Education in India.
CHAPTER IX Of Essays in National Idealism
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One of the most remarkable features of British rule in India has been the fact that the greatest injuries done to the people of India have taken the outward form of blessings. Of this, Education is a striking example; for no more crushing blows have ever been struck at the roots of Indian National evolution than those which have been struck, often with other, and the best intentions, in the name of Education. It is sometimes said by friends of India that the National movement is the natural result of English education, and one of which England should in truth be proud, as showing that, under 'civilisation' and the Pax Britannica, Indians are becoming, at last, capable of self-government. The facts are otherwise. If Indians are still capable of self-government, it is in spite of all the anti-national tendencies of a system of education that has ignored or despised almost every ideal informing the national culture.

By their fruits ye shall know them. The most crushing indictment of this Education is the fact that it destroys, in the great majority of those upon whom it is inflicted, all capacity for the appreciation of Indian culture. Speak to the ordinary graduate of an Indian University, or a student from Ceylon, of the ideals of the Mahabharata—he will hasten to display his knowledge of Shakespeare ; talk to him of religious philosophy—you find that he is an atheist of the crude type common in Europe a generation ago, and that not only has he no religion, but he is as lacking in philosophy as the average Englishman; talk to him of Indian music—he will produce a gramophone or a harmonium, and inflict upon you one or both; talk to him of Indian dress or jewellery—he will tell you that they are uncivilized and barbaric; talk to him of Indian art—it is news to him that such a thing exists ; ask him to translate for you a letter written in his own mother-tongue—he does not know it. He is indeed a stranger in his own land.

Yes, English educators of India, you do well to scorn the Babu graduate; he is your own special production, made in your own image; he might be one of your very selves. Do you not recognize the likeness? Probably you do not; for you are still hidebound in that impervious skin of self-satisfaction that enabled your most pompous and self-important philistine, Lord Macaulay, to believe that a single shelf of a good European library was worth all the literature of India, Arabia, and Persia. Beware lest in a hundred years the judgment be reversed, in the sense that Oriental culture will occupy a place even in European estimation, ranking at least equally with Classic. Meanwhile you have done well-nigh all that could be done to eradicate it in the land of its birth.

England, suddenly smitten with the great idea of ' civilising ' India, conceived that the way to do this was to make Indians like Englishmen. To this task England set herself with the best will in the world, not at all realising that, as has been so well said by the Abbe Dubois:

“To make a new race of the Hindus, one would have to begin by undermining the very foundations of their civilisation, religion and polity, and by turning them into atheists and barbarians."

And no words of mine could better describe the typical product of Macaulayism. Even suppose success were possible, and educated Indians were to acquire in some numbers, a thoroughly English point of view: this in itself would be damning evidence of failure, not merely because the English point of view is already sufficiently disseminated in a world of growing monotony, or even because of its many and serious limitations, but because it would prove that the education had failed to educate, that is, to draw out or set free the characteristic qualities of the taught. And in actual fact, it is not the English point of view that is acquired, but a caricature of it.

Imagine an ordinary English schoolmaster set down to educate the youth of Classic Greece. Obviously he could teach the Greek innumerable facts; but it is difficult to see how he could have taken any adequate part in his serious education. Merely to inform is not to educate: and into how little of the inner life of Greece, its religion and ideals, could the English schoolmaster, for all his Classic education, truly enter. The English schoolmaster to-day knows less of Indian culture and sympathises far less with Indian ideals, than he could with those of Greece. You cannot educate by ignoring (being ignorant of) the ideals of the taught, and setting up an ideal which they do not at heart acknowledge; if at the same time considerations of material advantage secure an outward acceptance, perhaps, even a willing acceptance, of the alien formula, the destruction of indigenous culture is assured.

All departments of education in India—primary, secondary and university—are directly or indirectly controlled by Government. A few indigenous institutions for imparting a knowledge of Sanskrit and Arabic carry on a forlorn struggle for existence. A few modern institutions, such as the Central Hindu College in Benares, and the Hardwar Gurukula, are carried on entirely without Government aid; but most of these are bound to the University curriculum, as otherwise their students would be unable to obtain degrees. Two-thirds of Indian Arts Colleges are Missionary Institutions,—equally bound to the Government codes and selected text-books. The net result is that Indian culture is practically ignored in modern education; for Indian culture, whether Hindu or Muhammadan, is essentially religious, and so, regardless of the example of almost every Indian ruler since history began, the Government practises toleration—by ignoring Indian culture,—and the Missionary practises intolerance—by endeavouring to destroy that culture, in schools where education is offered as a bribe, and where the religion of the people is of set purpose undermined. The great tragedy of the present situation lies in this, that the schools are not part of Indian life (as were the tols and maktabs of the past), but antagonistic to it. Of the two types of English schools in India, Government and Missionary, the one ignores, the other endeavours to break down the ideals of the home. Sir George Birdwood truly says: “Our education has destroyed their love of their own literature, the quickening soul of a people, and their delight in their own arts and, worst of all, their repose in their own traditional and national religion. It has disgusted them with their own homes—their parents, their sisters, their very wives. It has brought discontent into every family so far as its baneful influences have reached."

