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Vol. XII.

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No. 4.

National Education for India

By PROF. D. S. GORDON, M.A., LL. B., A.M., DIP. ED

(Continued from March issue)

Under these circumstances it is no wonder that the growth of primary education has been very slow. Effective primary education must at least produce literacy; but between 1892 and 1922 the percentage of male literates of five years and over in British India increased by only 1.4 and that of female literates by 1.3. The total literate population at the present time does not exceed 10 per cent. This is undoubtedly very slow progress. At this rate it would take more than a century for all the boys, and more than two centuries for all the girls, of school-going age, to get primary education, assuming that the population remained stationary during all this time.

In this connection the problem of relapse into illiteracy must also be considered. It has been found by actual experience that nothing less than a four-year primary course can secure permanent literacy in an individual. But unfortunately only 18 children out of every 100 who are enrolled in the first class of the primary school reach the fourth class. Out of nearly 4 million pupils who were found in class I in 1922—23, only about 711,000 reached class IV. This means that more than three-fourths of the money and effort spent on primary education is a waste. The most urgent need of Indian primary education, therefore, is the prevention of this huge "educational mortality". Every attempt should be made to retain the pupil in the school for at least four years. But as the Hartog Report wisely observes, (Page 49), "Retention of initial literacy acquired at the early age of 10 or 11 depends largely on environment, and the environment of the great majority of Indian pupils who leave school at the primary stage is not conducive to such retention. The parents in the village home are usually illiterate, they are too poor to buy books, and attractive vernacular

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literature and periodicals suitable for children are not available." Under these conditions it is no wonder that even those pupils who had a complete primary education may tend to become almost illiterate in the course of years. In order to counteract this tendency some kind of follow-up work must be done, so that children may come under educative influences even after their formal schooling is over. But the best and most permanent results in this matter can only be expected when a favourable atmosphere for learning has been created in the village. The adults must be reached; for so long as the adults remain indifferent, there is no incentive for the children to practise the art that they had learnt at school.

Unfortunately, however, it is in regard to adult education that the situation in India is most disappointing. In the advanced countries of the West, where the literate population ranges between 75 and 95 per cent, adult education is still considered an important matter. There, the people are no longer satisfied with the mere ability to read and write; they aim at making use of these tools for acquiring knowledge and broadening the mental outlook. Workers' Educational Associations, Extension Lectures, Working Men's Colleges, University Settlements for educational and social purposes, these represent some of the ways in which this kind of work is being intensively carried on. In India such a high type of work is not at present possible; nevertheless an enthusiasm for educational and social uplift can be created by similar agencies. Already in certain provinces night schools, lantern lectures, cinema shows, and moving libraries have been started. It is earnestly to be desired that these activities are rapidly extended.

While the great problem of adult education cannot be over-emphasised, the problems connected with children's primary education must at the same time be tackled. The number of primary schools in British India was 142,000 in 1917, 160,000 in 1922, and 190,000 in 1927. This represents an increase of about 11 per cent in the first quinquennium and 12 per cent in the second. It has also been found that there is only one boys' primary school for every seven square miles, or for every 900 of the male population, and there is only one girls' primary school for every 45 square miles, or for every 5000 of the female population. Nor is the distribution of these schools over the country satisfactory. In some provinces such as Madras, Bengal, and Bihar the provision is liberal; whereas in others such as the Central Provinces, the United Provinces, and Burma the schools are few and far between. Again, the urban areas are on the whole far better provided with school facilities. The great question therefore is, how to create a system of

schools for India's seven lakhs of villages in which ninety per cent of her population lives.

The present unequal distribution of schools not only retards educational progress but it also causes financial waste through inadequate utilisation of existing schools. The average enrolment in boys' primary schools, especially in the higher classes, is very low; and in girls' primary schools, it is lower still. Hence co-education has been suggested as a means of securing economy, for this will do away with the necessity for providing separate schools for the sexes. At the present time, in certain parts of India, co-education has already become the practice in the highest as well as the lowest stages of education. Some educationists even welcome the spread of this practice on other social grounds. A second method of preventing waste is by careful consolidation of schools. By closing superfluous schools and establishing central schools in suitable places educational effort and equipment may be concentrated and improved, and educational expenditure may be more wisely and effectively distributed.

Another factor which enables a little money to go a long way in India is the cheapness of school buildings and equipments, as compared with the Western countries. While one need not necessarily approve of open-air schools, it is at the same time not at all necessary to construct costly and elaborate structures. But this does not however mean that the present school buildings in most villages are in any way satisfactory. They are generally dark, dingy, ill-ventilated and badly situated and sanitary arrangements are almost unknown. A simple, inexpensive, unornamental and durable type of school building must be evolved for every large area throughout the country.

