

TOWARDS NEW EDUCATION

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Editor's Note

It is necessary to state at the outset what this book sets out to cover. The Navjivan Publishing House has already published a book by Gandhiji on Basic Education. It deals with Gandhiji's writings and speeches on education primarily from the latter half of 1937 when he launched his new scheme of education. This new scheme came to be called Basic Education. It related to education to be given to a child from his 7th to 14th year. To this was to be added in course of time Pre-Basic and Post-Basic education relating to education before the 7th and after the 14th year respectively. The education covering all these three stages is what is comprised under New Education or Nai Talim.

Gandhiji's ideas in regard to this New Education did not, of course, suddenly emerge from his brain in 1937, but were the outcome of long years of sustained thought and experience. The present book relates to this earlier formative period when he revolted from the prevailing system of education and sought in various ways to substitute it by educational practices more in harmony with his own conception of the function of education. To understand adequately the Basic Education scheme which he formulated in 1937 it is essential to go back to this earlier period where we can see it in origin and growth. The present book may, therefore, be said to be a necessary companion volume to the one on Basic Education.

The material for this book was collected by Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose and Prof. Anath Nath Bose. But for editing and arranging it in its present form they are not responsible.

An attempt has here been made to arrange the writings in such a way that the reader may see for himself the evolution of Gandhiji's ideas in regard to Education. Section I deals with his period of revolt ; Section II with experimentation, and Section III and the others following with formulation of principles. It is hardly necessary to say that these sections are by no means rigid, for even in his period of revolt and experimentation we find Gandhiji formulating principles. Nevertheless it is hoped that classifying his writings thus will help to provide a clearer understanding of the development of his ideas.

For the most part the titles of chapters and of extracts have been altered to suit the above arrangement.

Bharatan Kumarappa

Bombay

To The Reader

I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh. What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and, therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.

M. K. GANDHI

Harijan, 29-04-1933, p. 2

INADEQUACY OF PREVAILING EDUCATION

Literary Education

Editor (Gandhiji) : The ordinary meaning of education is a knowledge of letters. To teach boys reading, writing and arithmetic is called primary education. A peasant earns his bread honestly. He has ordinary knowledge of the world. He knows fairly well how he should behave towards his parents, his wife, his children and his fellow-villagers. He understands and observes the rules of morality. But he cannot write his own name. What do you propose to do by giving him a knowledge of letters ? Will you add an inch to his happiness? Do you wish to make him discontented with his cottage or his lot? And even if you want to do that, he will not need such an education. Carried away by the flood of Western thought, we came to the conclusion, without weighing pros and cons, that we should give this kind of education to the people.

Now let us take higher education. I have learned Geography, Astronomy, Algebra, Geometry etc. What of that? In what way have I benefited myself or those around me? Why have I learned these things? Professor Huxley has thus defined education:

"That man I think has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will and does with ease and pleasure all the work that as a mechanism it is capable of ; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine with all its parts of equal strength and in smooth working order... whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the fundamental truths of nature... Whose passions are

trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience... who has learnt to have all vileness and to respect others as himself. Such a one and no other, I conceive, has had a liberal education, for he is in harmony with Nature. He will make the best of her and she of him.

If this be true education, I must emphatically say that the sciences I have enumerated above I have never been able to use for controlling my senses. Therefore, whether you take elementary education or higher education it is not required for the main thing. It does not make of us men. It does not enable us to do our duty.

Reader : If that is so, I shall have to ask you, what enables you to tell all these things to me? If you had not received higher education how would you have been able to explain to me the things that you have?

Editor: You have spoken well. But my answer is simple: I do not for one moment believe that my life would have been wasted, had I not received higher or lower education. Nor do I consider that I necessarily serve because I speak. But I do desire to serve and, in endeavoring to fulfill that desire, I make use of the education I have received. And, if I am making good use of it, even then it is not for the millions, but I can use it only for such as you, and this supports my contention. Both you and I have come under the bane of what is mainly false education. I claim to have become free from its ill effects, and I am trying to give you the benefits of my experience and, in doing so, I am demonstrating the rottenness of this education.

Moreover, I have not run down a knowledge of letters under all circumstances. All I have now shown is that we must not make of it a fetish. It is not our kamadhuk. In its place it can be of use, and it has its place when we have brought our senses under subjection, and put our ethics on a firm foundation. And then, if we feel inclined to receive that education, we may make good use of it. As an ornament it is likely to sit well on us. It now follows that it is not necessary to make this education compulsory. Our ancient school system is enough. Character-building has the first place in it, and that is primary education. A building erected on that foundation will last.

Hind Swaraj (1908), Ch. XVIII

I have never been able to make a fetish of literary training. My experience has proved to my satisfaction that literary training by itself adds not an inch to one's moral height and that character-building is independent of literary training. I am firmly of opinion that the Government schools have unmanned us, rendered us helpless and godless. They have filled us with discontent, and providing no remedy for the discontent, have made us despondent. They have made us what we were intended to become, clerks and interpreters.

Young India, 1-6-1921

The question arises whether this education answers the wants of the people. As in the rest of India so in Baroda, the population is predominantly agricultural. Do the children of these farmers become

better farmers ? Do they show moral and material improvement for the education they have received ? Fifty years is a long enough time for showing results. I am afraid the answer to the inquiry cannot be satisfactory. The farmers of Baroda are no happier, no better than their brethren elsewhere. They are as helpless as any in times of famine. The sanitation of their villages is as primitive as in the other parts of India. They do not know even the value of manufacturing their own cloth. Baroda possesses some of the richest lands in India. It should not have to export its raw cotton. It can easily become a self-contained State with a prosperous peasantry. But it is bedecked in foreign cloth—a visible sign of their poverty and degradation. Nor are they better off in the matter of drink. Probably they are worse. Baroda education is as much tainted with the drink revenue as the British revenue. The children of the Kaliparaj are ruined by the drink demon in spite of the education they may receive. The fact is the education in Baroda is an almost slavish imitation of the British type. Higher education makes us foreigners in our country and the primary education being practically of no use in afterlife becomes almost useless. There is neither originality nor naturalness about it. It need not be at all original if it would only be aboriginal.

English Education

Reader : Do I then understand that you do not consider English education necessary for obtaining Home Rule?

Editor (Gandhiji) : My answer is yes and no. To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them. The foundation that Macaulay

laid of education has enslaved us. I do not suggest that he had any such intention, but that has been the result. Is not a sad commentary that we should have to speak of Home Rule in a foreign tongue?

And it is worthy of note that the systems which the Europeans have discarded are the systems in vogue among us. Their learned men continually make changes. We ignorantly adhere to their cast-off systems. They are trying each division, to improve its own status. Wales is a small portion of England. Great efforts are being made to revive a knowledge of Welsh among Welshmen. The English Chancellor, Mr Llyod George is taking a leading part in the movement to make Welsh children speak Welsh. And what is our condition ? We write to each other in faulty English, and from this even, our M.A.'s are not free ; our best thoughts are expressed in English ; the proceedings of our Congress are conducted in English ; our best newspapers are printed in English. If this state of things continues for a long time posterity will—it is my firm opinion—condemn and curse us.

It is worth noting that, by receiving English education, we have enslaved the nation. Hypocrisy, tyranny, etc., have increased ; English-knowing Indians have not hesitated to cheat and strike terror into the people. Now, if we are doing anything for the people at all, we are paying only a portion of the debt due to them.

It is not a painful thing that, if I want to go to a court of justice, I must employ the English language as a medium ; that, when I become a Barrister, I may not speak my mother tongue, and that someone else should have to translate to me from my own language ? Is not this

absolutely absurd ? Is it not a sign of slavery ? Am I to blame the English for it or myself ? It is we, the English-knowing men, that have enslaved India. The curse of the nation will rest not upon the English but upon us.

I have told you that my answer to your last question is both yes and no. I have explained to you why it is yes. I shall now explain why it is no.

We are so much beset by the disease of civilization, that we cannot altogether do without English education. Those who have already received it may make good use of it wherever necessary. In our dealing with the English people, in our dealings with our own people, when we can only correspond with them through that language, and for the purpose of knowing how much disgusted they (the English) have themselves become with their civilization, we may use or learn English, as the case may be. Those who have studied English will have to teach morality to their progeny through mother tongue, and to teach them another Indian language ; but when they have grown up, they may learn English, the ultimate aim being that we should not need it. The object to making money thereby should be eschewed. Even in learning English to such a limited extent, we will have to consider what we should learn through it and what we should not.

Hind Swaraj (1908), Ch. XVIII

Education for Manufacturing Clerks

You, the students of Madras as well as the students all over India, are you receiving an education which will make you worthy to realize that ideal and which will draw the best out of you, or is it an education which has become a factory for making Government employees or clerks in commercial offices? Is the goal of the education that you are receiving that of mere employment whether in the Government departments or other departments? If that be the goal of your education, if that is the goal that you have set before yourselves, I feel and I fear that the vision which the Poet pictured for himself is far from being realized. As you have heard me say perhaps, or as you have read I am and I have been a determined opponent of modern civilization. I want you to turn your eyes today upon what is going on in Europe and if you have come to the conclusion that Europe is today groaning under the heels of modern civilization, then you and your elders will have to think twice before you can emulate that civilization in our Motherland. But I have been told : "How can we help it, seeing that our rulers bring that culture to our Motherland ?" Do not make any mistake about it at all. I do not for one moment believe that it is for any rulers to bring that culture to you unless you are prepared to accept it, and if it be that the rulers bring that culture before us, I think that we have forces within ourselves to enable us to reject that culture.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, pp. 312,313 ; 27-4-15

English Education

It is my considered opinion that English education in the manner it has been given emasculated the English-educated Indian, it has put a severe strain upon the Indian students' nervous energy, and has made of us imitators. The process of displacing the vernacular has been one of the saddest chapters in the British connection. Rammohan Rai would have been a greater reformer, and Lokamanya Tilak would have been a greater scholar, if they had not to start with the handicap of having to think in English and transmit their thoughts chiefly in English. Their effect their own people, marvelous as it was, would have been greater if they had been brought up under a less unnatural system. No doubt they both gained from their knowledge of the rich treasures of English literature. But these should have been accessible to them through their own vernaculars. No country can become a nation by producing a race of imitators. Think of what would have happened to the English if they had not an authorized version of the Bible. I do believe that Chaitanya, Kabir, Nanak, Guru Govindsing, Shivaji, and Pratap were greater men than Rammohan Rai and Tilak. I know that comparisons are odious. All are equally great in their own way. But judged by the results, the effect of Rammohan and Tilak on the masses is not so permanent or far reaching as that of the others more fortunately born. Judged by the obstacles they had to surmount, they were giants, and both would have been greater in achieving results, if they had been handicapped by the system under which they received their training. I refuse to believe that the Raja and the Lokamanya could not have thought the thoughts they

did without a knowledge of the English language. Of all the superstitions that affect India, none is so great as that a knowledge of the English language is necessary for imbibing ideas of liberty, and developing accuracy of thought. It should be remembered that there has been only one system of education before the country for the past fifty years, and only one medium of expression forced on the country. We have, therefore, no data before us as to what we would have been but for the education in the existing schools and colleges. This, however, we do know that India today is poorer than fifty years ago, less able to defend herself, and her children have less stamina. I need not be told that this is due to the defect in the system of Government. The system of education is its most defective part. It was conceived and born in error, for the English rulers honestly believed the indigenous system to be worse than useless. It has been nurtured in sin, for the tendency has been to dwarf the Indian body, mind and soul.

Young India, 27-4-'21

Reply to Tagore

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other peoples' houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave. I refuse to put the unnecessary strain of learning English upon my sisters for the sake of false pride or questionable social advantage. I would have our young men and young women with literary tastes to

learn as much English and other world languages as they like, and then expect them to give the benefits of their learning to India and to the world, like a Bose, a Roy or the Poet himself. But I would not have a single Indian to forget, neglect or be ashamed of his mother tongue, or to feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or her own vernacular. Mine is not a religion of the prison-house. It has room for the least among God's creation. But it is proof against insolence, pride of race, religion or colour.

Young India, 1-6-1921

Translations from English Literature Enough

In asking our men and women to spend less time in the study of English than they are doing now, my object is not to deprive them of the pleasure which they are likely to derive from it, but I hold that the same pleasure can be obtained at less cost and trouble if we follow a more natural method. The world is full of many a gem of priceless beauty ; but then these gems are not all of English setting. Other languages can well boast of productions of similar excellence ; all these should be made available for our common people and that can only be done if our own learned men will undertake to translate them for us in our own languages.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, pp. 426-28 ; 20-2-1918

FORESHADOWINGS OF A NEW TYPE OF EDUCATION

At Home

Need for Experiments in Education

There is too much of make-believe, self-deception and submission to convention. The field of education which holds the seeds of the future of the children of the soil requires absolute sincerity, fearlessness in the pursuit of truth and boldest experiments, provided always that they are sound and based upon deep thought matured and sanctified by a life of consecration. Not every tyro in education may make such experiments. If the field is vast enough for sound experimenting, it is too dangerous for hasty and ill-conceived prospecting such as people in feverish search of gold delight in.

Young Indian, 30-9-1926

Education in the Home

When I landed at Durban in January 1897, I had there children with me, my sister's son ten years old, and my own sons nine and five years of age. Where was I to educate them? I was loth to send them back to India, for I believed even then that young children should not be separated from their parents. The education that children naturally imbibe in a well-ordered household is impossible to obtain in hostels. I therefore kept my children with me. I could not devote to the children all the time I had wanted to give them. My inability to give them

enough attention and other unavoidable causes prevented me from providing them with the literary education I had desired, and all my sons have had complaints to make against me in this matter. Whenever they come across an M.A. or a B.A. or even a Matriculate, they seem to feel the handicap of a want of school education.