The real difficulty at the root of all questions of Indian education is this, that modern ' education,' this education which Englishmen are so proud of having ' given' to India, is really based on the general assumption—nearly universal in England— that India is a savage country, which it is England's divine mission to civilize. This is the more or less conscious underlying principle throughout. The facts were more truly realized by Sir Thomas Munro, when he wrote that “if civilization were to be made an article of commerce between the two countries, England would soon be heavily in debt.”

None can be true educators of the Indian people who do not inherit their traditions. Others can be, not educators, but merely teachers of particular subjects. As such there is still room in India for English teachers; but they should be, not in power, but subordinate; they should be engaged by, paid by, and responsible to Indian managers, as, in Japan, English teachers are responsible to Japanese authorities. Professor Nelson Fraser, in a valuable discussion upon "The English Teacher in India," shows how little the English teacher can know of the real life of the Indian people, and deduces that -

“The Englishman is the last person to put forward any view as to possible reforms in Hindu institutions.”

To do so, should not, indeed, be conceived as part of the English teacher’s function – a fact which most

English teachers (other than missionaries) are in the end driven reluctantly to admit. At first it is otherwise.

"The conscientious professor does not merely desire to impart knowledge, but to impart useful knowledge, which will elevate the lives of his pupils; and he may perhaps wish to help them to apply it. Is there any prospect of his assisting this task? I suppose many teachers come to India with the hope of doing so; I should like to ask each of them, in the hour of his final departure, when he gave it up, and why. Possibly he would answer, when he candidly admitted to himself the impossibility of knowing much about India."

For the English Professor is debarred by ignorance of the language (very rarely adequately overcome), and by exclusion from familiarity with the home life of Indians, from ever really understanding them. The English Professor who arrives in India at the age, let us say, of twenty-five, is generally qualified to teach one or more special subjects, such as Chemistry, English Literature, or Greek. Ten years of sympathetic study of Indian religious philosophy, Sanskrit or Pali, some vernacular language, Indian history, art, music, literature and etiquette might enable him to understand the problem of Indian education, probably would do so, prejudice apart; but the more he thus understood, the less would he wish to interfere, for he would either be Indianised at heart, or would have long realised the hopeless divergence between his own and Indian ideals ; he would have learnt that true reforms come only from within, and slowly. But English teachers have neither the time nor the inclination to spend ten years, or even two, in such a study of Indian culture; and so, when, as often happens, they rise to a position of power, the Fellowship of some University, the Headship of a College, or even of a Department of Public Instruction, they cheerfully apply the solutions suited (or unsuited, as the case may be) to an English environment, to problems the elementary and fundamental conditions of which they do not understand, nor through mere book-learning can ever come to understand.

It must be understood that ' change ' and (real) 'progress' are not interchangeable terms. The idea of education must be separated from the notion of altering the structure of Indian society, — still one of the avowed objects of the Western educator. As we have seen, though it may require alteration, and certainly cannot remain unchanged, or be restored in any old form, yet the English teacher is of all men essentially ill-qualified to contribute to the solution of the problem. Even Sir Henry Craik, however, who thinks that English education in India is in its main lines "hopelessly wrong," and says that it is the opinion of every man capable of judging that it requires recasting, goes on to speak of the "hopeless hindrances" which it is necessary " to contend against." "The system of caste," he says, " the habits of the people, their inertness in manual labour, their fixed idea that clerical work has a dignity of its own —all these will take long before they are overcome."

What an incredible relief it would be to all concerned if the ' educator' would for a little while give over his 'contending,' and concern himself with education. For education, and the destruction of caste, purdah and religion are not convertible terms; education is the building up of character, essentially a constructive, not a contentious, process. Too often the "contention" is a tilting at a windmill; or the educator himself may be the tons et origo of the evil to be remedied. Take the last point raised by Sir Henry Craik, the idea of the dignity of clerical work. This is no more than a natural development resulting from the type of education offered, and the example set, by Englishmen. They with pain and labour have destroyed and are still endeavouring to destroy the caste idea of the dignity and duty or the heaven-ordained work, whether clerical or manual, to which a man is born; they in their educational system have ignored the Indian Gospel, wherein a well-known text declares, " Better is one's own duty, albeit insignificant, than even the well-executed duty of another." It is childish to be surprised at the result of a deliberate policy.