But a school is more than its walls. Its curriculum and methods of teaching are far more important than its exteriors. At present the primary school curriculum aims at little more than the three R's, and even this is not accomplished in the most efficient manner. Memorisation plays too important a role, and thinking is not encouraged. But perhaps by far the most fundamental criticism of Indian education in general, and of primary education in particular, is that it does not touch life. Education and life seem to run in parallel grooves. John Dewey has said that the school is a miniature society and that it should reflect the surrounding life-activities. But on the contrary what do we see in India? The educated child despises the occupation of its parents. Mr. F. L. Brayne, who has done not a little for the uplift of Panjab villages, condemns this sort of education in unmeasured terms. He says, "The making of better farms and better homes, the rules of health, the

dignity of labour, and the duty of service must be taught and practised, and the pupils be inspired to stay and lead their village to better things, instead of either bolting off to the towns as soon as they have got all they can out of the village school, or making their schooling an excuse for loafing about the village and refusing to put their hands to their ancestral occupation. What is the use of history or geography to a boy who is at any moment likely to lose health, sight or life owing to his ignorance of the ABC of hygiene? What is the use of Arithmetic if it does not teach the farmer to husband his resources and to fight the demon of waste that is keeping his village poor? What is the use of giving ideas of better things to the boy, when his future mate is not taught to make the home bright and comfortable? What is the use of learning anything at all when there is no means of continuing, developing and putting it into practice in the village when the boy has grown up? Surely the life-history of a fly or mosquito is of equal educational value and of ten times more practical value to a village boy than the life-history of Akbar or Napoleon. The theory and practice of co-operative credit or of village panchayats are surely of greater value to the village than algebra or syntax!" (The Rural Community and the School, by G. S. Krishnayya. Foreword, page IX). The rural school curriculum must be based upon rural interests and rural needs.

But the most important requirement of rural education today is the right type of teacher, for upon his energy, enthusiasm and efficiency the success of the whole thing depends. India needs large numbers of carefully selected and properly trained primary school teachers. "The number of teachers of vernacular who were sent out from the schools in 1917 for all India was only 9411, or 1828 less than there ought to have been to supply the annual wastage of 11,239 vernacular teachers through death and resignation." (Olcott: Village Schools in India, Page 136). Since then the situation has not appreciably improved. For want of teachers it has been necessary, in several provinces, to establish numerous single-teacher schools, although it is known that such schools are thoroughly inefficient. Over 50 per cent of the schools in Madras, Bengal, United Provinces, Burma, Bihar, Orissa and Assam are single-teacher schools; and over 60 per cent of the schools in the whole of India are such schools. As if this is not sufficiently bad, the proportion of trained teachers is deplorably low. In boys' Primary schools only 44 per cent of the teachers are trained; and only 28 per cent of the trained teachers have completed the middle school course, which is admitted on all hands as the minimum necessary general educational qualification for such a teacher. No need to say that the situation is far worse in girls' schools.

A better type of teacher is certainly needed. But how can you secure him when his salary is as low as Rs. 8/- per mensem in Bengal, and when it nowhere in India exceeds Rs. 50/- even after a whole lifetime of service? In many parts of the country village teachers have got to supplement their slender income in other ways. Frequently they act as village postmasters, letter writers, licensed quinine vendors, secretaries of local co-operative societies, and inciters of litigation. But apart from the question of improving their salaries and prospects, it cannot be contended that the kind of professional preparation that they have had is satisfactory. Firstly, their low initial qualification makes it necessary for the training institutions to spend much time in imparting a knowledge of the school subjects which they ought to have acquired before they came up for training. Secondly, the courses in the normal schools are overweighted with theory, whereas these schools should mainly direct their attention to the production of efficient classroom teachers. Thirdly, the rural bias is almost entirely lacking. It is forgotten that no one can be a successful rural teacher without an understanding of rural problems and without the ability to help the villagers in solving them.

Closely connected with the question of providing an adequate and properly trained teaching force is the question of school inspection and supervision. It is frequently complained that the inspecting staff is insufficient; but a far more serious consideration is whether the persons who compose the staff always possess the necessary qualities of head and heart. Inspectors and headmasters of the fault-finding type do far more harm than good; for it must be remembered that no amount of extraneous fear and coercion can produce such good results as the conversion of the village teacher himself into a willing servant of the community. Everything ultimately rests upon the teacher's mentality. If he believes in the nobility and value of his work, the presence or absence of a superior officer will be immaterial. The work will go on. And if there is an officer of the helping type, his visits will be eagerly awaited and gladly welcomed, for these visits are sure to put new spirit, and infuse new confidence, into the teacher.