Nevertheless I am of opinion that, If i had insisted on their being educated somehow at public schools, they would have been deprived of the training that can be had only at the school of experience, or from contact with the parents. I should never have been free, as I am today, from anxiety on their score, and the artificial education they could have had in England or South Africa, torn from me, would never have taught them the simplicity and the spirit of service they show in their lives today, while their artificial ways of living might have been a serious handicap in my public work. Therefore, though i have not been able to give them a literary education either to their or to my satisfaction, I am not quite sure, as I look back on my past years that I have not done my duty by them to the the best of my capacity. Nor do I regret not having sent to them to public schools. I have always felt that the undesirable traits I see today in my eldest son are echo of my own undisciplined and unformulated early life. I regard that time as a period of half baked knowledge and indulgence. It coincided with the most impressionable years of my eldest son, and naturally he has refused to regard it as my time of indulgence and inexperience. He has on the contrary believed that that was the brightest period of my life, and the changes, effected later have been due to delusion, miscalled

enlightenment. And well he might. Why should he not think that my earlier years represented a period of awakening, and the later years of radical change, years of delusion and egotism? Often have I been confronted with various posers from friends : What harm had there been, if I had given my boys an academics education ? What right had I thus to clip their wings? Why should I have come in the way of their taking degrees and choosing their own careers ?

I do not think that there is much point in these questions. I have come in contact with numerous students. I have tried myself or through others to impose my educational 'fads' on other children too and have seen the result thereof. There are within my knowledge a number of young men today contemporaneous with my sons. I do not think that man to man they are any better than my sons, or that my sons have much to learn from them.

But the ultimate result of my experiments is in the womb of the future. My object in discussing this subject here is that a student of the history of civilization may have some measure of the difference between disciplined home education and school education, and also of the effect produced on children through changes introduced by parents in their lives. The purpose put of this chapter is also to show the lengths to which a votary of truth is driven by his experiments with truth, as also to show the votary of liberty how many are the sacrifices demanded by that stern goddess. Had I been without a sense of self-respect and satisfied myself with having for my children the education that other children could not get, I should have deprived them of the object-

lesson in liberty and self-respect that I gave them at the cost of the literary training. And where a choice has to be made between liberty and learning, who will not say that the former has to be preferred a thousand times to the latter ?

Autobiography (1926), pp. 245-48

On The Tolstoy Farm

Education in the Tolstoy Farm

As the Farm grew, it was found necessary to make some provision for the education of its boys and girls. I did not believe in the existing system of education, and I had a mind to find out by experience and experiment the true system. Only this much I knew, —that, under ideal conditions true education could be imparted only by the parents, and that then there should be the minimum of outside help, that Tolstoy Farm was a family, in which I occupied the place of the father, and that I should so far as possible shoulder the responsibility for the training of the young.

The conception no doubt was not without its flaws. All the young people had not been with me since their childhood, they had been brought up in different conditions and environments, and they did not belong to the same religion. How could I do full justice to the young people, thus circumstanced, even if I assumed the place of paterfamilias ? But I had always given the first place to the culture of the heart or the building of character, and as I felt confident that moral training could be given to all alike, no matter how different their ages and their upbringing, I decided to live amongst them all the twenty-four hours of

the day as their father. I regarded character-building as the proper foundation for their education and, if the foundation was firmly laid, I was sure that the children could learn all the other things themselves or with the assistance of friends. But as I fully appreciated the necessity of a literary training in addition, I started some classes with the help of Mr Kallenbach and Shri Pragji Desai. Nor did I underrate the building up of the body. This they got in the course of their daily routine. For there were no servants on the Farm, and all the work, from cooking down to scavenging, was done by the inmates. There were many fruit-trees to be looked after, and enough gardening to be done as well. Mr Kallenbach was fond of gardening and had gained some experience of this work in one of the Governmental model gardens. It was obligatory on all, young and old, who were not engaged in the kitchen, to give some time to gardening. The children had the lion's share of this work, which included digging pits, felling timber and lifting loads. This gave them ample exercise. They took delight in the work, and so they did not generally need any other exercise or games. Of course some of them, and sometimes all of them, malingered and shirked. Sometimes I connived at their pranks, but often I was strict with them. I dare say that they did not like the strictness, but I do not recollect their having resisted it. Whenever I was strict, I would, by argument, convince them that it was not right to play with one's work. The conviction would, however, be short-lived, the next moment they would again leave their work and go to play. All the same we got along, and at any rate they built up fine physiques. There was scarcely any illness on the Farm,

though it must be said that good air and water and regular hours of food were not a little responsible for this.

A word about vocational training. It was my intention to teach every one of the youngsters some useful manual vocation. For this purpose Mr Kellenbach went to a Trappist monastery and returned having learnt shoe-making. I learnt it from him and taught the art to such as were ready to take it up. Mr Kellenbach had some experience of carpentry, and there was another inmate who knew it ; so we had a small class in carpentry. Cooking almost all the youngsters knew. All this was new to them. They had never even dreamt that they would have to learn these things some day. For generally the only training that Indian children received in South Africa was in the three Ra's. On Tolstoy Farm we made it a rule that the youngsters should not be asked to do what the teachers did not do, and, therefore, when they were asked to do any work, there was always a teacher co-operating and actually working with them. Hence whatever the youngsters learnt, they learnt cheerfully.

Literary training, however, was a more difficult matter. I had neither the resources nor the literary equipment necessary; and I had not the time I would have wished to devote to the subject. The physical work that I was doing used to leave me thoroughly exhausted at the end of the day, and I used to have the classes just when I was most in need of some rest. Instead, therefore, of my being fresh for the class, I could with the greatest difficulty keep myself awake. The mornings had to be devoted to work on the Farm and domestic duties, so the school hours

had to be kept after the midday meal. There was no other time suitable for the school.

We gave three periods at the most to literary training. Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati and Urdu were all taught, and tuition was given through the vernaculars of the boys. English was taught as well. It was also necessary to acquaint the Gujarati Hindu children with a little Sanskrit, and to teach all the children elementary history, geography and arithmetic.

I had undertaken to teach Tamil and Urdu. The little Tamil I knew was acquired during voyages and in jail. I had not got beyond Pope's excellent Tamil handbook. My knowledge of the Urdu script was all that I had acquired on a single voyage, and my knowledge of the language was confined to the familiar Persian and Arabic words that I had learnt from contact with Mussalman friends. Of Sanskrit I knew no more than I had learnt at the high school ; even my Gujarati was no better than that which one acquires at the school. Such was the capital with which I had to carry on. In poverty of literary equipment my colleagues went one better than I. But my love for the languages of my country, my confidence in my capacity as a teacher, as also the ignorance of my pupils, and more than that, their generosity, stood me in good stead.

The Tamil boys were all born in South Africa, and therefore, knew very little Tamil, and did not know the script at all. So I had to teach them the script and the rudiments of grammar. That was easy enough. My pupils knew that they could any say beat me in Tamil conversation, and when Tamilians, not knowing English came to see me, they became my

interpreters. I got along merrily, because I never attempted to disguise my ignorance from my pupils. In all respects I showed myself to them exactly as I really was. Therefore, in spite of my colossal ignorance of the language I never lost their love and respect. It was comparatively easier to teach the Mussalman boys Urdu. They knew the script. I had simply to stimulate in them an interest in reading and to improve their handwriting.

lost their love and respect. It was comparatively easier to teach the Mussalman boys Urdu. They knew the script. I had simply to stimulate in them an interest in reading and to improve their handwriting. These youngsters were for the most part unlettered and unschooled. But I found in the course of my work that I had very little to teach them, beyond weaning them from their laziness, and supervising their studies. As I was content with this, I could pull on with boys of different ages and learning different subjects in one and the same class room. Of text-books, about which we hear so much, I never felt the want. I do not even remember having made much use of the books that were available. I did not find it at all necessary to load the boys with quantities of books. I have always felt that the true text-book for the pupil is his teacher. I remember very little that my teachers taught me from books, but I have even now a clear recollection of the things they taught me independently of books. Children take in much more and with less labour through their ears than through their eyes. I do not remember having read any book from cover to cover with my boys. But I gave them, in my own language, all that I had digested from my

reading of various books, and I dare say they are still carrying a recollection of it in their minds. It was laborious for them to remember what they learnt from books, but what I imparted to them by word of mouth they could repeat with the greatest ease. Reading was a task for them, but listening to me was a pleasure, when I did not bore them by failure to make my subject interesting. And from the questions that my talks prompted them to put I had a measure of their power of understanding. The spiritual training of the boys was a much more difficult matter than their physical and mental training. I relied little on religious books for the training of the spirit. Of course I believed that every student should be acquainted with the elements of his own religion and have a general knowledge of his own scriptures, and therefore, I provided for such knowledge as best as I could. But that, to my mind, was part of the intellectual training. Long before I undertook the education of the youngsters of the Tolstoy Farm I had realized that the training of the spirit was a thing by itself. To develop the spirit is to build character and to enable one to work towards a knowledge of God and self-realization. And I held that this was as essential part of the training of the young, and that all training without culture of the spirit was of no use, and might be even harmful. I am familiar with the superstition that self-realization is possible only in the fourth stage of life, i.e. sannyasa (renunciation). But it is a matter of common knowledge that those who defer preparation for this invaluable experience until the last stage of life attain not self-realization but old age amounting to a second and pitiable childhood, living as a burden on this earth I have a full recollection that I held these views even whilst I

was teaching, i.e. in 1911-12, though I might not then have expressed in identical language. How then was this spiritual training to be given? I made the children memorize and recite hymns, and read to them from books on moral training. But that was far from satisfying me. As I came into closer contact with them I saw that it was not through books that one could impart training of the spirit, Just as physical training was to be imparted through physical exercise, and intellectual through intellectual exercise, even so the training of the spirit was possible only through the exercise of the spirit. And the exercise of the spirit entirely depended on the life and character of the teacher. The teacher had always to be mindful of his p's and q's whether he was in the midst of his boys or not.

It is possible for a teacher situated miles away to affect the spirit of the pupils by his way of living. It would be idle for me, if I were a liar, to teach boys to tell the truth. A cowardly teacher would never succeed in making his boys valiant, and a stranger to self-restraint could never teach his pupils the value of self-restraint. I saw, therefore, that I must be an eternal object-lesson to the boys and girls living with me. They thus became my teachers, and I learnt I must be good and live straight, if only for their sakes. I may say that the increasing discipline and restraint I imposed on myself at Tolstoy Farm was mostly due to those wards of mine. One of them was wild, unruly, given to lying, and quarrelsome. On one occasion he broke out most violently. I was exasperated. I never punished my boys, but this time I was very angry. I tried to reason with him. But he was adamant and even tried to over-

reach me. At last I picked up a ruler lying at hand and delivered a blow on his arm. I trembled as I struck him. I dare say he noticed it. This was an entirely novel experience for them all. The boy cried out and begged to be forgiven. He cried not because the beating was painful to him; he could, if he had been so minded, have paid me back in the same coin, being a stoutly built youth of seventeen; but he realized my pain in being driven to this violent resource. Never again after this incident did he disobey me. But I still repent that violence. I am afraid I exhibited before him that day not the spirit, but the brute, in me. I have always been opposed to corporal punishment. I remember only one occasion on which I physically punished one of my sons. I have therefore never until this day been able to decide whether I was right or wrong in using the ruler. Probably it was improper, for it was prompted by anger and a desire to punish. Had it been an expression only of my distress, I should have considered it justified. But the motive in this case was mixed.

This incident set me thinking and taught me a better method of correcting students. I do not know whether that method would have availed on the occasion in question. The youngster soon forgot the incident, and I do not think he ever showed great improvement. But the incident made me understand better the duty of a teacher towards his pupils.

Cases of misconduct on the part of the boys often occurred after this, but I never resorted to corporal punishment. Thus in my endeavor to impart spiritual training to the boys and girls under me, I came to

understand better and better the power of the spirit. Day by day it became increasingly clear to me how very difficult it was to bring up and educate boys and girls in the right way. If I was to be their real teacher and guardian, I must touch their hearts, I must share their joys and sorrows, I must help them to solve the problems that faced them, and I must take along the right channel the surging aspirations of their youth.

I hold that some occasions of delinquency on the part of pupils call for even the drastic remedy of fasting by the teacher. But it presupposes clearness of vision and spiritual fitness. Where there is no true love between the teacher and the pupil, where the pupil's delinquency has not touched the very being of the teacher and where the pupil has no respect for the teacher, fasting is out of place and may even be harmful. Though there is thus room for doubting the propriety of fasts in such cases, there is no question about the teacher's responsibility for the errors of his pupil.

Autobiography (1926), pp. 407-15, 418 and 419

In National Schools

National Schools

National schools, to be worth the name in terms of Swaraj, for the attainment of which they were brought into existence, must be conducted with a view to advancing the national programme in so far as it was applicable to educational institutions. Thus, for instance, national schools must be the most potent means of propagating the message of the charkha, of bringing Hindus, Mussalmans and others

closer together and of educating the 'untouchables' and abolishing the curse of untouchability from the schools. Judged by this standard the experiment must be pronounced, if not a failure, certainly a very dismal success. Out of 30,000 boys and girls hardly one thousand are spinning on 100 charkhas at the rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour per day. Hundreds of charkhas are lying idle and neglected. Whilst in theory the schools are open to the 'untouchables', very few as a matter of fact have 'untouchable' children in them. The Mussalman attendance at the schools is poor. I had therefore no hesitation in advising

that now we were to strive not after quantity but quality. The test for admission must be progressively stiffer. Parents who did not like their children to learn spinning or to mix with 'untouchable' children might if they chose withdraw them. I had no hesitation in advising that teachers should run the risk of closing down their schools if the condition of running them required the exclusion of 'untouchables' and the charkha. It was not enough to tolerate 'untouchable' children if they stole in, but it was necessary to draw them into our school by loving care and attention. The teachers were not to wait for Mussalman and Parsi parents to send their children but it was necessary to invite such parents to send their children. A national teacher must become a Swaraj missionary within his own sphere. He should know the history of every child under his care and know the children not in his school. He should know their parents and understand why they did not send their children to his school. He would do all this work not in an intolerant spirit but lovingly. Thus and thus only would national schools be truly

national in terms of the Congress resolution. The difficulty of the task is unmistakable. This Government has made everything mercenary. Character is no test for anything. Mechanical ability to go through a superficial syllabus is the sole test. Every profession has been degraded to mean a career. We become lawyers, doctors and school-masters not to serve our countrymen but to bring us money. The Vidyapith* therefore had to recruit for teachers in such a soul-killing atmosphere. The majority of the teachers have had to rise superior to themselves and their surroundings. The wonder is that they have at all responded to the call of the country.

