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THE PROBLEM
OF
EDUCATION OF THE INDIAN LANDHOLDERS
PAPERS SUBMITTED TO THE BIENNIAL CONFERENCE
OF
THE WORLD FEDERATION
OF
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS
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July 1933.

Educational Policy in the various countries of the world at the present time seems to be directed to one or other of the three following aims :

1. To make the rising generation into good citizens of the *existing* social political and economic order of their country. Japan and Poland may be quoted as examples of this.
2. To help to create a *new* social, political and economic order, by training the rising generation along the lines of the new order already planned by the leaders of the present generation. Russia and Italy are prominent examples.

3. To develop to the fullest possible extent the individuality of each child in an environment which enables him to realise his inter-dependence upon others, and to *leave it to the rising generation to plan and to build the future* social, political and economic order.

A distinguished American Educationalist, Dr. Carlton Washburne, who recently visited our country in the course of a world tour (undertaken principally to gather information on the points mentioned above), states in the book in which he recorded his experiences of that tour (*Remakers of Mankind*, published by the John Day Company, New York) that the Indian leaders whom he interviewed on the subject (among whom were Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Tagore, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Sir J. C. Bose and Pandit Malaviya) were practically unanimous in upholding the third aim as the one towards which they would wish to see Indian educational policy directed.

In advocating the better education of the Indian landholders as a class, I am not advocating class education in its narrow sense, and it is for this reason that I have commenced this paper by emphasising the broadest outlook on educational policy,—an outlook which to a large extent I share. I wish neither to overthrow the existing order, nor to make a fetish of it: but I take the view that for practical educational purposes we must accept the fact of its existence, and, literally, make the *best* of it. Especially in a country like India, which has its cultural roots deep down in the soil of the past, we cannot afford to ignore, even if we wished to do so, age-long established institutions and traditions.

In a World Conference of a World Federation there must necessarily be present some, if not many, of those who hold entirely radical views on the question of breaking with the past. To those I would say I do not deny the possibility that in the countries which you represent, in the conditions in which you work, such drastic changes may be the necessary preliminary to the attainment of the goal of the utmost development of every individual. But as regards my own country, I would like to draw your attention to a fact which, it seems to me, has no inconsiderable bearing upon the question. Along with many other traditions, some good, some doubtless bad and useless now, that have come down to us from the India of past millenia, is one which has persisted, and still persists even when it sometimes appears to be submerged in the darkest depths of feudalism or autocracy. It is this, that there is among our ruling classes, nay, in the very fibre of our people to whatever class they may belong, a deep sense of *duty to others*. Perhaps it is the emphasis placed upon the idea of "Dharma" in our Hindu religion, perhaps it is the prevalence (in many parts of India) of the social system of the joint family, perhaps it is sometimes mere pride of birth and caste, perhaps it is sometimes the fine sense of *noblesse oblige* so often still possessed by our Kshatriya or warrior class, be the cause whatever it may, the idea of Duty becomes a part of our make-up, along with our mothers' milk, and certainly often very definitely as a result of our mothers' teaching us at her knee the old-time stories of chivalry and devotion.

I do not deny that it is possible that the rising generation may benefit by the upholding of this ideal no less perhaps within the framework of some *new* state of society which *they* may plan and build

when their time comes, but I do hold that unless and until that change comes, it is a matter of duty and not of mere expediency to try to develop to the utmost the possibilities of the existing structure which has served as the home of our civilisation for so many centuries. And this is why, believing as I do that the sense of duty is inherent in our people, I make this plea for a form of education for the Indian landholders' sons which may enable them not only to have that sense of duty intensified and broadened, but also to be trained along lines which may make them capable of carrying out those duties in a manner most beneficial to the country, to the people for whose welfare they are the trustees, and to themselves.

I use the term landholder in a very wide sense to include all those who have a fairly large income from land. This class has existed amongst us ever since the dawn of Indian History. There were Samants or Tributary kings in Ancient India; there were Jahagirdars in Mohamedan India; the Saranjamdars and Inamdars came into being in the Maratha regime, and the Zamindars and Taluqdars are the creation of the British rule. The landholders of to-day belong to one or other of these classes and differ in name only.