So far the problem of Indian education has been considered and described mainly from the point of view of the male population. But the education of the women and girls of India is even more important; for it has been wisely said that if you educate a man you educate him alone, but if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Fortunately the necessity for female education has been increasingly recognised in recent times; but the situation is still unsatisfactory compared to the progress in the case of males.

While 13 per cent of the male population is literate, only 2 per cent of the female population can read and write in any language. "Between 1917 and 1922 the increase in the number of girls under instruction was only 184,000. Between 1922 and 1927 it was over 400,000 or 30·6 per cent, a very substantial increase; but in the latter quinquennium the increase in the number of male pupils was 2,400,000 or 37·1 per cent; thus the difference between the number of girls and boys at school, already great, was increased by two millions. In no province does one girl out of five attend school; in some provinces not one out of 20 or 25. In Madras three out of five boys attend school, in Burmah, where the proportion is lowest one out of four. In British India only ten per cent of the girls of school-going age attend school; the figure for boys is four times as high." (Hartog Report. Page 147). Between 1917 and 1922 the number of girls' institutions of all kinds in British India rose from 19,500 to 24,500. In the next quinquennium it rose to 29,000 and in 1929—30 it stood at 32,910. The enrolment, however, does not show a proportionate increase. During the twelve years that have elapsed since 1918 the female population in school has risen from 1 per cent, to 2 per cent representing 2,000,000. This includes girls from Anglo-Indian, Parsee, and Indian Christian communities also. And what is even more significant is the fact that over 90 per cent of the girls under instruction are in primary schools. The educational mortality is appalling. Out of every 100 girls who are admitted to Class I, ten only reach Class IV, as against 19 in the case of boys.

But apart from the question of increased effort and better facilities for girls' education, the methods of teaching and curriculum need examination. It is frequently complained that the teaching in girls' schools is not so good because well-qualified women teachers are not to be had. Moreover, there is little differentiation in the kind of subjects taught from those of boys' schools. As the Frazer Report truly observes. "Any scheme of education for the Indian girl should be based on a wise understanding of the tradition of womanhood into which she is born, of the place she occupies in the life of her own community, of the characteristics which her own people deem in her noblest and most admirable, and of the functions which she is or may be allowed to perform." (Page 68). It is no doubt true that at the primary stage the differentiation in the curriculum may not be very pronounced; but yet the villager would hardly send his girl children to school unless they fitted well into the life of the village home and of the village society after their schooling.

(To be continued.)

Importance of Domestic Science.*

BY MRS. HANNA SEN, B.A., B.L., T.D.

The twentieth century has inaugurated a period of rapid development and changing values. It has witnessed a revolution in the position of women. Political equality has been conceded to them, and women are being called upon to take part in the administration of the country. Equality of opportunities for self-expression is also theirs and the professions and the universities have been thrown open to them. New privileges have brought new responsibilities. In the educational field this is reflected in the insistent demand for reconstruction, for an educational programme drawn up against the national setting and closely related to practical realities and urgent needs. From distant corners of the country come everflowing streams of advice: reduce wastage, secure adequate financial support, change the objective, vary the curricula, adopt modern methods, improve the staffing, increase the equipment and what not. From all this welter of phrases and pious hopes, there emerges one significant fact; school studies must be related to life and the home if they are to prove attractive and worthwhile to both the taxpayer and the parent. Education must come down from the cold mountain heights of academic isolation to the warm plain of realities, placing the sum-totum of human experience at the service of all.

In so far as women's and girls' education is concerned, therefore, Domestic Science demands a place in the scheme of things. It must form an integral part of all educational curricula, primary, secondary, university. If homes are to survive and keep pace with the changing world, those in charge of them should be specially prepared and suitably trained.

A PARADOX

It seems paradoxical that while the progress for higher education has reduced the inevitability of marriage as the one and only career for women, greater emphasis is being laid on the study of domestic subjects. The present attitude is but a restatement of the age-old principle that whether women marry or follow other pursuits, on them will devolve the main task of managing the home, for decades to come. It is also a denial of the age old belief that women are gifted with an inborn genius, a heaven given intuition for home building. Disease in Indian homes,

* A Paper read at the Eleventh Session of the All-India Educational Conference, Nagpur, December 1935.

being watched. He studies the predominant passions and reactions of each child and as those differ so do his methods with each individual differ.

The problem of control which the class-room teacher must meet is a miniature of the greater problem which confronts the adult in real life. The future welfare of our country largely depends upon the methods of control we teachers use upon its future citizens. By our methods we can produce anything from slaves to freemen. Let it be our hope that in the dim distant future, through our methods of Education, the ideal of a true Democracy can be reached—a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

The teacher of the present day and of the future, it seems to me, is called upon to exercise greater resources within his or her own life than ever before. It is easier to command than to direct, to do than to get done. The teacher in the child-centred school needs personality, sympathy, and an understanding of the children's motives and actions. She needs to know why a child makes certain responses under certain circumstances. She has to provide interesting and suitable work and through it gain the co-operation of all the children. The teacher needs to feel the necessity for keeping a child well and suitably occupied. The teacher should also realise the importance of studying her children individually. Above all the teachers should realise that the school exists for the children and not for the teacher.