But now after nearly four years' experience, we must turn over a new leaf. We cannot afford to remain at a standstill and not sink. We must therefore insist upon the boys and girls plying the charkha for at least half an hour daily. It is an education of no mean sort for thirty thousand boys and girls and eight hundred teachers to be spinning i.e., labouring for the country for half an hour every day. It is a daily practical lesson in patriotism, useful toil and giving. That a boy should begin giving even during his education without expectation of return is an object-lesson in sacrifice he will not forget in after-life. And to the nation it means a gift of 1875 maunds of yarn per month. It will supply at least one dhoti each to 5,000 men. Apart from every other consideration let every teacher work out the value of the lesson learnt by each child in thinking that he or she with five others may be spinning in one month yarn enough for supplying one dhoti to each of

his countrymen rendered naked during the recent floods in Madras.
Young India, 7-8-"24

I can only think of national education in terms of Swaraj. Hence I would have even the collegiate to devote their attention to perfecting themselves in the art of spinning and all it means, I would have them study the economics and implications of Khaddar. They should know how long it takes to establish a mill and the capital required. They should know too the limitations on the possibility of an indefinite expansion of mills. They should know too the method of distribution of wealth through mills and that through hand-spinning and hand-weaving. They should know how hand-spinning and the manufacture of Indian fabrics were destroyed. They should understand and be able to demonstrate the effect of the adoption of hand-spinning in the cottages of the millions of India's peasants. They should know how a full revival of this cottage industry will weave into an undivided whole the sundered Hindu and Mussalman hearts.

Young India, 11-12-24

Spinning and the Sciences

I do not mean to say that our educational institutions must become mere spinning and weaving institutes. I do regard spinning and weaving as the necessary part of any national system of education. I do not aim at taking the whole of the children's time for this purpose. Like a skilled physician I tend and concentrate my attention on the diseased

limb knowing that that is the best way of looking after the others. I would develop in the child his hands, his brain and his soul. The hands have almost atrophied. The soul has been altogether ignored. I therefore put in a plea in season and out of season for correcting these grave defects in our education. Is half an hour's spinning every day by our children too great a strain upon them ? Will it result in mental paralysis ?

I value education in the different sciences. Our children cannot have too much of chemistry and physics. And if these have not been attended to in the institution in which I am directly supposed to be interested it is because we have not the professors for the purpose and also because practical training in these sciences requires very expensive laboratories for which in the present state of uncertainty and infancy we are not ready.

Young India, 12-3-"25

Spinning in Schools

If spinning is to be revived as an indispensable industry, it must be treated seriously and must be taught in a proper and scientific manner like the other subjects

taught in well-managed schools. The wheels will then be in perfectly good order and condition, will conform to all the tests laid down in these columns from time to time, the pupils' work would be regularly tested from day to day just as all their exercises would be or should be. Whilst charkha spinning may be taught so as to enable boys and girls, if

they wish, to use the spinning wheel in their own homes, for class-spinning the takli is the most economical and the most profitable instrument.

Young India, 15-10-'25

National vs. Government Education

One of our students has gone to jail in Bardoli and many more will go. They are the pride of the Vidyapith. Much as they may desire to do likewise, can students of Government institutions dare to do so ? It is not open to them to go to Bardoli and help Vallabhbhai, as it is to you. They can only give secret sympathy. What is literary training worth if it cramp and confine us at a critical moment in national life ? Knowledge and literary training are no recompense for emasculation.

Again there is a world of difference between our method of teaching and theirs. For instance, we may not teach English in the way they do. We may give a working knowledge of that language, but we may not without committing national suicide neglect the mother tongue, and make English the vehicle of our thought. In this national institution we strive to correct the pernicious practice We must learn all our subjects through the Gujarati language. We must enrich it and make it capable of expression all shades of thought and feeling.

Then take the teaching of economics. The present system obtaining in Government institutions is vicious. Each country has its own economics. German text-books are different from the English. Free trade may be

England's salvation. It spells our ruin. We have yet to formulate a system of Indian economics.

The same about history. A Frenchman writing a history of India will write it in his own way. The Englishman will write it quite differently. The descriptions of battles between the English and the French will differ with the writers who have described them. Indian history written from original sources by an Indian patriot will be different from that written by an English bureaucrat though each may be quite honest. We have grievously erred in accepting English estimates of events in our national life. Here, therefore, there is a vast field for you and your teachers for original research.

Even our teaching of a subject like arithmetic will also be different. Our teacher of arithmetic frames his examples from Indian conditions. He will thus simultaneously with the teaching of arithmetic teach Indian geography.

Then we are putting a special emphasis on manual and industrial training. Do not make the mistake of imagining that this training will dull your wit. It is not by making our brains a storehouse for cramming facts that our understanding is opened. An intelligent approach to an industrial training is often a more valuable aid to the intellect than an indifferent reading of literature.

NEW EDUCATION

New Education to be rooted in the Culture and Life of the People

National Education

The curriculum and pedagogic ideas which form the fabric of modern education were imported from Oxford and Cambridge, Edinburgh and London. But they are essentially foreign, and till they are repudiated, there never can be national education. For the moment, we are not going to discuss the problem whether it is possible for India to do without European education ; (and in this connection let us say that we regard the English as a mere special phenomenon of the European system). If India decides in the light of the need there is of fighting Europe with her own weapons, Industrialism, Capitalism, Militarism, and all the rest, in favor of making counterfeit Europeans of her children, soldiers, inventors of explosives, prostitutes of Science, forgetters of God, she must go forward on her path stern and open-eyed, whatever the disaster. But in that case, she should make up her mind to do without national education, for, national education will not secure those ends, will not make her sons and daughters fit for the fulfillment of those functions. The fact to be realized is that India by the very fact of her long established and elaborated civilization had once the advantage of an educational system of her own, the only thing entitled to be called 'national'. But it was fundamentally distinct from the Anglo-Indian type and from the pseudo-national type that is its

descendant. The question then is this: The choice must be clearly and finally made between national and foreign education, the choice of type and archetype, of meaning and purpose, of end and means. It has so far not been made. We are almost certain that the necessity for choosing is hardly realized. As long as confusion on this matter exists, 'national' education cannot flourish. And that for a simple reason. The Government is already imparting one type of education in respect of which it is impossible for any purely non-official body to compete. Official organization is bigger, it has more money, it has more prizes to offer. We believe that this root paradox will last as long as there is no hard and clear thinking about fundamentals. If, as a result of careful decisions, we promise to the people that the education we offer will be truly Indian and not a mere inferior prototype of the education offered in the schools and colleges of Government, people are bound to listen to us. We believe that the folk who suffer from the effects of the existing arrangements, who deplore social disruption, who are stricken by the waste of youth, will be thankful to find an avenue of escape. Institutions that stand for the inevitable revolution for the restoration of national and social continuum will have in their hands the secret of the future.

For that which should be remembered is this. The greatest visible evil of the present educational method, in itself evidence of deeper defects, is, that it has broken up the continuity of our existence. All sound education is meant to fit one generation to take up the burden of the previous and to keep up the life of the community without breach or

disaster. The burden of social life is continuous, and if at any stage one generation gets completely out of touch with the efforts of its predecessors or in anywise gets ashamed of itself or its culture, it is lost. The force that maintains society together is a series of high loyalties, loyalty to faith, calling, parents, family, dharma. The ancient educational system in India certainly maintained the long tradition of pride and service, the place of every order within the body social and body politic. It is equally certain that modern, foreign, non-national education makes young people unfit for any useful function in life. The vast majority of people that sent their children to the English schools were agriculturists, men and women with a deep and abiding faith in God. There is no doubt that the young people when they came back knew not a thing about agriculture, were indeed deeply contemptuous of the calling of their fathers and professed to have outgrown all faith in God or in His fulfilling providence. The fact that the tragedy of this destructive breach was limited by the need of Government for only a specified number of clerks and deputies, should not really mask the reality of the transaction. 'Reforms' have succeeded 'Reforms' in the educational system, Commissions have considered the case of the Universities, primary instruction has been sought to be made compulsory ; but there has never been the remotest perception of the fact that the whole thing is an evil because it was destroying the very foundations of all national life and growth. The system must be scrapped ; enquiry must be made promptly as to what constituted the elements of education before Indian Universities were constituted, before Lord Macaulay wrote his fatal minutes. Promptness is essential,

because the race of old teachers is nearly extinct and the secret of their methods may die with them. The resuscitation of those curricula may mean the disappearance of political history and geography; but the prospect does not disturb us in the slightest. We have been trying to get at the elements of the old curricula at least in one part of the country and we dare aver in all conscience that they strike us as infinitely more efficient and satisfactory than the latest thing come out of Europe. But we confess it is a layman's opinion. That is why we should like to have the matter investigated by experts. If it is done and its consequences faced, we are confident that the people of the land will have reason to be highly thankful.

Young India, 20-3-"24

Almost from the commencement, the text-books (today) deal, not with things the boys and the girls have always to deal with in their homes, but things to which they are perfect strangers. It is not through the text-books that a lad learns what is right and what is wrong in the home life. He is never taught to have any pride in his surroundings. The higher he goes, the farther he is removed from his home, so that at the end of his education he becomes estranged from his surroundings. He feels no poetry about the home life. The village scenes are all a sealed book to him. His own civilization is presented to him as imbecile, barbarous, superstitious and useless for all practical purposes. His education is calculated to wean him from his traditional culture. And if the mass of educated youths are not entirely denationalized, it is

because the ancient culture is too deeply imbedded in them to be altogether uprooted even by an education adverse to its growth. If I had my way, I would certainly destroy the majority of the present text-books and cause to be written text-books which have a bearing on and correspondence with the home life, so that a boy as he learns may react upon his immediate surroundings.

Young India, 1-9-"21

No Relation to Environment

Unfortunately the system of education has no connection with our surroundings which therefore remain practically untouched by the education received by a microscopic minority of boys and girls of the nation.

Harijan, 23-5-1936

With the best motives in the world, the English tutors could not wholly understand the difference between English and Indian requirements. Our climate does not require the buildings which they need. Nor do our children brought up in predominantly rural environment need the type of education the English children brought up in surroundings predominantly urban need.

When our children are admitted to schools, they need, not slate and pencil and books, but simple village tools which they can handle freely and remuneratively. This means a revolution in educational methods.

But nothing short of a revolution can put education within reach of every child of school-going age.

It is admitted that so-called knowledge of the three R's that is at present given in Government schools is of little use to the boys and girls in afterlife. Most of it is forgotten inside of one year, if only for want of use. It is not required in their village surroundings.

But if a vocational training in keeping with their surroundings was given to the children, they would not only repay the expenses incurred in the schools but would turn that training to use in afterlife. I can imagine a school entirely self-supporting, if it became, say, a spinning and weaving institution with perhaps a cotton field attached to it.

The scheme I am adumbrating does not exclude literary training. No course of primary instruction would be considered complete that did not include reading, writing and arithmetic. Only, reading and writing would come during the last year when really the boy or girl is readiest for learning the alphabet correctly. Handwriting is an art. Every letter must be correctly drawn, as an artist would draw his figures. This can only be done if the boys and girls are first taught elementary drawing. Thus side by side with vocational training which occupies most of the day at school, they would be receiving vocal instruction in elementary history, geography and arithmetic. They would learn manners, have object-lessons in practical sanitation and hygiene, all of which they would take their homes in which they would become silent revolutionists.

Young India, 11-7-1929

To Develop Character

Education of the Heart

One word only as to the education of the heart. I do not believe that this can be imparted through books. It can only be done through the living touch of the teacher. And, who are the teachers in the primary and even secondary schools ? Are they men and women of faith and character ? Have they themselves received the training of the heart ? Are they expected to take care of the permanent element in the boys and girls placed under their charge ? Is not method of engaging teachers for lower schools an effective bar against character ? Do the teachers get even a living wage ? And we know that the teachers of primary schools are not selected for their patriotism. They only come who can not find any other employment.

Young India, 1-9-"21

Freedom but under Discipline

The pupils must have initiative. They must cease to be mere imitators. They must learn to think and act for themselves and yet be thoroughly obedient and disciplined. The highest form of freedom carries with it the greatest measure of discipline and humility. Freedom that comes from discipline and humility can not be denied, unbridled license is a sign of vulgarity injurious alike to self and one's neighbours.

Young India, 3-6"26

Purity of Heart Indispensable

Purity of personal life is the one indispensable condition for building a sound education. And my meetings with thousands of students and the correspondence which I continuously have with students, in which they pour out their innermost feelings and take me into their confidence, show me quite clearly that there is much left to be desired. I am sure that all of you understand thoroughly what I mean. In our languages there is a beautiful word, equivalent for the word student, that is, brahmachari. Vidyarthi is a coined word and a poor equivalent for brahmachari. And I hope you know what the word brahmachari means. It means searcher after God, one who conducts himself so as to bring himself nearest to God in the least possible time. And all the great religions of the world, however much they may differ, are absolutely one on this fundamental thing that no man or woman with an impure heart can possibly appear before the Great White Throne. All our learning or recitation of the Vedas,

correct knowledge of Sanskrit, Latin, Greek and what not will avail us nothing if they do not enable us to cultivate absolute purity of heart. The end of all knowledge must be building up of character.

Young India, 8-9-1927

Service a Part of Education

Whilst Sir M. Vishweshwarayya has emphasized one grave defect of our present education which places exclusive emphasis on literary merit, I would add a graver defect in that students are made to think that

whilst they are pursuing their literary studies, they may not do acts of service at the sacrifice of their studies, be it ever so small or temporary. They will lose nothing and gain much if they would suspend their education, literary or industrial, in order to do relief work, such as is being done by some of them in Gujarat. The end of all education should surely be service, and if a student gets an opportunity of rendering service even whilst he is studying, he should consider it as a rare opportunity and treat it not really as a suspension of his education but rather its complement.

Young India, 13-10-'27

Unity of All Life

Real education consists in drawing the best out of yourself. What better book can there be than the book of humanity ? What better education can there be than to go, day in and day out, to Harijan quarters and to regard Harijans as members of one human family ? It would be an uplifting, ennobling study. Mine is no narrow creed. It is one of realizing the essential brotherhood of man.

