critically review the existing colonial and imperialistic basis of current education and development practices. What is your opinion regarding such an effort?

AGA: I fully share your views on this. I also believe that globalization is another form of colonialism, yet there are possibilities for countries like us. Also, one must understand the circumstances in which colonialism occurred. It is with all this in view that you can protect yourself against further exploitation. One should be fair, balanced and most importantly self-critical. Only by constantly subjecting ourselves to self-criticism, will we be able to gain self-confidence that, in my opinion, is integral for a sustained social change.

SN: However being the Minister of Education, how do you think these issues will go down?

AGA: It should go down well. There is such a thing as self-pride and I think that many institutions are doing good work and we should be proud of them. I believe that people are starved for stimulating information to the extent of ‘perverse’ and provocative opinions, so go ahead.

SN: We as younger people belonging to SEF, marvel at your dedication and energy and wonder what keeps you going given the obstacles you are faced with.

AGA: I never thought of that! I have so much faith in every person’s potential to do something meaningful. Secondly, I am not disillusioned by failure; if you think something has failed, put it aside and go for it again. One needs to admit things and see them as they are. Perhaps the most basic and important thing is that one must enjoy his/her work, take pleasure in achievements big or small and face problems head on.

SN: What are your expectations associated with this magazine?

AGA: I am praying that this will bring about a change in the thinking of our (especially younger) intellectuals who are or should be preparing themselves for public service. I am very enthusiastic and hope that this magazine will create necessary awareness regarding various global issues, which are integral for greater social consciousness, responsibility and most importantly social responsibility. I hope that through this magazine there is going to be a revival of formal and informal debates amongst various groups belonging to different ages. You know, I believe that meaningful and constructive public debates are very important for greater political sense. Also, my greatest hope is that the economically, politically and socially privileged will be driven to a greater sense of responsibility and will come forward and help the disadvantaged of the country.

SN: Lastly, we would like to thank you for your time and we would like to close this interview with your final message to the readers of this magazine.

AGA: My final word is ‘millenniums pass, it is the moments that linger’. If you relate this to what I said earlier, you will realize why I am so conscious of the nature of Time.

SN: Prof. Anita, it has been a pleasure and a great learning experience. Thank you so much