

WESTERN EDUCATION IN INDIA

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OF all departments of national life and activity that of education is perhaps the most important. There cannot be a firmly established political edifice unless there is a highly developed system of national education. Without it no country can be a unified and homogenous nation with common culture, common traditions, common convictions and common ideals. If the children are not taught to love their country and take pride in its cultural heritage, the state will rest on very insecure and shifting foundations and will be constantly exposed to internal and external dangers. It cannot summon its citizens in the hour of its need and cannot rely upon their loyalty to defend its honor against the incursions of foreign enemies. Its existence, interests, power and prestige depend upon its ability to diffuse a patriotic education among its subjects and to mould them into one consistent and nationalistic body. Even its commercial and industrial advance, and that means the political and social advance, is in very vital relationship to its educational advance.

No other great country of the world is so backward in its adoption of modern nationalistic ideas in education as India. She lags far behind other nations in organizing a universal system of education with definitely recognized principles. The education which the British government has fastened upon her is of a too formal, literary and ineffectual character, and it is most stereotyped and inflexible in its organization. It is not directed toward any needs of Indian society, or even needs of social service, but simply toward the passing of school examinations. It aims to impart the knowledge of foreign language and literature thru the medium of the English language and to familiarize them with the writings of British authors. Familiarity here simply means an absolute verbal

and cramming knowledge of the prescribed courses and an ability to imitate them in the style of their writings. The Indian examinations are tests of knowledge gained and of a certain imitative skill and mastery of English classics. The object of western education in India is to compel the students to memorize the school texts without understanding their significance and importance. It strengthens the retentive powers of its recipients, at the expense of the symmetrical training of their minds, but absolutely fails to develop in them a power of initiativeness, of inventiveness, and of all original and creative thinking. The brains of Indian students are stuffed with useless details and fine distinctions of form, but are sadly deficient in most branches of general knowledge and ignorant of hundreds of common things and of events in their national history. American high school students know more of electrical appliances and mechanical things, and of American history and the structure of their national government than Indian University students.

The worst defect of western education in India is that it is notoriously unpatriotic and anti-nationalistic. Its chief aim is to inculcate in the minds of Indians absolute acquiescence in the established political regime and unquestioned obedience to the authority of alien rulers. It concentrates its attention on forming habits of thought and action of its receivers identical with the interests of British bureaucracy and on reconciling them to the accepted ways of English imperialism. It strives to teach Indians how to conform their conduct with official etiquette, how to behave before their imperial masters, and how to carry out their behests. The entire system of Indian education is wrapped in bureaucratic cerecloths and is stiffened in the stony sarcophagus of racial arrogance. It is education by which India is held down in subjection and tightened firmly to the British chariot wheel. The western educated classes of India, with certain noble exceptions, are the worst specimen of servility and beggary and ally themselves with the exploiters of their country. So utterly degraded many of them are that they do not hesitate to lick the boots of Lady Macbeths and to bow before their masters in order to secure a minor post in any governmental department. They hanker after the loaves and fishes of office like hungry jackals and are without any love of their country, without any idealism, without any feeling of racial pride, and without any ray

of self-respect. Money-making is their sole ambition in life ; securing of official favors is their badge of success.

In no other department of study anti-nationalistic education is more stressed and emphasized as in history. British bureaucracy has grossly perverted Indian history for its own base and selfish ends. It is taught to the Indian students that India has never constituted a unified and compact nation ; that she has never known a highly developed and stable form of political organization and national system of government ; and that she has never dreamed of anything greater than a caste. It is said that most of India's long history is a bloody chronicle of bloodshed, of wars, rebellions, and political and social convulsions and a record of sheer inability to resist the incursions of foreign freebooters. It is impressed upon the minds of all Indians that in the first time of history England has brought peace and order to Hindustan and has established an impartial and benign system of government based on a strict sense of justice and humane rules of law. No energy is spared to thrust upon their minds the absolute necessity of keeping their country within the orbit of the British empire and under English tutelage. It is maintained that were the Pax Britannica withdrawn India would relapse into anarchy and would fall prey to foreign invaders. It is one of the most conventional lies by which the Indians are scared into subserviency and made to feel their utter dependence on the British connection.