However convinced the Engilsh or Anglicised Indian educator may be of the superior value of European ideals, he must even then as an educator realise that you can only educate by means of ideals accepted by the taught. Ideals are not to be transferred from one people to another as easily as furniture from house to house. It is only too easy to ridicule and to disparage, but when you have destroyed belief in one ideal it is not easy to secure acceptance of another. Not only, then, are the ideals of Indian civilization actually higher than those of any other, at least in our view; but, were it not so, it would still be true that only by means of those ideals can the Indian people be educated.

The aim of education in India must be no longer the cultivation of the English point of view or an ability to use the English formula correctly. In the words of Sir Henry Craik, it is necessary to abandon "the senseless attempt to turn an Oriental into a bad imitation of a Western mind……. It is not a triumph for our education—it is, on the contrary a satire upon it—when we find the sons of leading natives expressly discouraged by their parents from acquiring any knowledge of the vernacular……. We must abandon the vain dream that we can reproduce the English public school on Indian soil. We must recognise that it is a mistake to insist that a man shall not be considered to be an educated man unless be can express his knowledge otherwise than in a language which is not his own. Place no restriction on English as an optional subject, but cease to demand it as the one thing necessary for all."

And, I would add, having learnt English, use it as the key to all extra-Indian literature and culture ; do not teach Greek or Latin unless in rare cases there is a reasonable prospect of the attainment of proficiency sufficient to ensure the enjoyment of the literature in the original. India has classic tongues of her own, the doors of culture for all who have the opportunity of passing beyond the merely bi-lingual stage of education, which should be the general goal.

What are the essentials in the Indian point of view, which for their intrinsic value, and in the interests of the many-sidedness of human development, it is so important to preserve? Space will not admit of their illustration at any length, but these appear to the writer to be some of the ideals that must be preserved in any true education system for India:—

Firstly, the almost universal philosophical attitude, contrasting strongly with that of the ordinary Englishman, who hates philosophy. For every science school in India to-day, let us see to it that there are ten to-morrow. But there are wrong as well as right ways of teaching science. A ' superstition of facts' taught in the name of science were a poor exchange for a metaphysic, for a conviction of the subjectivity of all phenomena. In India, even the peasant will grant you that " All this is *maya*;" he may not understand the full significance of what he says ; but consider the deepening of European culture needed before the peasant there could say, however blindly, that "The world is but appearance, and by no means Thing-in-Itself."

Secondly, the sacredness of all things—the antithesis of the European division of life into sacred and profane- The tendency in European religious development has been to exclude from the domain of religion every aspect of 'worldly' activity. Science, art, sex, agriculture, commerce, are regarded in the West as secular aspects of life, quite apart from religion. It is not surprising that under such conditions, those concerned with life in its reality, have come to feel the so-called religion that ignores the activities of life, as a thing apart, and of little interest or worth. In India, this was never so; religion idealises and spiritualizes life itself, rather than excludes it. This intimate entwining of the transcendental and material, this annihilation of the possibility of profanity or vulgarity of thought, explains the strength and permanence of Indian faith, and demonstrates not merely the stupidity, but the wrongness of attempting to replace a religious culture by one entirely material.

Thirdly, the true spirit of religious toleration, illustrated continually in Indian history, and based upon a consciousness of the fact that all religious dogmas are formulas imposed upon the infinite, by the limitations of the finite human intellect.

Fourthly, etiquette,—civilisation conceived of as the production of civil men There is a Sinhalese proverb that runs, “Take a ploughman from the plough, and wash off his dirt, and he is fit to rule a kingdom." “This was spoken," says Knox, "of the people of Cande Uda (the highlands of Ceylon) because of the civility, understanding, and gravity of the poorest men among them. Their ordinary Plowmen and Husbandmen do speak elegantly, and are full of compliment. And there is no difference between the ability of speech of a Country-man and a Courtier." There could be said of few people any greater things than these; but they cannot be said of those who have passed through the ' instruction machines' of to-day; they belong to a society where life itself brought culture, not books alone.

Fifthly, special ideas in relation to education, such as the relation between teacher and pupil implied in the words of guru and chela (master and disciple); memorizing great literature,* the epics as embodying ideals of character; learning a privilege demanding qualifications, not to be forced on the unwilling, or used as a mere road to material prosperity; extreme importance of the teacher's personality.