It will be clear to any student of history that this class always played a prominent part in the politics of the past. They had a hand in shaping the political destinies of the people. They occupied responsible posts in the administration. Some of them were of a humble origin and rose to prominence by dint of capacity. We might safely say that but for them History

would not have been what it was. But they served a more useful purpose. They were, as it were, a link between the king on the one hand and the people on the other. They were the natural leaders of the people. They enjoyed the confidence alike of the rulers and the ruled. The people served the king through them.

But this great class of a long and glorious past suddenly disappears from the field soon after the establishment of the British rule in India. The political change in India brought about a change in the condition of the Jahagirdars. Since the establishment of British peace in India and their treaties or Subsidiary Alliances with the various states in India, the political and military life of the Jahagirdars came to a sudden end. They are now no more than mere landholders with some administrative powers in a few cases. They have nothing more to do than enjoy their patrimony. They lost contact with the sons of the soil. For in old times they had to take the people with them in all expeditions and could not do so unless the people loved and respected them. With the cessation of their military life there came a severance of the close bond that tied this class to the people. What remained was a revenue and in some cases administrative connection with them. They ceased to function as leaders of the people. Is this state desirable? Nobody would say it is. This idle richness, within the short century for which it has existed, has brought evil results in its train. These results are harmful to the states to which the Jahagirdars belong and to the Jahagirdars everywhere. Lack of education in this class has brought self-interested outsiders to high posts in the states. Not

having a stake in the states they have naturally no vital interest in the well-being of the state. The other and perhaps worse evil is that this idle richness has caused the degeneration and in some places the disappearance of the sterling qualities, that made the Jahagirdars a valuable asset to society. Thus it must sadly be admitted that this state of affairs means a waste of human energy, either in idleness or in undesirable channels.

Our next question is : Is there no hope for this class ? Are we to let a state like this continue ? It would hardly be wise to remain, and let any class remain, ignorant in this age of light and progress. It will be an injustice to them and to ourselves. But what are the means which we should employ for the awakening of this class ? If we look to the history of communities or nations that have risen from insignificance to prominence we find that they have done so because they educated themselves in the right manner. Look at Japan, Turkey, Persia and Russia. They educated their children in the manner calculated to help the onward progress of their nation. And in less than a generation they have taken long strides in the direction of progress. So if we want that this class with high potential capacities should not disappear ignominiously the only remedy is Education.

But this does not take us very far. Any education would not do. Already we are dissatisfied with the education that we are having. This very gathering is meant to discuss the various aspects of education, examine the present system in the light of this discussion and to suggest proper changes where necessary. We need not make radical changes in our present system. The sons

of the landholders should have all the education that other boys have. But they should have something more. We must not lose sight of the fact that they hold a unique place in society. They have large estates to manage and there are a vast number of people whose fate lies in their hands. This being so, they must have a special type of education. I am not unaware that a large section of people will misunderstand us and object to special schools being raised for our class. But they will be mistaken if they do so. The idea is not to widen the gulf between ourselves and the other classes. Our ultimate aim would be to give the rest of education, free, to all classes but in the meantime let those who can afford it have it. That will at least educate some amongst us in the way we think best. I must emphasise, therefore, that I am not an advocate of any special privileges for this class. I know the evils of exclusive institutions. I am not for creating schools which would make snobs of our children. On the contrary, I say that the children of the landholders should be taught to realise that they have a great duty ahead of them and that they shall have deserved their place or privilege only if they have lived in a spirit of service to the people and the crown.

This is not the place to enter into the details of a scheme for the education of the Aristocracy of India. The All-India Feudatories' Educational Association is doing that work. It will suffice to say that it should be suitable to the class for which it is intended. In olden times it was enough for most of them to have military training. But now times have changed. There will be fewer occasions for military activities in future and even then the

tactics will have changed and with mechanisation there will be less need for soldiers than for military experts. In these times equal stress will have to be laid on training in administration and in political and economic principles. For this purpose ideal schools will have to be established at different centres of the country. The conditions there should be the best that we can afford. The discipline in these schools should be exemplary though consonant with the modern spirit of education. To put it in brief the institutions should be run on the model of the best English Public Schools with such modifications as are essential. I say this because I am aware that some aspects of the English Public School would not be acceptable in these days of modern democratic educational ideals. Besides that it would not be entirely suitable to Indian traditions and culture to adopt the Public School whole-sale. We shall have to modify it to suit our needs and when this is done the schools that I am speaking of would serve as models to other institutions as well. These schools will not be closed to other classes. Rather they would welcome them. Considering the linguistic, traditional and historical differences of the various provinces it would perhaps be desirable to have one such Public School in every province.