Harijan, 30-3-'34

To Madame Montessori

Even as you, out of your love for children, are endeavoring to teach children, through your numerous institution, the best that can be brought out of them, even so, I hope that it will be possible not only for

the children of the wealthy and the well-to-do, but for the children of paupers to receive training of this nature. You have very truly remarked that if we are to reach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with children and if they will grow up in their natural innocence, we won't have the struggle, we won't have to pass fruitless idle resolutions, but we shall go from love to love and peace to peace, until at last all the corners of the world are covered with that peace and love for which, consciously or unconsciously, the whole world is hungering.

Young India, 19-11-'31

Not Mere Text-Book Learning **Pupils to Learn Discrimination**

Pupils should know to discriminate between what should be received and what rejected. It is the duty of the teacher to teach his pupils discrimination. If we go on taking in indiscriminately we would be no better than machines. We are thinking, knowing beings and we must in this period distinguish truth from untruth, sweet from bitter language, clean from unclean things and so on. But the student's path today is strewn with more difficulties than the one of distinguishing good from bad things. The *rishis* taught their pupils without books. They only gave them a few mantras which the pupils treasured in their memories and translated in practical life. The present day student has to live in the midst of heaps of books, sufficient to choke him.

Young India, 29-1-'25

Text-books

For India a multiplicity of text-books means deprivation of the vast majority of village children of the means of instruction. Text-books, therefore, in India must mean, principally and for the lower standards, text-books for teachers, not pupils. Indeed, I am not sure that it is not better for the children to have much of the preliminary instruction imparted to them vocally. To impose on children of tender age a knowledge of the alphabet and the ability to read before they can gain general knowledge is to deprive them, whilst they are fresh, of the power of assimilating instruction by word of mouth. Should, for instance, a lad of seven wait for learning the Ramayan till he can read it ? The results that we arrive at when we think of the few lakhs living in the cities of India are wholly different from those we obtain, we think, in terms of the millions of rural India.

Young India, 16-9-1926

Teachers and Text-books

There seems to me to be no doubt that in the public schools the books used, especially for children, are for the most part useless when they are not harmful. That many of them are cleverly written cannot be denied. They might even be the best for the people and the environment for which they are written. But they are not written for Indian boys and girls, not for the Indian environment. When they are so written, they are generally undigested imitations hardly answering the wants of the scholar. In this country, wants vary according to the

provinces and the classes of children. For instance, wants of Harijan children are, in the beginning stages at least, different from those of the others.

I have, therefore, come to the conclusion that books are required more for the teachers than for the taught. And every teachers, if he is to do full justice to his pupils, will have to prepare the daily lesson from the material available to him. This, too, he will have to suit to the special requirements of his class. Real education has to draw out the best from the boys and girls to be educated. This can never be done by packing ill-assorted and unwanted information into the heads of the pupils. It becomes a dead weight crushing all originality in them and turning them into mere automata. If we were not ourselves victims of the system, we would long ago have realized the mischief wrought by the modern method of giving mass education, especially in a case like India's.

Attempts have undoubtedly been made by many institutions to produce their own text-books with more or less success. But in my opinion they do not answer the vital needs of the country. I lay no claim to originality for the views I have endeavoured to set forth here. They are repeated here for the benefit of the managers and teachers of Harijan schools, who have tremendous task before them. They dare not be satisfied with mere mechanical work resulting in simply making the children under their charge indifferently and in a parrot-like manner learn the books chosen anyhow. They have undertaken a great trust which they must discharge courageously, intelligently and honestly.

The task is difficult enough but not so difficult as one would imagine, provided the teacher or the manager puts his whole heart into the work. If he becomes a parent to his pupils, he will instinctively know what they need and set about giving it to them. If he has it not to give, he will proceed to qualify himself. And seeing that we have stated with the idea that the boys and girls have to have instruction in accordance with their wants, no extraordinary cleverness or possession of external knowledge is required in a teacher of Harijan and for that matter, any other children.

And when it is remembered that the primary aim of all education is, or should be, the moulding of the character of pupils, a teacher who has a character to keep need not lose heart.

Young India, 1-12-1933

To Teach Self-reliance and Respect for Manual Labour **Self-reliance**

As a lover of the Gurukula, I may be permitted to offer one or two suggestions to the Committee and the parents. The Gurukula boys need a thorough industrial training if they are to become self-reliant and self-supporting. It seems to me that in our country in which 85 per cent of population is agricultural and perhaps 10 per cent occupied in supplying the wants of the peasantry, it must be part of the training of every youth that he has a fair practical knowledge of agriculture and hand-weaving. He will lose nothing if he knows a proper use of tools, can saw a piece of board straight and build

a wall that will not come down through a faulty handling of the plumber's line. A boy who is thus equipped, will never feel helpless in battling with the world and never be in want of employment. A knowledge of the laws of hygiene and sanitation, as well as the art of rearing children, should also form a necessary part of the Gurukula lads. The sanitary arrangements at the fair left much to be desired. The plague of flies told its own tale. These irrepressible sanitary inspectors incessantly warned us that in point of sanitation all was not well with us. They plainly suggested that the remains of our food and excreta need to be properly buried. It seemed to me to be such a pity that a golden opportunity was being missed of giving to the annual visitors practical lessons on sanitation. But the work must begin with the boys. Thus the management would have at the annual gathering three hundred practical sanitary teachers. Last but not least, let the parents and the Committee not spoil their lads by making them ape European dress or modern luxuries These will hinder them in their afterlife and are antagonistic to brahmacharya. They have enough to fight against in the evil inclinations common to us all. Let us not make their fight more difficult by adding to their temptations.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, pp. 334, 335

Manual Labour

You may ask : 'Why should we use our hands?' and say ' the manual work has got to be done by those who are illiterate. I can only occupy myself with reading literature and political essays.' I think we have to

realize the dignity of labour. If a barber or shoemaker attends a college, he ought not to abandon the profession of a barber or shoemaker. I consider that a barber's profession is just as good as the profession of medicine.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, pp. 388, 389 ; 16-2-'16

Whatever may be true of other countries, in India at any rate where more than eight per cent of the population is agricultural and another ten per cent industrial, it is a crime to make education merely literary, and to unfit boys and girls for manual work in afterlife. Indeed I hold that as the larger part of our time is devoted to labour for earning our bread, our children must from their infancy be taught the dignity of such labour. Our children should not be so taught as to despise labour. There is no reason why a peasant's son after having gone to a school should become useless, as he does become, as agricultural labourer. It is a sad thing that our school-boys look upon manual labour with disfavour, if not contempt.

Young India, 1-9-1921

The Duty of Spinning

In any curriculum of the future, spinning must be a compulsory subject. Just as we cannot live without breathing and without eating, so is it impossible for us to attain economic independence and banish pauperism from this ancient land without reviving and without reviving home-spinning. I hold the spinning wheel to be as much a necessity in

every household as the hearth. No other scheme that can be devised will ever solve the problem of the deepening poverty of the people. How then can spinning be introduced in every home? I have already suggested the introduction of spinning and systematic production of yarn in every national school. Once our boys and girls have learnt the art they can easily carry it to their homes.

Young India, 19-1-1921

To be Self-financing

If every school introduced spinning, it would revolutionize our ideas of financing education. We can work a school for six hours per day and give free education to the pupils. Supposing a boy works at the wheel for four hours daily, he will produce every day 10 tolas of yarn and thus earn for his school one anna per day. Suppose further that he manufactures very little during the first month, and that the school works only twenty-six days in the month. A class of thirty boys would yield, after the first month, an income of Rs. 48-12-0 per month.

I have said nothing about literary training. It can be given during the two hours out of the six. It is easy to see that every school can be made self-supporting without much effort and the nation can engage experienced teachers for its schools.

The chief difficulty in working out the scheme is the spinning wheel. We require thousand of wheels if the art becomes popular. Fortunately, every village carpenter can easily construct the machines. It is a serious mistake to order them from the Ashram or any other place. The

beauty of spinning is that it is incredibly simple, easily learnt, and can be cheaply introduced in every village.

The course suggested by me is intended only for this year of purification and probation. When normal times are reached and Swaraj is established, one hour only may be given to spinning and the rest to literary training.

Young India, 2-2-" 21

Our education should not be financed out of the excise revenue, neither out of land revenue. Under Swaraj its main prop should be the spinning wheel. If the spinning wheel and the loom are introduced in every school and college, our education would easily pay its way. Today, I would like our boys to give all their time to spinning. After Swaraj is attained, at least one hour will have to be given. Swaraj must react in each and every department of our life. Our schools today are so many factories to turn out slaves from. Education under Swaraj will aim at making boys self-supporting from their youth. Any other profession may be taught them, but spinning will be compulsory. The spinning wheel ought to be the solace of the miserable. Nothing else has its virtues, for it alone can supplement agriculture. All cannot be carpenters, nor smiths, but all must be spinners, and must spin either for their country or to supplement their own earnings. Because the need of clothing is universal the spinning wheel must needs be universal.

Let us have spinning introduced from now as a necessary adjunct to literary education, so that under Swaraj we may not have to fight over this question a new.

Young India, 30-3-1921

I venture to suggest to you, that it is a matter of deep humiliation for the country to find its children educated from the drink revenue. We shall deserve the curse of posterity if we do not wisely decide to stop the drink evil, even though we may have to sacrifice the education of our children. But we need not. I know, many of you have laughed at the idea of making education self-supporting by introducing spinning in our schools and colleges. I assure you that it solves the problem of education as nothing else can. The country cannot bear fresh taxation. Even the existing taxation is unbearable. Not only must we do away with the opium and the drink revenue, but the other revenues have also to be very considerably reduced if the ever-growing poverty of the masses is to be combated in the near future.

Young India, 8-6-1921

Who does not know what questionable things fathers of families in need of money for their children's education have considered it their duty to do ? I am convinced that we are in for far worse times, unless we change the whole system of our education. We have only touched the fringe of an ocean of children. The vast mass of them remain without education, not for want of will but of ability and knowledge on the part

of the parents. There is something radically wrong, especially for a nation so poor as ours, when parents have to support so many grown up children, and given them a highly expensive education without the children making any immediate return. I can see nothing wrong in the children, from the very threshold of their education, paying for it in work. The simplest handicraft suitable for all, required for the whole of India, is undoubtedly spinning along with the previous processes. If we introduced this in our educational institutions, we should fulfil three purposes, make education self-supporting, train the bodies of the children as well as their minds, and pave the way for a complete boycott of foreign yarn and cloth. Moreover, the children thus equipped will become self-reliant and independent.

Young India, 15-6-1921

If we expect, as we must, every boy and girl of school going age to attend public schools, we have not the means to finance education in accordance with the existing style nor are millions of parents able to pay the fees that are at present imposed. Education to be universal must therefore be free. I fancy that even under an ideal system of Government, we shall not be able to devote two thousand million rupees which we should require for finding education for all the children of school going age. It follows, therefore, that our children must be made to pay in labour partly or wholly for all the education they receive. Such universal labour to be profitable can only be (to my thinking) hand-spinning and hand-weaving. But for the purpose of my

proposition, it is immaterial whether we have spinning or any other form of labour, so long as it can be turned to account. Only, it will be found upon examination that on a practical, profitable and extensive scale, there is no occupation other than the processes connected with cloth production which can be introduced in our schools throughout India.

The introduction of manual training will serve a double purpose in a poor country like ours. It will pay for the education of our children and teach them an occupation on which they can fall back in afterlife, if they choose for earning a living. Such a system must make our children self-reliant. Nothing will demoralize the nation so much as that we should learn to despise labour.

Young India, 1-9-1921

To Promote All-Round Development of the Pupil **Integrated Education**

I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs, e.g. hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, etc. In other words an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lop-sided affair. By spiritual training I mean education of the heart. A proper and all-round development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds *pari passu* with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They

constitute an indivisible whole. According to this theory, therefore, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that they can be developed piecemeal or independently of one another.

The baneful effects of absence of proper co-ordination and harmony among the various faculties of body, mind and soul respectively are obvious. They are all around us; only we have lost perception of them owing to our present perverse associations. Take the case of our village folk. From their childhood upward they toil and labour in their fields from morning till night like their cattle in the midst of whom they live. Their existence is a weary, endless round of mechanical drudgery unrelieved by a spark of intelligence or higher grace of life. Deprived of all scope for developing their mind and soul, they have sunk to the level of the beast. Life to them is a sorry bungle which they muddle through anyhow. On the other hand, what goes by the name of education in our schools and colleges in the cities today is in reality only intellectual dissipation. Intellectual training is there looked upon as something altogether unrelated to manual or physical work. But since the body must have some sort of physical exercise to keep it in health, they vainly try to attain that end by means of an artificial and otherwise barren system of physical culture which would be ridiculous beyond words if the result was not so tragic. The young man who emerges from this system can in no way compete in physical endurance with an ordinary labourer. The slightest physical exertion gives him headache ; a mild exposure to the sun is enough to cause him giddiness. And what is more, all this is looked upon as quite 'natural'. As for the faculties of

the heart, they are simply allowed to run to seed or to grow anyhow in a wild undisciplined manner. The result is moral and spiritual anarchy. And it is regarded as something laudable.

As against this, take the case of a child in whom the education of the heart is attended to from the very beginning. Supposing he is set to some useful occupation like spinning, carpentry, agriculture etc. for this education, and in that connection is given a thorough comprehensive knowledge relating to the theory of the various operations that he is to perform, and the use and construction of the tools that he would be wielding. He would not only develop a fine, healthy body but also a sound, vigorous intellect that is not merely academic but is firmly rooted in and is tested from day to day by experience. His intellectual education would include a knowledge of mathematics and the various sciences that are useful for an intelligent and efficient exercise of his avocation. If to this is added literature by way of recreation, it would give him a perfect well-balanced, all-round education in which the intellect, the body and the spirit have all full play and develop together into a natural, harmonious whole. Man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animal body, nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for the making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education.

Harijan, 8-5-1937

To be Craft-Centered

As to the necessity and value of regarding the teaching of village handicrafts as the pivot and centre of education I have no manner of

doubt. The method adopted in the institutions in India I do not call education, i.e. drawing out the best in man, but a debauchery of the mind. It informs the mind anyhow, whereas the method of training the mind through village handicrafts from the very beginning as the central fact would central fact would promote the real, disciplined development of the mind resulting in conservation of the intellectual energy and indirectly also the spiritual.