The Indian war of independence of 1857 is labeled mutiny in history text books and its authors are denounced as wild fanatics, dark assassigators, and seditious rebels. The great Indian patriots who sacrificed their lives at the altar of their country's freedom and sought to liberate her from the shackles of foreign domination are held up to scorn and ridicule. Rani of Jhansi, Tantia Topi, and Nana Farnavis and other heroes of the war of independence are objects of the grossest abuse, misrepresentation and calumny and the English teachers pour forth vitriol and the vials of their wrath on their names. Even modern Indian patriots such as Gandhi, the Nehrus and Subhas Chandar who are universally respected for their sincere patriotism, suffer the same villification and misrepresentation as their predecessors.

Western education in India is wholly inadequate to meet the demands of the changing conditions of Indian society and to answer

to the needs of the Indian people. It does not prepare the people of India for harsh competitive struggle and to equip them for successful participation in the economic, political, and social activities of the modern world. Everywhere in India there is a crying need for industrial, mechanical, and scientific education, but no efforts are made by the Indian government to found technical schools in order to diffuse practical education among the Indian people. Too much importance is attached to the purely linguistic and literary studies at the expense of exact sciences and the aim of education is conceived to be the creation of a babu class, a semi-educated proletariat. In all advanced countries education is regarded as a means to make the individual a productive social unit economically and to develop his productive power. But in India the main object of education is entirely neglected and nothing is being done to give an economic training of a practical kind to the Indian youth and to introduce industrial training into the school curriculum. There are no schools for the teaching of design, of textile weaving, of dyeing, and of practical chemistry. School museums, school gardens, and school libraries are not provided to any appreciable extent in order to relate the school to practical life. No such courses as building construction, the nature of materials, mechanical and freehand drawing, and horticulture are taught in the schools. It is very much feared that industrial and practical education of the Indian youth will result in the economic development of India on a colossal scale and will adversely affect English trade and industries. It is an axiom in British policy towards India that she must be kept as a source of raw materials and a dumping ground for British goods.

India is practically an agricultural country and nearly 85 per cent of her inhabitants extract their sustenance from the soil. The Indian peasantry are wretchedly poor and live on the brink of starvation. Their material degradation cannot be removed except by the removal of the intellectual and moral poverty. Their ignorance, squalor, and misery are due to a widespread illiteracy which prevails among them. Only two per cent of the Indian farmers are superficially acquainted with some Indian vernacular or can read or write a letter in their own script. They are intelligent and ambitious and have the germs of all the powers, sentiments, faculties, and aptitudes that are needed for their successful, satisfactory, and useful participation in national life and in the regeneration of Indian

society. But the Indian government does next to nothing to educate the peasantry and to reclaim them from their deepest ignorance and crass superstition. It turns a deaf ear to the demand of Indian patriots for a universal and compulsory education. It spends Indian money recklessly on the army and navy and on official buildings, offices, darbars, and churches, but practically nothing on education and institutions of national welfare.

Western education in India from the nationalistic point of view is a dismal failure. It is simply a means in the hands of India's alien masters to manufacture base servitors and satellites in order to carry on scientifically the economic exploitation of the country. It absolutely fails to respond to the new and growing aspirations of modern India and to lead her to any definite and cherished goal. Mahatma Gandhi and others leaders of Indian nationalistic thot do not hesitate to condemn it as an exotic plant and utterly unsuited to Indian conditions, genius and character. After a century and a half of its operation it has accomplished comparatively little and has affected no change for the better in Indian sentiments, ideals, manners, and customs. It has bent its energy on imparting a veneer of European culture to the few at the expense of the many and to impregnate them with English ideas and tendencies. The younger generations of India are made to submit to alien modes of life and thot—to be engrafted on a foreign stock. They are not assimilated to the historical traditions of their country and are not made to feel a pride in their cultural heritage. Their bodies are not strengthened and trained; their minds are not stimulated and expanded; and their moral purpose is not formed and set in the mold of the new social and political order. Western education in India in short has undertaken to do those things which it ought not to have done, and has left undone those things which it ought to have done.