

197

OUR EDUCATION
AND
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by the

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PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA.

I

The subject of human education is a vast concern : it is as vast and infinite as the universe itself. But I will confine myself here to that aspect of it which tends to make a human being a rational man, a peaceful member of civilized society, and a responsible, self-respecting, law-abiding and enterprising citizen of the world. And even in this regard I wish to confine my observations to the specific demands and requirements of my own country, India, as it stands at present.

The English have a saying that knowledge is power. Our ancient law-givers and sages have left for our guidance the dictum which asserts that "without knowledge a man is a mere brute." Man is an animal. Given education of the right kind, he becomes a rational being, a civilized person : not only that, he becomes a power.

The Hindus were the most civilised nation on earth once upon a time. They dominated the whole world, and their sway extended far far away beyond the seas. Why? Simply because they had a most perfect system of education, and character, sound character was looked upon, as the *sine qua non* of human existence. We are a governed race to-day, and the balance of power has gone in favour of our rulers, the British. Why? Simply because we allowed ourselves to fall back educationally while the British have evolved out a system of national education which in my humble opinion is decidedly the best and the ideal system of public education in the modern world. Yes, education is power, and no one understands

it better than these rulers of the unique Empire over which the sun never sets.

Where then lies the secret of the success of the British? My considered opinion is that the pre-eminence of the British lies in the system of their Public School education. No modern nation in the world has been able to produce a larger and better number of public leaders in thought and action than the British. This fact is too patent to need any demonstration. Every section of society in England has produced a fair proportion of eminent men, and all of them no matter whether they belonged to the Royal Family, to the Order of Peerage, the Middle Classes, or the lowest strata of society, were, as a rule, the products of the Public Schools.

Of all blessings which India has received by her connection with Britain, the system of public instruction, despite the view expressed to the contrary, is by far the greatest one. It is not ideal, I admit, but is not everything in human affairs a mere process of experimentation! It is not perfect, I admit again: but what have *we* done to make it perfect? There is a good deal of talk about a system of *National* education. But as far as I am aware no one has so far succeeded in evolving out and placing before us anything which may be called a system of national education equally acceptable to every community and class in this country. A few *Gurukuls* and *Rishikuls* have been started in certain parts of our country by well-meaning and public-spirited leaders of society. We have the Benares *Hindu* University, and the Aligarh *Muslim* University also: and there is a Jamai Millia also started by the late Maulana Mohammad Ali. But are they really *national* institutions in the true sense of the word? I doubt very much. It is an irony of the times that sectionalism, religiosity, and communalism have entered the sacred precincts of our educational institutions also: and I sometimes fear that India is having too much of religion at the expense of real humanity.

I do not believe in devolution. I am a firm believer in the potentiality and power of evolution. We cannot possibly go back to the past : and those who persist that India must go back to the past are wasting precious time and opportunities for nothing. What past? Whose past? If we are to rise higher in the scale of human progress, we must keep pace with the times we are living in. We must modernise our life by assimilating the best in western life with the invaluable culture or traditions of our own country. We must adapt ourselves to modern conditions.

With all its defects and faults, I believe that the system of education introduced by the British in this country is mainly responsible for the national awakening that we behold here to-day. Indeed, the spirit of democracy that is swaying main, a product of British rule, the English education. Most of our national leaders of the present times were, or are, the products of our modern schools and universities. Through that very system of education, we have reached a stage when we are looking for and planning wholesale reforms in every phase of our national life. I am, therefore, solely concerned and interested in the question of educational reforms.

Britain is marching on towards the fulfilment of her mission in India. Whether she is marching too slowly or too fast is a controversial question which I would leave to be fought out by Right Honourable gentlemen of the Churchill and Sapru schools of thought. I am mainly interested in the cause of Indian education : and without any hesitation I venture to assert that I have pinned my faith in the efficacy of the Public School system of education as it is imparted to British youths in England. With a few necessary alterations necessary to suit the special conditions of our country to which I would allude later, I stand for the wholesale introduction of Public Schools on English lines in India.