Harijan, 5-6-' 37

I would therefore begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically, i.e. the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process. I am not writing this without some confidence, because it has the backing of experience. This method is being adopted more or less completely wherever spinning is being taught to workers. I have myself taught sandal-making and even spinning on these lines with good results.

Harijan , 31-7-' 37

THE QUESTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Education

The question of religious education is very difficult, Yet we cannot do without it. India will never be godless. Rank atheism cannot flourish in this land. The task is indeed difficult. My head begins to turn as I think of religious education. Our religious teachers are hypocritical and selfish; they will have to be approached. The Mullas, the Dasturs and the Brahmins hold the key in their hands, but if they will not have the good sense, the energy that we have derived from English education will have to be devoted to religious education. This is not very difficult. Only the fringe of the ocean has been polluted, and it is those who are within the fringe who alone need cleansing. We who come under this category can even cleanse ourselves, because my remarks do not apply to the millions. In order to restore India to its pristine condition, we have to return to it.

Hind Swaraj (1908), p. 107

To me religion means Truth and Ahimsa or rather Truth alone, because Truth includes Ahimsa, Ahimsa being the necessary and indispensable means for its discovery. Therefore anything that promotes the practice of these virtues is a means for imparting religious education and the best way to do this, in my opinion, is for the teachers rigorously to practise these virtues in their own person. Their very association with

the boys, whether on the playground or in the class room, will then give the pupils a fine training in these fundamental virtues.

So much for instruction in the universal essentials of religion. A curriculum of religious instruction should include a study of the tenets of faiths other than one's own. For this purpose the students should be trained to cultivate the habit of understanding and appreciating the doctrines of various great religions of the world in a spirit of reverence and broad-minded tolerance. This if properly done would help to give them a spiritual assurance and a better appreciation of their own religion. There is one rule, however, which should always be kept in mind while studying all great religions, and that is that one should study them only through the writings of known votaries of the respective religions. For instance, if one wants to study the Bhagavata one should do so not through a translation of it made by a hostile critic but one prepared by a lover of the Bhagavata. Similarly to study the Bible one should study it through the commentaries of devoted Christians. This study of other religions besides one's own will give one a grasp of the rock-bottom unity of all religions and afford a glimpse also of that universal and absolute truth which lies beyond the 'dust of creeds and faiths'.

Let no one even for a moment entertain the fear that a reverent study of other religions is likely to weaken or shake one's faith in one's own. The Hindu system of philosophy regards all religions as containing the elements of truth in them and enjoins an attitude of respect and reverence towards them all. This of course pre-supposes regards for

one's own religion. Study and appreciation of other religions need not cause a weakening of that regard ; it should mean extension of that regard to other religions.

In this respect religion stands on the same footing as culture. Just as preservation of one's own culture does not mean contempt for that of others, but requires assimilation of the best that there may be in all the other cultures, even so should be the case with religion.

Young India, 6-12-'28

THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM

Medium of Instruction

The Mother Tongue

I am hoping that this University* will see to it that the youths who come to it will receive their instruction through the medium of their vernaculars. Our language is the reflection of ourselves, and if you tell me that our languages are too poor to express the best thought, then I say that the sooner we are wiped out of existence the better for us. Is there a man who dreams that English can ever become the national language of India ? (Cries of "Never".) Why this handicap on the nation ? Just consider for one moment what an unequal race our lads have to run with every English lad. I had the privilege of a close conversation with some Poona professors. They assured me that every Indian youth, because he reached his knowledge through the English language, lost at least six precious years of life. Multiply that by the number of students turned out by our schools and colleges and find out for yourselves how many thousand years have been lost to the nation. The charge against us is, that we have no initiative. How can we have any if we are to devote the precious years of our life to the mastery of a foreign tongue ? We fail in this attempt also. . . . I have heard it said that after all it is English-educated India which is leading and which is doing everything for the nation.

It would be monstrous if it were otherwise. The only education we receive is English education. Surely we must show something for it. But suppose that we had been receiving during the past fifty years education through our vernaculars, what should we have today ? We should have today a free India, we should have our educated men, not as if they were foreigners in their own land, but speaking to the heart of the nation ; they would be working amongst the poorest of the poor, and whatever they would have gained during the past fifty years would be a heritage for the nation (Applause). Today even our wives are not sharers in our best thought. Look at Professor Bose and Professor Ray and their brilliant researches. Is it not a shame that their researches are not the common property of the masses ?

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, p.p. 318-20; 4-2-1916

The Foreign Medium

The foreign medium has caused brain fag, put an undue strain upon nerves of our children, made them crammers and imitators, unfitted them for original work and thought, and disabled them for filtrating their learning to the family or the masses. The foreign medium has made our children practically foreigners in their own land. It is the greatest tragedy of the existing system. The foreign medium has prevented the growth of our vernaculars. If I had the powers of a despot, I would today stop the tuition of our boys and girls through a foreign medium, and require all the teachers and professors on pain of dismissal to introduce the change forthwith. I would not wait for the

preparation of text-books. They will follow the change. It is an evil that needs a summary remedy.

Young India, 1-9-1921

But for the fact that the only higher education, the only education worth the name has been received by us through the English medium, there would be no need to prove such a self-evident proposition that the youth of a nation to remain a nation must receive all instruction including the highest in its own vernacular or vernaculars. Surely, it is a self-demonstrated proposition that the youth of a nation cannot keep or establish a living contact with the masses unless their knowledge is received and assimilated through a medium understood by the people. Who can calculate the immeasurable loss sustained by the nation owing to thousands of its young men having been obliged to waste years in mastering a foreign language and its idiom of which in their daily life they have the least use and in learning which they had to neglect their own mother tongue and their own literature? There never was a greater superstition than that a particular language can be incapable of expansion or expressing abstruse or scientific ideas. A language is an exact reflection of the character and growth of its speakers.

Among the many evils of foreign rule this blighting imposition of a foreign medium upon the youth of the country will be counted by history as one of the greatest. It has sapped the energy of the nation, it has shortened the lives of the pupils, it has estranged them from the masses, it has made education unnecessarily expensive. If this process

is still persisted in, it bids fair to rob the nation of its soul. The sooner therefore educated India shakes itself free from the hypnotic spell of the foreign medium, the better it would be for them and the people.

Young India , 5-7-" 28

My Own Experience

Let me give a chapter from my own experience. Up to the age of 12 all the knowledge I gained was through Gujarati, my mother tongue. I knew then something of Arithmetic, History and Geography. Then I entered a High School. For the first three years the mother tongue was still the medium. But the schoolmaster's business was to drive English into the pupil's head. Therefore more than half of our time was given to learning English and mastering its arbitrary spelling and pronunciation. It was a painful discovery to have to learn a language that was not pronounced as it was written. It was a strange experience to learn the spelling by heart. But that is by the way, and irrelevant to my argument. However, for the first three years, it was comparatively plain sailing.

The pillory began with the fourth year. Everything had to be learnt through English—Geometry, Algebra, Chemistry, Astronomy, History, Geography. The tyranny of English was so great that even Sanskrit or Persian had to be learnt through English, not through the mother tongue. If any boy spoke in the class in Gujarati which he understood, he was punished. It did not matter to the teacher if a boy spoke bad English which he could neither pronounce correctly nor understand

fully. Why should the teacher worry? His own English was by no means without blemish. It could not be otherwise. English was as much a foreign language to him as to his pupils. The result was chaos. We the boys had to learn many things by heart, though we could not understand them fully and often not at all. My head used to reel as the teacher was struggling to make his exposition on Geometry understood by us. I could make neither head nor tail of Geometry till we reached the 13th theorem of the first book of Euclid. And let me confess to the reader that in spite of all my love for the mother tongue, I do not to this day know the Gujarati equivalents of the technical terms of Geometry, Algebra and the like. I know now that what I took four years to learn of Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra, Chemistry and Astronomy, I should have learnt easily in one year, if I had not to learn them through English but Gujarati. My grasp of the subjects would have been easier and clearer. My Gujarati vocabulary would have been richer. I would have made use of such knowledge in my own home. This English medium created an impassable barrier between me and the members of my family, who had not gone through English schools. My father knew nothing of what I was doing. I could not, even if I had wished it, interest my father in what I was learning. For though he had ample intelligence, he knew not a word of English. I was fast becoming a stranger in my own home. I certainly became a superior person. Even my dress began to undergo imperceptible changes. What happened to me was not an uncommon experience. It was common to the majority.

The first three years in the High School made little addition to my stock of general knowledge. They were a preparation for fitting the boys for teaching them everything through English. High Schools were schools for cultural conquest by the English. The knowledge gained by the three hundred boys of my High School became a circumscribed possession. It was not for transmission to the masses.

A word about literature. We had to learn several books of English prose and English poetry. No doubt all this was nice. But that knowledge has been of no use to me in serving or bringing me in touch with the masses. I am unable to say that if I had not learnt what I did of English prose and poetry, I should have missed a rare treasure. If I had, instead, passed those precious seven years in mastering Gujarati and had learnt Mathematics, Sciences, and Sanskrit and other subjects through Gujarati, I could easily have shared the knowledge so gained with my neighbours. I would have enriched Gujarati, and who can say that I would not have, with my habit of application and my inordinate love for the country and the mother tongue, made a richer and greater contribution to the service of the masses?

I must not be understood to decry English or its noble literature. The columns of the Harijan are sufficient evidence of my love of English. But the nobility of its literature cannot avail the Indian nation any more than the temperate climate or the scenery of English can avail her. India has to flourish in her own climate and scenery and her own literature, even though all the three may be inferior to the English climate, scenery and literature. We and our children must build on our

own heritage. If we borrow another we impoverish our own. We can never grow on foreign victuals. I want the nation to have the treasures contained in that language, and for that matter the other languages of the world, through its own vernaculars. I do not need to learn Bengali in order to know the beauties of Rabindranath's matchless productions. I get them through good translations. Gujarati boys and girls do not need to learn Russian to appreciate Tolstoy's short stories. They learn them through good translations. It is the boast of Englishmen that the best of the world's literary output is in the hands of that nation in simple English inside of a week of its publication. Why need I learn English to get at the best of what Shakespeare and Milton thought and wrote?

It would be good economy to set apart a class of students whose business would be to learn the best of what is to be learnt in the different languages of the world and give the translation in the vernaculars. Our masters chose the wrong way for us, and habit has made the wrong appear as right.

I find daily proof of the increasing and continuing wrong being done to the millions by our false de-Indianizing education. These graduates who are my valued associates themselves flounder when they have to give expression to their innermost thoughts. They are strangers in their own homes. Their vocabulary in the mother tongue is so limited that they cannot always finish their speech without having recourse to English words and even sentences. Nor can they exist without English books. They often write to one another in English. I cite the case of my

companions to show how deep the evil has gone. For we have made a conscious effort to mend ourselves.

It has been argued that the wastage that occurs in our colleges need not worry us if, out of the collegians, one Jagadish Bose can be produced by them. I should freely subscribe to the argument, if the wastage was unavoidable. I hope I have shown that it was and is even now avoidable. Moreover the creation of a Bose does not help the argument. For Bose was not a product of the present education. He rose in spite of the terrible handicaps under which he had to labour. And his knowledge became almost intransmissible to the masses. We seem to have come to think that no one can hope to be like a Bose unless he knows English. I cannot conceive a grosser superstition than this. No Japanese feels so helpless as we seem to do.

The medium of instruction should be altered at once and at any cost, the provincial languages being given their rightful place. I would prefer temporary chaos in higher education to the criminal waste that is daily accumulating. In order to enhance the status and the market-value of the provincial languages, I would have the language of the law courts to be the language of the province where the court is situated. The proceedings of the provincial legislatures must be in the language, or even the languages of the province where a province has more than one language within its borders. I suggest to the legislators that they could, by enough application, inside of a month understand the languages of their provinces. There is nothing to prevent a Tamilian from easily learning the simple grammar and a few hundred words of

Telugu, Malayalam, and Kanarese all allied to Tamil. At the centre Hindustani must rule supreme.

In my opinion this is not a question to be decided by academicians. They cannot decide through what language the boys and girls of a place are to be educated. That question is already decided for them in every free country. Nor can they decide the subjects to be taught. That depends upon the wants of the country to which they belong. There is a privilege of enforcing the nation's will in the best manner possible. When this country becomes really free, the question of medium will be settled only one way. The academicians will frame the syllabus and prepare text-books accordingly. And the products of the education of a free India will answer the requirements of the country as today they answer those of the foreign ruler. So long as we the educated classes play with this question, I very much fear we shall not produce the free and healthy India of our dream. We have to grow by strenuous effort out of our bondage, whether is it Educational, Economical, Social or Political. The effort itself is three-fourths of the battle.

Harijan, 9-7-1938

Need for Quick Action

If the medium is changed at once and not gradually, in an incredibly short time we shall find text-books and teachers coming into being to supply the want. And if we mean business, in a year's time we shall find that we need never have been party of the tragic waste of the nation's time and energy in trying to learn the essentials of culture through a

foreign medium. The condition of success is undoubtedly that provincial languages are introduced at once in Government offices and courts, if the Provincial Governments have the power or the influence over the courts. If we believe in the necessity of the reform, we can achieve it in no time.

Harijan, 30-7-38

Technical Education through the Mother Tongue

Gandhiji deprecated the suggestion that it would need a lot of research and preparation to enable them to impart technical education through the medium of the mother tongue. Those who argued like that, were unaware of the rich treasure of expressions and idioms that were buried in the dialects of our villages. In Gandhiji's opinion there was no need to go to Sanskrit or Persian in search for many expressions. He had been in Champaran and he had found that the village folk there, could fully express themselves with ease and without the help of a single foreign expression or idiom. As an illustration of their resourcefulness, he mentioned the word *hava gadi* which they had coined to denote a motor car.

Harijan, 18-8-46

Mother Tongue Fundamental

I must cling to my mother tongue as to my mother's breast, in spite of its shortcomings. It alone can give me the life-giving milk.