“As the man who digs with a spade obtains water, even so an obedient (pupil) obtains the knowledge which lies in his teacher" (Manu II. 218). This view is antithetic to the modern practice of making everything easy for the pupil,

Sixthly, the basis of ethics are not any commandments, but the principle of altruism, founded on the philosophical truth: “Thy neighbour is thyself." Recognition of the unity of all life.

Seventhly, control, not merely of action, but of thought; concentration, one-pointedness, capacity for stillness.

These are some of the points of view which are intrinsic in Indian culture, and must be recognized in any sound educational ideal for India; but are in the present system ignored or opposed. The aim should be to develope the people's intelligence through the medium of their own national culture. For the national culture is the only *Aussichtspunkt* from which, in relation to a wider landscape, a man can rightly *sich am Denken orientiren*. To this culture has to be added, for those brought into contact with the modern idea, some part of that wider synthesis that should enable such an one to understand what may be the nature of the prospect seen from some other of the great headlands, the other national cultures, wherefrom humanity has gazed into the dim sea of the Infinite Unknown. To effect this wider synthesis, are needed signals and interpretations, rather than that laborious backward march through the emptiness of a spiritual desert where one may perish by the way, or if not so, then weary and footsore arrive at last upon one of those other headlands, only to learn, it may be, that there is to be found a less extensive prospect and a more barren soil.

As has been well said, Western knowledge is necessary for India, but it must form for her, (and especially for her women), a post-graduate course.

‘Every man who is capable of judging' knows that the educational system of modern India requires re-casting. The task may be Herculean; the more reason to begin before it become impossible. The work must be done by Indian hands. It may be true, as Professor Geddes wrote to me lately, that

"The trouble is not only with the vested interests of the official class (which are sure to be protected in any change), but in the wooden heads, the arrested minds, the incompetent hands, etc., etc., of those who have gone through this machine, whether here or with you in India. It lies in your thousands of barristers and clerks and crammers, who know all the programme of the University of London in its darkest days. . . but who know nothing of the vital movements in literature, science, art, etc., by which we in some measure here escape or at least mitigate- our official oppression, or even begin to modify it.

"In short, then, the strife is not between 'Eastern and Western Education' (Instruction, Cram rather) but between Cram and Education, and for both alike, in West as in East. It is very hard indeed, upon your thousands of graduates to say that they must be considered as lost victims of a mistake, and put aside as useless for practical purposes, save here and there the man who has the will and power to re-educate himself; but the same is true here at home, and nothing could be more disastrous, I think, than for you in India to give your present Europeanised graduates the re-organizing of things; that would be continuing our mistake, not correcting it. But recover your own arts, etc., on one hand, and utilise also the Western progress since the {utilitarian doctrinaires and their bureaucratic successors. Learn from France—non-official France primarily of course,—from America on her non-philistine side, from Germany at her best (though this is being materialised in most of the universities or elsewhere), from the small countries you as yet practically ignore—Scandinavia, Netherlands, etc., and so on. Don't believe the usua1 contempt of South American States; they are far more advanced than most Europeans know': in short, open yourselves more widely to the Western influence—*similia sitmlibus curantur*"

From such advice there is not a little to be learnt. But it is not true that any others can do for us the work that is our own; the re-organization of Indian education, if it is to be of any use, must be accomplished by Indian hands. The most de-nationalized Indian is still more Indian than a European. It is for Indians to nationalize Indian education. Given the responsibility, and the power to act, and even Europeanized India will rise to the occasion ; to those who cannot think so, India must appear to be not worth the saving. Let Indians place the control of education in the forefront of the nationalist programme. By control, let absolute control be meant, not merely a half control, or a control sanctioned by some royal charter that may be withdrawn as easily as given. There is one true service, and one only, which England can now render to the cause of Indian education; it is the placing of the education budget and the entire control of education in Indian hands. It will then be for us to combine with our own national culture, all that we may learn from Denmark, Hungary, and the other smaller lands more educationally advanced than England, if it seems good to us to do so. It will be for us to develope the Indian intelligence through the medium of Indian culture, and building thereupon, to make it possible for India to resume her place amongst the nations, not merely as a competitor in material production, but as a teacher of all that belongs to a true civilization, a leader of the future, as of the past. Herein the ordinary English educator can help but little, and can hinder much. In the last words of Buddha to his beloved disciple:

“O, Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves; be ye refuges to yourselves. Hold fast to the dharma as to a lamp; hold fast to the dharma as a refuge. Look not for refuge to any one beside yourselves."