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PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA.

II

In my last letter on this subject I have discussed the importance of the part played by the English Public Schools in moulding and shaping British character. My observations are not based on mere fancy but on experience and well-founded facts.

Various institutions were started in India originally with the intention of imparting education to our boys on the lines of the English Public Schools, but so far the results have not been quite commensurate with the expectations. There are the Chiefs' Colleges at Rajkot, Ajmere, Lahore, Indore and similar schools for lesser chiefs and landholders' sons at Raipur and Lucknow and other places. Not one among them has attained the high degree of utility or efficiency of the English Public Schools. Owing to the exclusiveness of class restrictions, studied absence of social contacts with the other classes, and the heavy cost involved, these institutions cannot meet the requirements of the public. The total yearly cost of one of the Chiefs' Colleges is said to amount to £30,000 a year—£6,000 for the College Staff, and £25,000 for the upkeep of about 50 pupils only! The expenditure of Rs. 4,00,000 a year on the education of 50 boys is a story on which comments would be superfluous. In opening the Chiefs' College at Rajkot in 1870 Lord Hardinge had said: "It is on the education and enlightenment of the ruling Chiefs and their Sirdars that the moral and material progress of India in no small measure depends." After over thirty years of experimentation with these institutions, Lord Curzon

was constrained to make the following significant observations:—

“ We desire to raise up a vigorous and intelligent race of young men who will be in touch with modern progress but not out of touch with old traditions, who will be liberally educated in sympathy with their own families and people, who will be manly, not effeminate, strong-minded but not strong-willed, acknowledging a duty to others instead of a law unto themselves, and will be fit to do something in the world instead of setting down into *fops* or *spendthrifts* or *drones*.”

The defects in the Indian Universities system of education as it is at present are too patent to need any recapitulation here. Earnest efforts are doubtless being made to reform the system, and it is hoped that under the new reforms, liberal grants would be forthcoming to place Indian Universities on a par with those of the West.

As matters stand, to give their sons the benefit of the English public schools, those who can afford the expenses, have been sending their boys to England for education. But it must be remembered that every school in England is not of the same high standard as those of Eton or Harrow and a few others. The result of sending young Indian boys of an impressionable age indiscriminately to all sorts of schools in England has also been unsatisfactory in many cases. The lad becomes alienated from the life, customs, traditions and culture of his people and country, and often imbibes ideas and ideals quite incompatible with the requirements of his education.

The crying need therefore of young India is the opening in this country of a sufficient number of educational institutions on the lines of the English public schools, but such as would be distinctively Indian in their moral and spiritual outlook, and would attempt to develop in an atmosphere of Indian traditions, culture and social environment, many of the best features of the English public schools, such as discipline *esprit de corps*, emphasis on the building of individual character, games, physical develop-

ment, the spirit of chivalry, fair play, and straight dealing so essential in dealing with the practical problems of life.

Just as people in British India are being admitted to the higher services of the Indian Government, so some of the benevolent among the Ruling Princes too desire to train their own Sirdars and subjects to man the services of their States. This purpose can, however, only be achieved by educating the rising generations on the English public school system. An experiment on these lines was actually made by His late Highness Maharaja Sir Madhorao Scindia of Gwalior. A school for educating the sons of the Jagirdars was opened by His Highness at Gwalior, with the result that within a few years every boy who passed from this school found ready admission in the civil or military services of the State, and at the time of the demise of His late Highness the number of ex-boys of the Sirdars' school was predominantly large. The school was managed on English lines and the higher Staff was recruited direct from England. In view of the successful working of this school, His Highness was pleased to create a special endowment to perpetuate the institution. The present Council of Regency of Gwalior is to be congratulated for going one step further in that they have abolished class distinctions in the school and have thrown it open for the education of all classes of the general public. This was done on the recommendation of the ex-boys' Association of the Gwalior Sirdars' School, which has now been renamed the Scindia Public School.

In my opinion each province must have at least one such Public School, and every Indian State which can afford the expenses, ought to open one such school for the education of the children of their own Sirdars and subjects.