Harijan, 25-8-46

National Language and Script

Hindi : The National Language for India

It behoves us to devote attention to a consideration of a national language, as we have done to that of the medium of instruction. If English is to become a national language, it ought to be treated as a compulsory subject. Can English become the national language? Some learned patriots contend that even to raise the question betrays ignorance. In their opinion, English already occupies that place. His Excellency the Viceroy in his recent utterance has merely expressed a hope that English will occupy that place. His enthusiasm does not take him as far as that of the former. His Excellency believes that English will day after day command a larger place, will permeate the family circle, and at last rise to the status of a national language. A superficial consideration will support the viceregal contention. The condition of our educated classes gives one the impression that all our activities would come to a stand-still if we stop the use of English. And yet deeper thought will show that English can never and ought not to become the national language of India. What is the test of national language ?

- (1) For the official class it should be easy to learn.
- (2) The religious, commercial and political activity throughout India should be possible in that language.
- (3) It should be the speech of the majority of the inhabitants of India.
- (4) For the whole of the country it should be easy to learn.

(5) In considering the question, weight ought not to be put upon momentary of short-lived conditions.

The English language does not fulfill any of the conditions above-named. The first ought to have been the last, but I have purposely given it the first place, because that condition alone gives it the appearance of being applicable to the English language. But upon further consideration we should find that for the officials even at the present moment it is not an easy language to learn. In our scheme of administration, it is assumed that the number of English officials will progressively decrease, so that in the end only the Viceroy and others whom one may count on one's finger-tips will be English. The majority are of Indian nationality today, and their number must increase.

And every one will admit that for them, English is more difficult to be learnt than any Indian language. Upon an examination of the second condition, we find that until the public at large can speak English, religious activity through that tongue is an impossibility. And a spread of English to that extent among the masses seems also impossible.

English cannot satisfy the third condition, because the majority in India do not speak it.

The fourth, too, cannot be satisfy by English, because it is not an easy language to learn for the whole of India.

Considering the last condition we observe that the position that English occupies today is momentary. The permanent condition is that there will be little necessity for English in national affairs. It will certainly be required for imperial affairs. That, therefore, it will be an imperial

language, the language of diplomacy, is a different question. For that purpose its knowledge is a necessity. We are not jealous of English. All that is contended for is, that it ought not to be allowed to go beyond its proper sphere. And as it will be the imperial language, we shall compel our Malaviyajis, our Shastriars and our Banerjees to learn it. And we shall feel assured that they will advertise the greatness of India in other parts of the world. But English cannot become the national language of India. To give it that place is like an attempt to introduce Esperanto. In my opinion, it is unmanly even to think that English can become our national language. The attempt to introduce Esperanto merely betrays ignorance. Then which is the language that satisfies all the five conditions ? We shall be obliged to admit that Hindi satisfies all those conditions.

I call that language Hindi which Hindus and Mohammedans in the North speak and write, either in the Devanagari or the Urdu character. Exception has been taken to this definition. It seems to be argued that Hindi and Urdu are different languages. This is not a valid argument. In the Northern parts of India, Mussalmans and Hindus speak the same language. The literate classes have created a division. The learned Hindus have Sanskritized Hindi. The Mussalmans, therefore, cannot understand it. The Moslems of Lucknow have Persianized their speech and made it unintelligible to the Hindus. These represent two excesses of the same language. They find no common place in the speech of the masses. I have lived in the North. I have freely mixed with Hindus and Mohammedans and although I have but a poor knowledge of Hindi, I

have never found any difficulty in holding communion with them. Call the language of the North what you will, Urdu or Hindi, it is the same. If you write it in the Urdu character you may know it as Urdu. Write the same thing in the Nagari character and it is Hindi.

There, therefore, remains a difference about the script. For the time being Mohammedan children will certainly write in the Urdu character, and Hindus will mostly write in the Devanagari. I say mostly, because thousands of Hindus use the Urdu character, and some do not even know the Nagari character. But when Hindus and Mohammedans come to regard one another without suspicion, when the causes begetting suspicion are removed, that script which has greater vitality will be more universally used, and therefore, become the national script. Meanwhile those Hindus and Mohammedans who desire to write their petitions in the Urdu character, should be free to do so and should have the right of having them accepted at the seat of the National Government.

There is not another language capable of competing with Hindi in satisfying the five conditions. Bengali comes next to Hindi. But the Bengalis themselves make use of Hindi outside Bengal. No one wonders to see a Hindi-speaking man making use of Hindi, no matter where he goes. Hindu preachers and Mohammedan Moulvis deliver their religious discourses throughout India in Hindi and Urdu and even the illiterate masses follow them. Even the unlettered Gujarati going to the North, attempts to use a few Hindi words whereas a gate-keeper from the North declines to speak in Gujarati even to his employer, who has on

that account to speak to him in broken Hindi. I have heard Hindi spoken even in the Dravid country. It is not true to say that in Madras one can go on with English. Even there I have employed Hindi with effect. In the trains I have heard Madras passengers undoubtedly use Hindi. It is worthy of note that Mohammedans throughout India speak Urdu and they are to be found in large numbers in every Province. Thus Hindi is destined to be the national language. We have made use of it as such in times gone by. The rise of Urdu itself is due to that fact. The Mohammedan kings were unable to make Persian or Arabic the national language. They accepted the Hindi grammar, but employed the Urdu character and Persian words in their speeches. They could not, however, carry on their intercourse with the masses through a foreign tongue. All this is not unknown to the English. Those who know anything of the sepoys, know that for them military terms have had to be prepared in Hindi or Urdu.

Thus we see that Hindi alone can become the national language. It presents some difficulty in case of the learned classes in Madras. For men from the Deccan, Gujarat, Sind and Bengal it is easy enough. In a few months they can acquire sufficient command over Hindi to enable them to carry on national intercourse in that tongue. It is not so for the Tamils. The Dravidian languages are distinct from their Sanskrit sister in structure and grammar. The only thing common to the two groups is their Sanskrit vocabulary to an extent. But the difficulty is confined to the learned class alone. We have a right to appeal to their patriotic spirit and expect them to put forth sufficient effort in order to learn

Hindi. For in future when Hindi has received State recognition, it will be introduced as a compulsory language in Madras as in other Provinces, and intercourse between Madras and them will then increase. English has not permeated the Dravidian masses. Hindi, however, will take no time.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, pp.395-99; 20-10-17

The Need for Hindustani

I have ventured to advise every student to devote this year of our trial to the manufacture of yarn and learning Hindustani. I am thankful to the Calcutta students that they have taken kindly to the suggestion. Bengal and Madras are the two Provinces that are cut off from the rest of India for want of a knowledge of Hindustani on their part. Bengal, because of its prejudice against learning any other language of India, and Madras, because of the difficulty of the Dravidians about picking up Hindustani. An average Bengali can really learn Hindustani in two months if he gave it three hours per day and a Dravidian in six months at the same rate. Neither a Bengali nor a Dravidian can hope to achieve the same result with English in the same time. A knowledge of English opens up intercourse only with the comparatively few English-knowing Indians, whereas a possible knowledge of Hindustani enables us to hold intercourse with the largest number of our countrymen. I do hope the Bengalis and the Dravidians will come to the next Congress with a workable knowledge of Hindustani. Our greatest assembly cannot be a real object-lesson to the masses unless it speaks to them in a language

which the largest number can understand. I appreciate the difficulty with the Dravidians, but nothing is difficult before their industrious love for the motherland You and I, and every one of us has neglected the true education that we should have received in our national schools. It is impossible for the young men of Bengal, for the young men of Gujarat, for the young men of the Deccan to go to the Central Provinces, to go to the United Provinces, to go to the Punjab and all those vast tracts of India which speak nothing but Hindustani, and therefore I ask you to learn Hindustani also in your leisure hours. Do not consider for one moment that you can possibly make English a common medium of expression between the masses. Twenty-two crores of Indians know Hindustani—they do not know any other language. And if you want to steal into their hearts, Hindustani is the only language open to you.

Young India, 2-2-1921

The Richness of the Hindi Language

You talk of the poverty of Hindi literature—you talk of the poverty of today's Hindi, but if you dive deep into the pages of Tulsidas, probably you will share my opinion that there is no other book that stands equal to it in the literature of the world in modern languages. That one book has given me faith and hope which no other book has given. I think that it is a book which can stand any criticism and any scrutiny, alike in literary grace, in metaphor and in religious fervour.

Young India, 9-2-1921

Hindustani and Mother Tongue

A fear had been expressed, observed Gandhiji, that the propagation of Rashtrabhasha or the national tongue would prove inimical to the provincial languages. That fear was rooted in ignorance. Provincial tongues provided the sure foundation on which the edifice of the national tongue should rest. The two were intended to complement, not supplant each other.

Harijan, 18-8-1946

A Common Script

If we are to make good our claim as one nation, we must have several things in common. We have a common culture running through a variety of creeds and sub-creeds. We have common disabilities. I am endeavouring to show that a common material for our dress is not only desirable but necessary. We need also a common language not in suppression of the vernaculars, but in addition to them. It is generally agreed that that medium should be Hindustani—a resultant of Hindi and Urdu, neither highly Sanskritized, nor highly Persianized or Arabianized. The greatest obstacle in the way are the numerous scripts we have for the vernaculars. If it is possible to adopt a common script, we should remove a great hindrance in the way of realizing the dream, which at present it is, of having a common language.

A variety of scripts is an obstacle in more ways than one. It constitutes an effectual barrier against the acquisition of knowledge. The Aryan

languages have so much in common that, if a great deal of time had not to be wasted in mastering the different scripts, we should all know several languages without much difficulty ; for instance, most people who have a little knowledge of Sanskrit would have no difficulty in understanding the matchless creation of Rabindranath Tagore, if it was all printed in Devanagari script. But the Bengalee script is a notice to the non-Bengalis—"hands off". Conversely, if the Bengalis knew the Devanagari script, they would at once be able to enjoy the marvellous beauty and spirituality of Tulsidas and a host of other Hindustani writers. When I returned to India in 1905, I had a communication from a society whose headquarters were, I believe, in Calcutta, and whose object was to advocate a common script for all India. I do not know the activities of that society, but its object is worthy, and a great deal of substantial work can be done by a few earnest workers in this direction. There are obvious limitations. A common script for all India is a distant ideal. A common script for all those who speak the Indo-Sanskrit languages, including the Southern stock, is a practical ideal, if we can but shed our provincialisms. There is little virtue, for instance, in Gujarati clinging to the Gujarati script. A provincial patriotism is good where it feeds the larger stream of all-India patriotism, as the latter is good to the extent that it serves the still larger end of the universe. But a provincial patriotism that says "India is nothing. Gujarat is all", is wickedness. I have selected Gujarat because it is the half-way house, and because I am myself a Gujarati. In Gujarat, somewhat fortunately, those who settled the principles of primary education, decided to make Devanagari script compulsory. Every Gujarati boy or girl, who has

passed through a school, therefore knows both the Gujarati and the Devanagari scripts. If the committee had decided upon purely Devanagari script, it would have been better still. No doubt, the research scholars would still have learnt the Gujarati script for deciphering old manuscripts, but the Gujarati boy's energy would have been spared for more useful labour, if he had to learn only one instead of two scripts. The committee that settled the education scheme for Maharashtra, was more enlightened, and it simply required the Devanagari script. The result is that a Mahratta reads, so far as mere reading is concerned, Tulsidas with as much facility as he reads Tukaram, and Gujaratis and Hindustanis read Tukaram with equal facility. The committee in Bengal, on the other hand, ruled otherwise, with the result we all know and many of us deplore. The treasures of the richest Indian vernacular have been rendered most difficult of access as if by design. That Devanagari should be the common script, I suppose, does not need any demonstration—the deciding factor being that it is the script known to the largest part of India.

These reflections arise, because, I was called upon to solve, during my visit to Cuttack, a practical question. There is a tribe wedged between the Hindi-speaking people in Bihar and Uriya-speaking people of Orissa. What was to be done for the education of its children ? Were they to be taught through Uriya or through Hindi ? Or were they to be taught through their own dialect, and if they were, was the script to be Devanagari or a new invention ? The first thought of the Utkal friends was to absorb the tribe amongst the Uriyas. The Biharis would think of

absorbing them in Bihar, and if the elders of the tribe were consulted, they would most probably and naturally say that their dialect was just as good as the Uriya or the Bihari, and that it should be reduced to writing. And for them it would be a toss whether the script to be adopted should be Devanagari or Uriya, if not even a newly invented script, as has happened in modern times in at least two instances I know. Endeavouring to think in terms of all-India I suggested to my friends that, whilst it was proper for them to strengthen the Uriya language among the Uriya-speaking people, the children of this tribe should be taught Hindi and naturally the script should be Devanagari. A spirit that is so exclusive and narrow as to want every form of speech to be perpetuated and developed, is anti-national and anti-universal. All undeveloped and unwritten dialects should, in my humble opinion, be sacrificed and merged in the great Hindustani stream. It would be a sacrifice only to be nobler, not a suicide. If we are to have a common language for cultured India, we must arrest the growth of any process of disintegration or multiplication of languages and scripts. We must promote a common language. The beginning must naturally be made with the script, and until the Hindu-Muslim question is solved, confined perhaps to Hindu India. If I could have my way, I would make the learning of Devanagari script and Urdu script, in addition to the established provincial script, compulsory in all the provinces and I would print in Devanagari chief books in the different vernaculars with a literal translation in Hindustani.

Young India, 27-8-1925

Roman Script

Regarding the replacing of the Urdu and Nagari scripts by the Roman script, however attractive the proposition may appear to be, in my opinion, the replacing would be a fatal blunder and we would find ourselves in the fire out of the frying pan.

Harijan, 23-3-1947

Other Languages

Every cultured Indian should know in addition to his own provincial language, if a Hindu, Sanskrit; if a Mohammedan, Arabic; if a Parsee, Persian; and all, Hindi. Some Hindus should know Arabic and Persian; some Mohammedans and Parsees, Sanskrit. Several Northerners and Westerners should learn Tamil. A universal language for India should be Hindi, with the option of writing it in Persian or Nagari characters. In order that the Hindus and Mohammedans may have closer relations, it is necessary to know both the characters.

Hind Swaraj (1908), p. 107

If I had not acquired the little Sanskrit that I learnt then, I should have found it difficult to take any interest in our sacred books. In fact I deeply regret that I was not able to acquire a more thorough knowledge of the language, because I have since realized that every Hindu boy and girl should possess sound Sanskrit learning.