Notes.

Reorganisation of Education in India.

By PROF. C. A. KRISHNAMURTHI RAO, M.A., F.R. ECON. S.

ASSOCIATE EDITOR.

Judging from the kind and extent of light thrown on this important question from various parts of the country by those competent to speak on the subject on account of the heavy responsibility they are shouldering in matters educational, we may well feel entitled to say that we are well-nigh out of the woods and progress hereafter is not only assured but also substantial and bound to yield satisfactory results. We refer to the very clear lead given by Educationists particularly in the neighbouring Indian states of Cochin and Mysore regarding problems that had hitherto appeared formidable and almost incapable of an early or easy solution. They are the problems of General versus Technical or Vocational education which had been for long so interlocked that the best brains found it difficult to know exactly where to begin or how indeed to approach the problem with any certainty of success. There was even a tendency to regard all thought and energy spent on this question in the past, as having been futile. But it must now be clear that all this has led to clear thinking and definite plans formulated embodying details into a workable scheme whereby neither General nor Vocational education need suffer by what might appear to be encroachment on each other's domains. The process has been certainly painful but pain is the price we are called upon to pay for any progress.

The problem has been mentioned above in a somewhat simple form—General versus Vocational education. But the same problem has been stated in numerous other ways which, though apparently different, can all be traced directly or indirectly to this one broad and vexed question of General and Vocational Education. Among these may be mentioned questions like University Domination of Secondary Education, the Reorganisation of the S. S. L. C. Syllabus, University Education and the Unemployment Problem, Mass Illiteracy, Mass Education and the like which a casual glance at any page of a newspaper would reveal in

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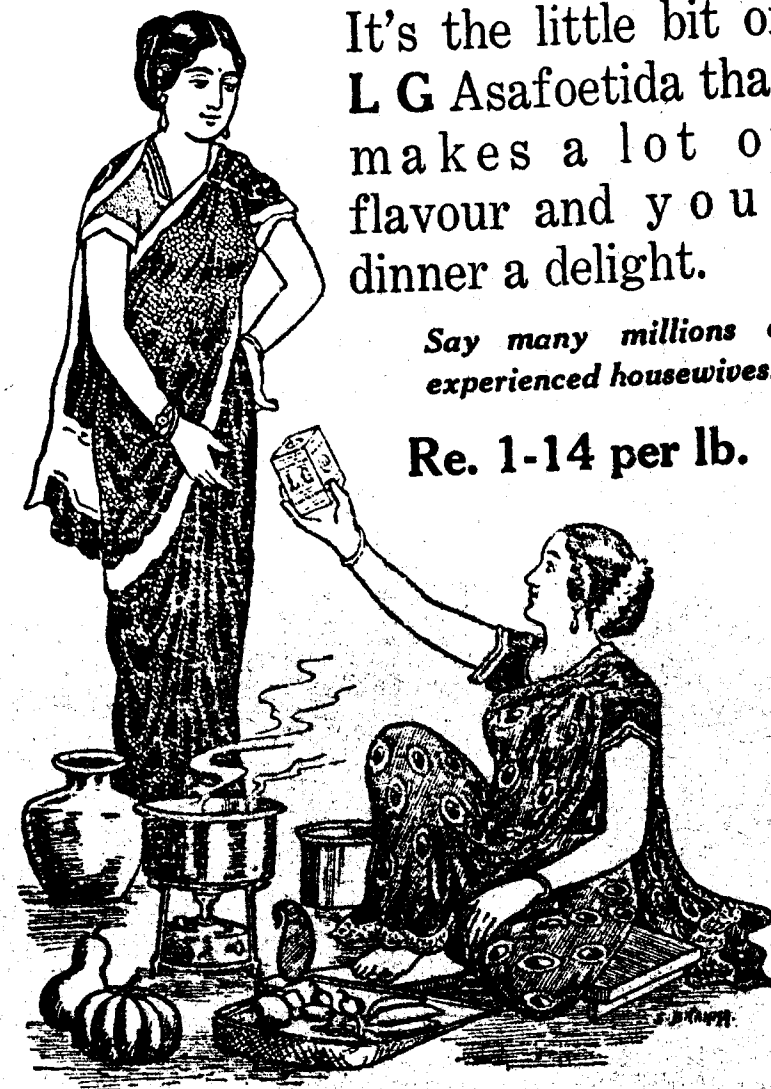
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