The whole country's grateful thanks are due to the late Hon'ble Mr. S. R. Das, a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, for the lead taken by him in this noble cause. And thanks to the generous support extended to

his scheme by the late Viceroy, Lord Irwin and His Excellency Lord Willingdon, Sir Frank Noyce, Sir Joseph Bhore, and other high officials of the Government, Ruling Princes, and a large number of public-spirited gentlemen in the country, one All-India institution of this kind has now been opened at Dehra Dun under the direction of an education-
alist of high attainments, Mr. A. E. Foot, M.A., the present Head-master. The school has already started working, and I will give my impressions about it in my next letter.

[An extract from this appeared in "The Times of India," dated
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PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA.

III

THE DOON SCHOOL, DEHRA DUN.

In his Convocation Address at the Delhi University on the 4th March, 1927, His Excellency Lord Willingdon had observed that the importance of good secondary schools, in which physique, mind and character can be developed and which are not forgetful of the practical needs of modern life, has wisely been recognised as a necessary link in the great chain of a nation's education. "The greatest educationists have always been disposed to lay stress on the importance of variety of types of school and we have, therefore, recently heard with interest of the proposed attempt to reproduce here a type familiar enough in England, but which hitherto has not taken root in India." His Excellency's reference alluded to the movement set up by the late Mr. S. R. Das for the establishment of a Public School in India on the lines of the English Public Schools.

It must be borne in mind that the English public school system of education has a unique history behind it. It is not the product of any theory or plan formulated beforehand by statesmen or philosophers, but has come into existence through a long course of experiments, compromises, traditions, successes, failures, and religious controversies. It is the resultant of many diverse forces, and of slow evolution and growth effected in different degrees by philanthropy, by private enterprise, by religious

zeal, by endowed foundations, by municipal and local efforts, and only to a small extent by legislation. The universities and the endowed schools in England adapt themselves to the wants of the times but they always retain their character of local, and one might almost say private, corporations. Their administration is subject to the control of no State authority and their existence is mainly dependent on voluntary enterprise or public endowments. The foundations of the Doon School have also been laid more or less on these lines.

The Doon School is the posthumous child of the patriotism, selflessness and zealous efforts of Mr. Das which received every encouragement and support at the hands of the late Viceroy, Lord Irwin and of His Excellency the Earl of Willingdon. Before the school was started, extensive enquiries were conducted by the sponsors of the scheme which led to the indication of a widespread desire not only among the ruling Princes and feudatories, but also among the representatives of the learned professions, commercial and industrial classes and others for the foundation *in India* of an institution "distinctly Indian in its moral and spiritual outlook which will attempt to develop in an atmosphere of Indian traditions, culture and social environment," many of the best features of the English public school.

Thanks to the generous support given by several among the Ruling Princes and other leading persons in the country, Mr. Das was able, during his own life-time, to collect necessary funds to give the scheme a start. The Indian Public School Society was formed and registered formally in 1928. After careful investigation, Dehra Dun, which has been called in certain quarters as "the Windsor of India" was selected as the ideal place for the location of the school. Dehra Dun is situated 2,500 feet above the sea level. It enjoys an excellent climate which, in its avoidance of extremes of heat and cold throughout the year, is unrivalled throughout India. The Indian Public School Society has been exceptionally fortunate in securing

from the Government, on a nominal rental, the extensive Chanbagh Estate covering an area of some 45 acres containing fine buildings with accommodation for class rooms, laboratories, residential quarters for Staff, etc., already sufficient to meet the needs of over 250 boys. Another neighbouring estate covering some 25 acres of land has also been purchased and acquired by the Society which will be available for additional playgrounds.

The Doon School is a residential institution which will in no sense be exclusive as it is open to all classes and communities whatever be their social status. Indeed, one of the principal aims of the school will be to foster a spirit of comradeship among its students and to eliminate all social, communal, religious or provincial prejudices which have greatly handicapped the development of the Indian nationality. Many among the enlightened Ruling Princes have also recognised the advantage of educating their sons in the free atmosphere of a public school uncontaminated by notions of social or communal exclusiveness.