It is now my opinion that in all Indian curricula of higher education there should be a place for Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and English,

besides of course the vernacular. This big list need not frighten anyone. If our education were more systemic, and the boys free from the burden of having to learn their subjects through a foreign medium, I am sure learning all these languages would not be an irksome task, but a perfect pleasure. A scientific knowledge of one language makes a knowledge of other languages comparatively easy.

Autobiography (1926), p. 30

The Place of English

English is a language of international commerce, it is the language of diplomacy, and it contains many a rich literary treasure, it gives us an introduction to Western thought and culture. For a few of us, therefore, a knowledge of English is necessary. They can carry on the departments of national commerce and international diplomacy, and for giving to the nation the best of Western literature, thought, and science. That would be the legitimate use of English, whereas today English has usurped the dearest place in our hearts and dethroned our mother tongues. It is an unnatural place due to our unequal relations with Englishmen. The highest development of the Indian mind must be possible without a knowledge of English. It is doing violence to the manhood and specially the womanhood of India to encourage our boys and girls to think that an entry into the best society is impossible without a knowledge of English. It is too humiliating a thought to be bearable. To get rid of the infatuation for English is one of the essentials of Swaraj.

Young India, 2-2-1921

I know this tussle between English and Hindi is almost an eternal tussle. Whenever I have addressed student audiences, I have been surprised by the demand for English. You know, or ought to know, that I am a lover of the English language. But I do believe that the students of India, who are expected to throw in their lot with the teeming millions and to serve them, will be better qualified if they pay more attention to Hindi than to English. I do not say that you should not learn English ; learn it by all means. But, so far as I can see, it cannot be the language of the millions of Indian homes. It will be confined to thousands or tens of thousands, but it will not reach the millions.

Harijan, 17-11-'33

I love the English tongue in its own place, but I am its inveterate opponent, if it usurps a place which does not belong to it. English is today admittedly the world language. I would therefore accord it a place as a second, optional language, not in the school but in the university course. That can only be for the select few—not for the millions. Today when we have not the means to introduce even free compulsory primary education, how can we make provision for teaching English ? Russia has achieved all her scientific progress without English. It is our mental slavery that makes us feel that we cannot do without English. I can never subscribe to that defeatist creed.

Harijan, 25-8-'46

COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Compulsory Education

I am not quite sure that I would not oppose compulsory education at all times. All compulsion is hateful to me. I would no more have the nation become educated by compulsion than I would have it become sober by such questionable means. But just as I would discourage drink by refusing to open drink shops and closing existing ones, so would I discourage illiteracy by removing obstacles in the path and opening free schools and making them responsive to the people's needs. But at the present moment we have not even tried on any large scale the experiment of free education. We have offered the parents no inducements. We have not even sufficiently or at all advertised the value of literacy. We have not the proper school-masters for the training. In my opinion therefore it is altogether too early to think of compulsion. I am not even sure that the experiment in compulsory education has been uniformly successful wherever it has been tried. If the majority wants education, compulsion is wholly unnecessary. If it does not, compulsion would be most harmful. Only a despotic Government passes laws in the teeth of the opposition of a majority. Has the Government afforded full facilities for education to the children of the majority ? We have been compulsion-ridden for the past hundred years or more. The State rules our life in its manifold details without our previous sanction. It is time to use the nation to voluntary methods even though for the time being there may be no response to prayers,

petitions and advice addressed to the nation. It has had little response to its prayers. Nothing is more detrimental to the true growth of society than for it to be habituated to the belief that no reform can be achieved by voluntary effort. A people so trained become wholly unfit for Swaraj. It follows from what I have said above that if we get Swaraj today I should resist compulsory education at least till every effort at voluntary primary education has been honestly made and failed. Let the reader not forget that there is more illiteracy in India today than there was fifty years ago, not because the parents are less willing but because the facilities they had before have disappeared under a system so foreign and unnatural for the country.

It is not reasonable to assume that the majority of parents are so foolish or heartless as to neglect the education of their children even when it is brought to their doors free of charge.

Young India, 14-8-1924

EDUCATION OF SPECIAL GROUPS

Adult Education

In my opinion what we have reason to deplore and be ashamed of is not so much illiteracy as ignorance. Therefore for adult education I should have an intensive programme of driving out ignorance through carefully selected teachers with an equally carefully selected syllabus, according to which they would educate the adult villagers' mind. This is not to say that I would not give them a knowledge of the alphabet. I value it too much to despise or even belittle its merit as a vehicle of education. I appreciate Prof. Laubach's immense labours in the way of making the alphabet easy and Prof. Bhagwat's great and practical contribution in the same direction. Indeed I have invited the latter to come to Segaon whenever he chooses and try his art on the men, women and even children of Segaon.

Harijan, 5-6-1937

Q. In our schemes for adult education should the aim be to promote the spread of literacy or to impart 'useful knowledge'?

A. The primary need of those who are come of age and are following an avocation, is to know how to read and write. Mass illiteracy is India's sin and shame and must be liquidated. Of course, the literacy campaign must not begin and end with a knowledge of the alphabet.

It must go hand in hand with the spread of useful knowledge. But Municipal bodies should beware of trying to ride two horses at a time, or else they are sure to come a cropper.

Harijan, 18-2-1939

The Gandhi Mission Society, Tiruvennainallur, send me their half-yearly report of adult literary work. The total number of adults educated was 197. But the problem that really faces them is 'how to enable the adults to retain the knowledge thus gained'. The report goes on : 'Nearly half the members who attended the class during the first session have approached the worker in charge to repeat the lessons. In fact they had lapsed into illiteracy. The workers are racking their brains to devise means to prevent this lapse.' The workers need not rack their brains at all. The lapse is bound to occur after the short courses that are given. The lapse can only be prevented by correlating the teaching to the villagers` daily wants. The dry knowledge of the three R's is not even now, it can never be, a permanent part of the villagers' life. They must have knowledge given to them which they must use daily. It must not be thrust upon them. They should have the appetite for it. What they have today is something they neither want nor appreciate. Give the villagers village arithmetic, village geography, village history, and the literary knowledge that they must use daily, i.e. reading and writing letters, etc. They will treasure such knowledge and pass on to the other stages. They have no use for books which give them nothing of daily use.

Harijan, 22-6-1940

Women's Education

Women's Education

Man and woman are of equal rank but they are not identical. They are a peerless pair being supplementary to one another; each helps the other, so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived, and therefore it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts that anything that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of them both. In framing any scheme of women's education this cardinal truth must be constantly kept in mind. Man is supreme in the outward activities of a married pair and therefore it is in the fitness of things that he should have a greater knowledge thereof. On the other hand, home life is entirely the sphere of woman and therefore in domestic affairs, in the upbringing and education of children, women ought to have more knowledge. Not that knowledge should be divided into watertight compartments, or that some branches of knowledge should be closed to any one; but unless courses of instruction are based on a discriminating appreciation of these basic principles, the fullest life of man and woman cannot be developed.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, pp. 425, 426 ; 20-2-1918

Women and English Education

I do not believe in women working for a living or undertaking commercial enterprises. The few women who may require or desire to have English education, can very easily have their way by joining the schools for men. To introduce English education in schools meant for

women could only lead to prolonging our helplessness. I have often read and heard people saying that the rich treasures of English literature should be opened alike to men and women. I submit in all humility that there is some misapprehension in assuming such an attitude. No one intends to close these treasures against women while keeping them open for men. There is none on earth able to prevent you from studying the literature of the whole world if you are fond of literary tastes. But when courses of education have been framed with the needs of an entire society in view, you cannot supply the requirements of the few who have cultivated a literary taste.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, pp. 426, 427; 20-2-1918

Illiteracy among Women

As for illiteracy among the women, its cause is not mere laziness and inertia as in the case of men. A more potent cause is the status of inferiority with which an immemorial tradition has, unjustly branded her. Man has converted her into a domestic drudge and an instrument of his pleasure, instead of regarding her as his helpmate and 'better half'! The result is a semi-paralysis of our society. Woman has rightly been called the mother of the race. We owe it to her and to ourselves to undo the great wrong that we have done her.

Harijan, 18-2-1939

Harijan Education

Harijan education is the most difficult of all. Be it in the crudest manner possible, a non-Harijan child receives some home culture. A Harijan

child, being shunned by society, has none. Even when, therefore, all primary schools are open to Harijan children, as they must be sooner or later and in my opinion sooner rather than later, preliminary schools will be needed for Harijan children if they are not to labour under a perpetual handicap. This preliminary training can be discovered and tried in all the numerous Harijan schools conducted under the aegis of Harijan Sevak Sanghas scattered throughout India. That preliminary training should consist in teaching Harijan children manners, good speech and good conduct. A Harijan child sits anyhow ; dresses anyhow; his eyes, ears, teeth, hair, nails, nose are often full of dirt; many never know what is to have a wash. I remember what I did when in 1915 I picked up a Harijan boy at Tranquebar (in Tamilnad) and took him with me to Kochrab where the Ashram was then situated. I had him shaved. He was then thoroughly washed and given a simple dhoti, vest and a cap. In a few minutes in appearance he became indistinguishable from any child from a cultured home. His head, eyes, ears, nose were thoroughly cleaned. His feet which were laden with dust were rubbed and cleaned out. Such a process has to be gone through every day, if need be, with Harijan children attending schools. Their lesson should begin for the first three months with teaching them cleanliness. They should be taught also how to eat properly, though as I write this sentence I recall what I had seen during the walking pilgrimage in Orissa. Harijan boys and grown-ups, who were fed at some of the stages, ate with much better cleanness than the others who soiled their fingers, scattered about the leavings and left their places in a messy condition. Harijans had no leavings, and their dishes

were left thoroughly clean. Their fingers, whilst they were eating, were after every morsel taken licked clean. I know that all Harijan children do not eat so cleanly as the particular ones I have described.

If this preliminary training is to be given in all Harijan schools, pamphlets giving detailed instructions for teachers in their languages should be prepared and distributed, and inspectors of schools be required during their inspection to examine teachers and pupils on this head and to send full reports of the progress made in this direction.

This programme involves care in the selection of teachers and the training of the present staff. But all this is well worth the attention, if the Sangh is to discharge its trust by the thousands of Harijan children that are brought under its care.

Harijan, 18-5-35

HIGHER EDUCATION

National Education

The national University* stands today as a protest against British injustice, and as a vindication of national honour. But it has come to stay. It draws its inspiration from the national ideals of a united India. It stands for a religion which is the Dharma of the Hindus and Islam of Mohammedans. It wants to rescue the Indian vernaculars from unmerited oblivion and make them the fountains of national regeneration and Indian culture. It holds that a systematic study of Asiatic cultures is no less essential than the study of Western sciences for a complete education for life. The vast treasures of Sanskrit and Arabic, Persian and Pali, and Magadhi have to be ransacked in order to discover wherein lies the source of strength for the nation. It does not propose merely to feed on, or repeat, the ancient cultures. It rather hopes to build a new culture based on the traditions of the past, enriched by the experience of later times. It stands for the synthesis of the different cultures that have come to stay in India, that have influenced Indian life and that, in their turn, have themselves been influenced by the spirit of the soil. This synthesis will naturally be of the Swadeshi type where each culture is assured its legitimate place, and not of American pattern, where one dominant culture absorbs the rest, and where the aim is not towards harmony, but towards an artificial and forced unity. That is why the University has desired a study of all the Indian religions by its students. The Hindus may thus have an

opportunity of studying the Koran and the Muslims of knowing what the Hindu Shastras contain. If the University has excluded anything, it is the spirit of exclusion that regards any section of humanity as permanently untouchable. The study of Hindustani, which is a national blend of Sanskrit, Hindi and Persianized Urdu, has been made compulsory. The spirit of independence will be fostered not only through Religion, Politics and History but through vocational training also, which alone can give the youths of the country economic independence and a backbone that comes out of a sense of self-respect. The University hopes to organize higher schools throughout the mofussil towns, so that education may be spread broadcast and filtered down to the masses as early as possible. The use of Gujarati as the medium of education will facilitate this process and, ere long, the suicidal cleavage between the educated and the non-educated will be bridged. And as an effect of industrial education to the genteel folks, and literary education for the industrial classes, the unequal distribution of wealth and the consequent social discontent will be considerably checked. The greatest defect of the Government Universities has been their alien control and the false values they have created as regards 'careers'. The Gujarat University by non-co-operating with the Government has automatically eradicated both these evils from its own system. If the founders and promoters stick to this resolve till the Government becomes nationalized, it will help them to cultivate a clear perception of national ideals and national needs.

Tagore, pp. 445-57; 17-11-1920

College Education not at State Expense

I would revolutionize college education and relate it to national necessities. There would be degrees for mechanical and other engineers. They would be attached to the different industries which should pay for the training of the graduates they need. Thus the Tatas would be expected to run a college for training engineers under the supervision of the State, the mill associations would run among them a college for training graduates whom they need.

Similarly for the other industries that may be named. Commerce will have its college. There remains arts, medicine and agriculture. Several private arts colleges are today self-supporting. The State would, therefore, cease to run its own. Medical colleges would be attached to certified hospitals. As they are popular among moneyed men they may be expected by voluntary contributions to support medical colleges. And agricultural colleges to be worthy of the name must be self-supporting. I have a painful experience of some agricultural graduates. Their knowledge is superficial. They lack practical experience. But if they had their apprenticeship on farms which are self-sustained and answer the requirements of the country, they would not have to gain experience after getting their degrees and at the expense of their employers.

Harijan, 31-7-1937

Higher Education

Higher education should be left to private enterprise and for meeting national requirements whether in the various industries, technical arts, belles-letters or fine arts.

The State Universities should be purely examining bodies, self-supporting through the fees charged for examinations.

Universities will look after the whole of the field of education and will prepare and approve courses of studies in the various departments of education. No private school should be run without the previous sanction of the respective Universities. University charters should be given liberally to any body of persons of proved worth and integrity, it being always understood that the Universities will not cost the State anything except that it will bear the cost of running a Central Education Department.

The foregoing scheme does not absolve the State from running such seminaries as may be required for supplying State needs.

Harijan, 2-10-1937

(1) I am not opposed to education even of the highest type attainable in the world.

(2) The State must pay for it wherever it has definite use for it.

(3) I am opposed to all higher education being paid for from the general revenue.