Here, among other things, special attention will be paid to elementary military training, administration and estate management, politics and economics, surveying and forestry. Attention will also have to be given to acquainting the boys with the outlines of the principal religions in India.

I cannot conclude this without referring to one thing more. I am aware that there is a section of people who are out to sweep the aristocracy out of existence. To

them the aristocracy is an evil, a cancer on the body of Indian society. The aristocrat is a parasite, a leech who bleeds his ryot white. I admit there are evils in unearned wealth. I also admit there are evils in one large section of society remaining idle and irresponsible. I would go so far as to say that in individual cases they are hard upon the ryot. I am even prepared to think that as society evolves, landholders of present type will disappear. Whom they have disappeared in many lands and might disappear here also. Yet I am afraid our friends exaggerate the case. Even those who wish aristocrats as a class to disappear, cannot wish for the spirit and quality of aristocracy to die. We cannot be blind to the contributions which aristocracy makes to society. Aristocrats have patronised Art and Learning and might do so even to-day if properly brought up. They have developed and maintained a high standard of culture which has served as a model to other classes. And more important than all this is the fact that they are the stable element of society, being vitally connected with the land. While admitting that the class of Zamindars will ultimately disappear from the land we must realise that it is bound to take a considerable time. Would it be wise to let it rot in the meanwhile? In that case when the class does disappear its members would be worse than useless. On the contrary, if they are properly educated and equipped for the discharge of their duties now, they will be an asset to society at all times, even when their class disappears.

The above, it will be seen, is consistent with the standpoint which I expressed in the opening paragraphs of this paper. I am not advocating a type of education devised

specifically for the preservation of the existing classes and castes of our society, with all the disadvantages which have undoubtedly clustered around them. But I am advocating that our children should be brought up with a keen sense of their trusteeship, and a keen desire to fulfil that trusteeship to the utmost of their capacity, so long as society entrusts it to them. With such qualities and capacities they will then be ready, even if in their generation great social changes take place, to play their part in nation-building activities. Whether their private possessions be great or small, they will hold them as a trust in the eyes of God: whether they work as managing proprietors or as managers on behalf of the state or the community, they will work with the zeal and the disinterestedness of those who put the common good before private gain.

To some, such sentiments may seem to savour of mere idealism. 'After all,' it will be said, 'human nature will ever remain the same.' If this be true, then why take the trouble to educate our children at all? Why not save all the labour and expense by recognising once and for all that Nature is 'red in tooth and claw' and will remain so immutably, whatever man may do to raise himself and his descendants out of the slime of savagery? I do not think this view is one which will commend itself to many of those who have assembled from all parts of the world in the cause of Education! And for my part, I am one of those who believe that, in time, almost anything can be achieved by education. We may suffer setbacks, like that which was caused by over-haste in Afghanistan: but, on the other hand, look at what has been achieved in Turkey,

in Russia, in Japan. So too in our India. Our problem is a vast one because our country is a continent, our peoples so many and so diverse. The problem of the education of the Indian landholders is only a small part of the vast problem of Indian education as a whole. As an Indian, I feel the responsibility that we have for tackling the vaster problem; but as a landholder I feel a nearer responsibility, one which I can do something immediately to help to fulfil. With this aim was our All-India Feudatories' Educational Association set on foot, and it is as one who is trying to tackle a fractional portion of the vaster problem that I have ventured to address you to-day, in the hope that, from you who are tackling other, and no doubt in many cases much larger, fractions of the problem in your own fields of work, may come the encouragement and fellowship which will help to stir up others in my country to bear their part in this grand cause, the cause of education, by which indeed the whole world stands or falls together.

SAMBHAJI VILAS, GWALIOR,
 (INDIA).
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C. S. ANGRE.

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