The main idea is to impart to the students a sound education on the most approved lines and a general culture which will enable them to go straight into an University, English or Indian, or to enter upon a business career, or in the case of those who belong to the class of landed aristocracy, to take up their appropriate place in the national life as men of character and culture whose services may be of great utility to the nation. Arrangements will also be made, as in the English Public Schools, for those who wish to prepare themselves for a military career or for the superior Indian civil services.

The school is not a Government concern as appears to be the mistaken belief in certain quarters. It doubtless enjoys the generous patronage and full moral support of the State, but its management and general control is vested in the hands of the Public School Society which consists of leading men representing all provinces and the

leading Indian States. Its ultimate success shall therefore naturally depend upon the measure of the public support which it receives from patriotic Indians of all classes.

“ A public school head-master who is active-minded, and who has thought out for himself the meaning of the occupation in which he is engaged, can revolutionise methods of teaching, can put his ideas in practice far more easily than the head-master of an elementary school, who has to please the local education committee as well as the Government Inspector.” Such a head-master is Mr. A. E. Foot, M.A., and those who have the privilege of knowing him personally as I do, will be unanimous in their opinion that the management and direction of the institution could not be safely entrusted to better hands.

In my next letter I will put forward certain suggestion which in my opinion would be necessary to introduce to ensure complete success of the school from the Indian point of view.

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PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA.

IV

Public Schools of the type to which I have referred in my previous letters are wanted in this country for two special reasons, *viz.*, (1) to obviate the necessity of sending out young boys to foreign countries and (2) to found institutions in India which will be distinctly Indian in their moral and spiritual outlook and which will develop at the same time the best features of the English Public Schools. It is needless here to dwell at length upon the evils and disadvantages which result from the removal to distant foreign lands of young boys at the most impressionable age of their life. They are obvious and need no recapitulation within the limited scope of this letter. I will, therefore, confine myself only to the question of the assimilation of the best features of English life with the traditional culture of our country.

So far as the general education and training of boys in our public schools is concerned, I am strongly of the opinion that in order to create the atmosphere of an ideal English public school, the greatest care should be bestowed on the selection and appointment of Teachers and Instructors and the school staff in general. To begin with I would suggest that with the exception of teachers required to teach oriental languages, the rest of the entire school staff must be recruited from England who should preferably be men of distinguished talents and experience selected from the various English Public Schools. I mean no disparagement to Indian teachers many among whom are doubtless men of sterling merit and character. My object,

is that the institution of the present type of Public Schools being a new experiment in this country, it is both desirable and necessary, for the present at any rate, that the tutorial and instructional staff should be drawn from the public schools in England. I am anxious to place our new public schools out of the rut of the old system when our educational institutions had the reputation of being corporations not of scholars but of administrators which did not deal so much with the training of men as with the examination of candidates; which indeed were concerned not so much with learning, physical training, or the building up of the character of the students, but whose chief consideration was the test of mere book knowledge through the mechanical process of periodical examinations. I do not wish our new public schools to be fettered by examination tests only: I want their teachers to enjoy that freedom which teachers must be given: and we need teachers who would encourage our boys to value training for its own sake and not merely as a means for obtaining marketable qualifications. We want *culture* and *character* and not a scramble for "the parchment roll" only.

In the appeal published by the founders of the Indian Public School Society in 1927, it was suggested that among the distinctive features of the proposed Indian Public School "A mosque and a Hindu temple and, if there is a sufficient number of Sikh students, a Sikh Gurudwara, will be provided within the grounds of the school, and attendance at these places of worship will be encouraged. Adequate arrangements will be made for the religious instruction of the boys." As it stands, the proposal is a most welcome one, but I fear the execution of the idea is likely to present serious difficulties. Indian culture, Indian traditions, indeed the whole fabric of Indian social life is based to a large extent upon religion which in many oriental countries still plays a great part in the life of a nation. The question of religious instruction in Indian public schools is fraught with difficulties and obstacles because unfortunately religion has somehow taken the