(4) It is my firm conviction that the vast amount of the so-called education in arts, given in our colleges, is sheer waste and has resulted in unemployment among the educated classes. What is more, it has destroyed the health, both mental and physical, of the boys and girls who have the misfortune to go through the grind in our colleges.

(5) The medium of a foreign language through which higher education has been imparted in India has caused incalculable intellectual and moral injury to the nation. We are too near our own times to judge the enormity of the damage done. And we who have received such education have both to be victims and judges—an almost impossible feat.

Thus I claim that I am not an enemy of Higher Education. But I am an enemy of Higher Education as it is given in this country. Under my scheme there will be more and better libraries, more and better laboratories, more and better research institutes. Under it we should have an army of chemists, engineers and other experts who will be real servants of the nation, and answer the varied and growing requirements of a people who are becoming increasingly conscious of their rights and wants. And all these experts will speak, not a foreign language, but the language of the people. The knowledge gained by them will be the common property of the people. There will be truly original work instead of mere imitation. And the cost will be evenly and justly distributed.

Harijan, 9-7-' 38

An ex-professor writes a long letter on the above article on Higher Education. From it I take the following relevant extract :

"Your third conclusion about general revenue and claims of Higher Education and its corollary, viz. that Universities should be self-supporting, has left me unconvinced. I believe that every country to be a progressive country must have sufficient facilities for the pursuit of all branches of knowledge—not merely chemistry, medicine and engineering, but every kind of knowledge, literature, philosophy, history, sociology, both abstract and applied. All higher pursuits require many facilities which cannot be had without State support. A country depending only on voluntary effort for such pursuits is sure to fall behind and suffer. It can never hope to be free and be able to maintain that freedom. The State must be jealously watchful over the position of higher education in all fields. Voluntary effort must be there and we must have our Nuffields and Rockfellers, But the State cannot and must not be allowed to remain a silent spectator. It must actively come forward to organize, help and direct. I wish you to clarify this aspect of the question.

You say at the end of your article: 'Under my scheme there will more and better libraries.' I do not find The scheme you speak of in your article, nor am I able to make out how 'more and better libraries and laboratories will come into being there under. I am of opinion that such libraries and laboratories must be maintained, and so long as donors and voluntary agencies are not coming forward in sufficient numbers, the State cannot divest itself of this responsibility."

My article is clear enough if the expression 'definite use' mentioned in it is given its extensive meaning. I have not pictured a poverty-stricken India containing ignorant millions. I have pictured to myself an India continually progressing along the lines best suited to her genius. I do not, however, picture it as a third class or even a first class copy of the dying civilization of the West. If my dream is fulfilled, and every one of the seven lakhs of villages become a well-living republic in which there are no illiterates, in which no one is idle for want of work, in which everyone is usefully occupied and has nourishing food, well-ventilated dwellings, and sufficient Khadi for covering the body, and in which all the villagers know and observe the laws of hygiene and sanitation, such a State must have varied and increasing needs, which it must supply unless it would stagnate. I can therefore well imagine the State financing all the education my correspondent mentions and much more that I could add. And if the State has such requirements, surely it will have corresponding libraries.

What, however, according to my view the State will not have is an army of B.A.'s and M.A.'s with their brains sapped with too much cramming and minds almost paralyzed by the impossible attempt to speak and write English like Englishmen. The majority of these have no work, no employment. And when they have the latter, it is usually clerkships at which most of the knowledge gained during their twelve years of High Schools and Colleges is of no use whatsoever to them.

University training becomes self-supporting when it is utilized by the State. It is criminal to pay for a training which benefits neither the

nation nor the individual. In my opinion there is no such thing as individual benefit which cannot be proved to be also national benefit. And since most of my critics seem to be agreed that the existing Higher Education, and for that matter both Primary and Secondary, are not connected with realities, it cannot be of benefit to the State. When it is directly based on realities and is wholly given through the mother tongue, I shall perhaps have nothing to say against it. To be based on realities is to be based national, i.e. State, requirements. And the State will pay for it. Even when that happy time comes, we shall find that many institutions will be conducted by voluntary contributions. They may or may not benefit the State. Much of what passes for education today in India belongs to that category and would therefore not be paid for from the general revenue, if I had the way.

Harijan, 30-7-" 38

Reorientation of University Education

Gandhiji remarked at the Conference of Education Ministers in Poona that what he had said about adult education applied to University education. It must be originally related to the Indian scene. It must therefore be an extension and continuation of the Basic Education course. That was the central point. If they did not see eye to eye with him on that point, he was afraid they would have little use for his advice. If, on the other hand, they agreed with him that the present University education did not fit them for independence but only enslaved them, they would be as impatient as he was to completely

overhaul and scrap that system and remodel it on new lines consonant with the national requirement.

Today the youth educated in our universities either ran after the Government jobs or fell into devious ways and sought outlet for their frustration by fomenting unrest. They were not even ashamed to beg or sponge upon others. Such was their sad plight. The aim of University education should be to turn out true servants of the people, who would live and die for the country's freedom. He was therefore of opinion that University education should be co-ordinated and brought into line with Basic Education, by taking in teachers from the Talimi Sangh.

Harijan, 25-8-1946

On New Universities

There seems to be a mania for establishing new universities in the provinces. Gujarat wants one for Gujarati, Maharashtra for Marathi, Karnatic for Kannad, Orissa for Uriya, Assam for Assami and what not. I do believe that there should be such universities if these rich provincial languages and the people who speak them are to attain their full height.

At the same time I fear that we betray ourselves into undue haste in accomplishing the object. The first step should be linguistic political redistribution of provinces. Their separate administration will naturally lead to the establishment of universities where there are none.

The province of Bombay absorbs three languages: Gujarati, Marathi and Kannad and, therefore, stunts their growth. Madras absorbs four: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannad. Thus there is overlapping also. That Andhradesh has an Andhra University is true. In my opinion it does not occupy the place it would, if Andhra was separate administrative unit, free from foreign control. India attained that freedom only two months ago. The same thing can be said of the Annamalai University. Who can say that Tamil has come to its own in that University?

There should be a proper background for new universities. They should have feeders in the shape of schools and colleges which will impart instruction through the medium of their respective provincial languages. Then only can there be a proper milieu. University is at the top. A majestic top can only be sustained if there is a sound foundation. Though we are politically free, we are hardly free from the subtle domination of the West. I have nothing to say to that school of politicians who believe that knowledge can only come from the West. Nor do I subscribe to the belief that nothing good can come out of the West. I do fear, however, that we are unable as yet to come to a correct decision in the matter. It is to be hoped that no one contends that because we seem to be politically free from foreign domination, the mere fact gives us freedom from the more subtle influence of the foreign language and foreign thought. Is it not wisdom, does not duty to the country dictate, that before we embark on new universities we should stop and fill our own lungs first with the ozone of our newly got

freedom? A university never needs a pile of majestic buildings and treasures of gold and silver. What it does need most of all is the intelligent backing of public opinion. It should have a large reservoir of teachers to draw upon. Its founders should be farseeing.

In my opinion it is not for a democratic State to find money for founding universities. If the people want them they will supply the funds. Universities so founded will adorn the country which they represent. Where administration is in foreign hands, whatever comes to the people comes from the top and thus they become more and more dependent. Where it is broad-based on popular will, everything goes from bottom upward and hence it lasts. It is good looking and strengthens the people. In such a democratic scheme money invested in the promotion of learning gives a tenfold return to the people even as a seed sown in good soil returns a luxuriant crop. Universities founded under foreign domination have run in the reverse direction. Any other result was perhaps impossible. Therefore, there is every reason for being cautious about founding new universities till India has digested the newly-acquired freedom.

Then take the Hindu-Muslim question. The poison has assumed dangerous proportions, such that it is difficult to forecast where it will land us. Assume that the unthinkable has happened and that not a single Muslim can remain in the Union safely and honorably and that neither Hindu nor Sikh can do likewise in Pakistan. Our education will then wear a poisonous form. If, on the other hand, Hindus, Muslims and all the others who may belong to different faiths can live in either

dominion with perfect safety and honour, then in the nature of things our education will take a shape altogether pleasing. Either people of different faiths having lived together in friendship have produced a beautiful blend of cultures, which we shall strive to perpetuate and increasingly strengthen and shape, or we shall cast about for the day when there was only one religion represented in Hindustan and retrace our steps to that exclusive culture. It is just possible that we might not be able to find any such historical date and if we do and we retrace our steps, we shall throw our culture back to that ugly period and deservedly earn the execration of the universe. By way of example, if we make the vain attempt to obliterate the Muslim period, we shall have to forget that there was a mighty Juma Masjid in Delhi second to none in the world, or that there was a Muslim University in Aligarh, or that there was the Taj in Agra, one of the seven wonders of the world, or that there were the great forts of Delhi and Agra built during the Moghul period. We shall then have to rewrite our history with that end in view. Surely, today we have not the atmosphere which will enable us to come to a right conclusion about the conflicting choices. Our two months' old freedom is struggling to get itself shaped. We do not know what shape it will ultimately take. Until we know this definitely, it should be enough if we make such charges as are possible in the existing universities and breathe in our existing educational institutions the quickening spirit of freedom. The experience we will thus gain will be helpful when the time is ripe for founding new universities.

Harijan, 2-11-1947

Students

Students May Forgo Higher Education

When it is difficult for millions even to make the two ends meet, when millions are dying of starvation, it is monstrous to think of giving our relatives a costly education. Expansion of the mind will come from hard experience, not necessarily in the college or the school-room. When some of us deny ourselves and ours the so-called Higher Education, we shall find the true means of giving and receiving a really Higher Education. Is there not, may there not be, a way of each boy paying for his own education ? There may be no such a way. Whether there is or there is not such a way is irrelevant. But there is no doubt that when we deny ourselves the way of expensive education, seeing that aspiration after Higher Education is a laudable end, we shall find out a way of fulfilling it more in accord with our surroundings. The golden rule to apply in all such cases is resolutely to refuse to have what millions cannot. This ability to refuse will not descend upon us all of a sudden. The first thing is to cultivate the mental attitude that will not have possessions or facilities denied to millions, and the next immediate thing is to re-arrange our lives as fast as possible in accordance with that mentality.

Young India, 24-6-1926

Self-study

It is a gross superstition to suppose that knowledge can be obtained only by going to schools and colleges. The world produced brilliant

students before schools and colleges came into being. There is nothing so ennobling or lasting as self-study. Schools and colleges make most of us mere receptacles for holding the superfluities of knowledge. Wheat is left out and mere husk is taken in. I do not wish to decry schools and colleges as such. They have their use. But we are making altogether too much of them. They are but one of the many means of gaining knowledge.

Young India, 25-5-'31

A Student's Difficulty

A student asks :

"What should a matriculate or an under-graduate who is unfortunately father of two or three children do in order to produce a living wage, and what should he do when he is forced to marry against his will and before even the age of twenty-five?"

The simplest answer that occurs to me is that a student who does not know to support his wife or children or who marries against his will has studied to no purpose. But that is past history for him. The perplexed student deserves a helpful answer. He does not say what his requirement is. If he does not pitch it high because he is a matriculate and will put himself in level with an ordinary labourer, he should have no difficulty in earning a livelihood. His intelligence should help his hands and feet and enable him to do better than the labourer who has had no opportunity of developing his intelligence. This is not to say that

the labourer who has never learnt English is devoid of intelligence. Unfortunately labour has never been helped to develop the mind, and those who pass through schools do have their minds opened even though under a handicap not to be found in any part of the world. Even this mental equipment is counterbalanced by false notions of dignity inculcated during school and college days. And so students think that they can earn their living only at the desk. The inquirer has therefore to realize the dignity of labour and seek the maintenance of himself and his family in that field.

And there is no reason why his wife should not add to the family income by utilizing her spare hours. Similarly if the children are at all able to do any work, they too should be in spanned for productive work. The utterly false idea that intelligence can be developed only through book reading should give place to the truth that the quickest development of the mind can be achieved by the artisan's work being learnt in a scientific manner. True development of the mind commences immediately the apprentice is taught at every step why a particular manipulation of the hand or a tool is required. The problem of the unemployment of students can be solved without difficulty, if they will rank themselves among the common labourers.

Harijan, 9-1-1937

Foreign Studies

I have never been an advocate of our students going abroad. My experience tells me that such, on return, find themselves to be square

pegs in round holes. That experience is the richest and contributes most to growth which springs from the soil.

Harijan, 8-9-1946

Students and Politics

If there is one compact students' organization. It can become a mighty instrument of service. Their objective can only be one : Never for the purpose of finding a lucrative career but fitting themselves for the service of the motherland. If they were to do so, their knowledge would attain a great height. Agitation is only for those who have completed their studies. While studying , the only occupation of students must be to increase their knowledge. The education, as it is prescribed today, is detrimental, conceived in terms of the masses of India. It is possible to show that the present education has been of some use to the country. I regard it as negligible. Let no one be deceived by it. The acid test of its usefulness is this: Does it make, as it should, an effective contribution to the production of food and clothing? What part does the student world play in allaying the present senseless slaughter ? All education in a country has got to be demonstrably in promotion of the progress of the country in which it is given. Who will deny that education in India has not served that purpose ? Hence, one purpose of the organization should be to discover the defects of the present education and seek to remove them, so far as possible in their own persons. By their correct conduct they will be able to convert to their view the heads of education. If they do so, they will never be entangled in party politics.

In the revised scheme, constructive and creative programme will naturally have its due place. Indirectly, their action will keep the politics of the country free of the spirit of exploitation.

What I said in the matter of students' education at the time of the country's battle for freedom is evidently forgotten. I did not invite the students to devote themselves to politics whilst they were in schools and colleges. I had inculcated non-violent non-co-operation. I had suggested that they should empty these educational institutions and throw themselves in the battle for freedom. I had encouraged national universities and national schools and colleges.

Harijan, 7-9-1947

Political Parties and Students

Gandhiji referred to a letter by some students saying that the proposed students' strike on the 9th was being organized by the Communist students, not Congress students. Gandhiji said that while he congratulated the Congress students who had dissociated themselves from the proposed strike, he would reiterate what he had already said about such strikes, viz. that for students there should be no party politics. There should be no Socialist, Communist, Congress and other groups among students. They should be all students first and last determined to gather as much knowledge as possible and that for the sake of the service of the people, not for the sake of getting jobs.

Harijan, 18-1-1948