form of communalism in our country which threatens to invade the peaceful flow of our social and political life also. In his Convocation address in the University of Mysore on the 9th instant, Mr. C. Y. Chintamani, an ex-Education Minister of the United Provinces Government, has rightly made these observations: "The place of religion in education has engaged the best thought of the wisest men in two continents for generations and yet remains, I fear, an unsolved problem. I am as far as ever I was from any idea of educational institutions being converted into centres of sectarian strife or theological contention: that would indeed be a disaster of the first magnitude, but the conviction has been strengthening in me that this can be avoided, and, yet, instruction in the broad principles of religion—the most important of which are, I believe, common to all religious systems—can be imparted to the great advantage of the individual as well as the nation."

I do not know how far the idea of introducing a mosque, a temple, a church or a Gurudwara in a public school would be feasible or advisable seeing that these temples and mosques and Gurudwaras have often been the cause of not a little trouble latterly. Personally I would exclude theological controversies from the public schools, and confine myself only to the study of those broad humanitarian ideas and principles of life which are common to all civilised religions. To quote the words of Lord Macaulay, "Every human being, be he idolator, Mahometan, Jew, Papist, Socinian, Deist, or Atheist, naturally loves life, shrinks from pain, desires comforts which can be enjoyed only in communities where property is secure. To be murdered, to be tortured, to be robbed, to be sold into slavery these are evidently evils from which men of every religion, wish to be protected; and, therefore, it will hardly be disputed that men of every religion, and of no religion, have thus far a common interest in being well governed." The central idea of the Public School Education in India is "to destroy all social, communal, religious or provincial prejudices which have impeded the development of an

Indian nationality." Our boys should, in course of time, take their stand as a brother to a brother in the body-politic of the country. Religious instruction in our schools should therefore be confined to the ethical development of their minds and ideas in such a way that they may be enabled to see the good points of every religion without imbibing the bigotry of any. The evils of present day communalism should be a sufficient warning to us against the propagation of any religious instruction which may be liable to excite among us discontents dangerous to public order or national solidarity. The bright side of every religion must be known to the boys in such a way that they may be able to stand firm against the pitfalls of sheer sectarianism.

The necessity of imparting physical training needs no special stressing by me. The principle of "a sound mind in a sound body" is only too well-known to every one among us. All I need, therefore, suggest is that in addition to the usual course of physical training, and games, every public school boy ought to undergo a course of drilling and musketry also, so that the complaint of dearth of suitable material for the military requirements of the country may be removed. I am sure that with necessary alterations in the existing buildings of Chandbagh (Doon School) well-ventilated, airy and healthy rooms shall be plentifully available for all boys. With regard to messing arrangements, I agree that *all boys* should dine together in one common dining hall so that the evil of touch-me-notism and religious or racial prejudices may be eliminated once and for all. The question of food is also important. Side by side with European arrangements, *Deshi Khana* vegetarian or non-vegetarian according to requirements, should also be supplied to the boys at proper intervals which I am sure they will relish and greatly appreciate.

My last proposal is that efforts should be made to make the school a self-sufficient and a self-supporting institution. Classes to encourage manual work, such as carpentry,

joinery, gardening, farming, poultry farming should be introduced and the school should have its own laundry and dairy arrangements. It is said boys learn more from the boys than they learn in the class rooms. Our object should be to make an all-round useful man of every boy so that he may know something of every thing that every useful citizen is expected to learn and know.

I admit ample funds will be needed to bring about a complete consummation of the ideal that I have indicated above. I feel sure, however, that when parents would be convinced that they can have in India all the advantages expected from their boys' education in England they would be only too willing to avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by the public school here, and would also be willing to contribute substantially to make the institution worth the name of India. I earnestly appeal to all lovers of education in India, to the generosity of our great Princes and landed aristocracy as well as to the magnates of commerce and industry to interest themselves in the public schools of their country on which must depend the future well-being and greatness of India.