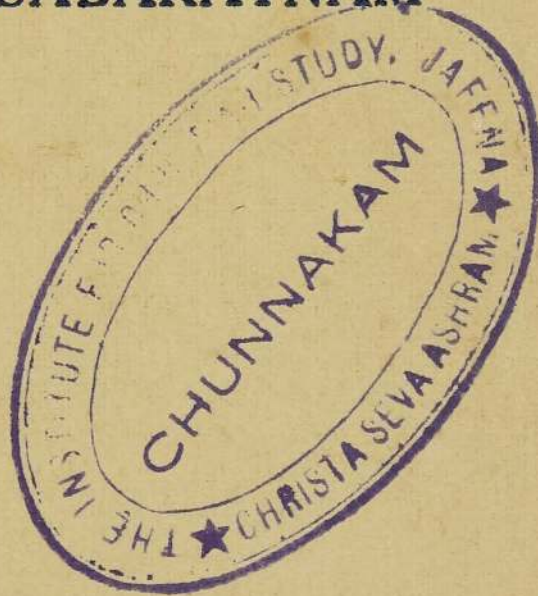


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# NATIONAL EDUCATION

## —Its Concept and Content

N. SABARATNAM



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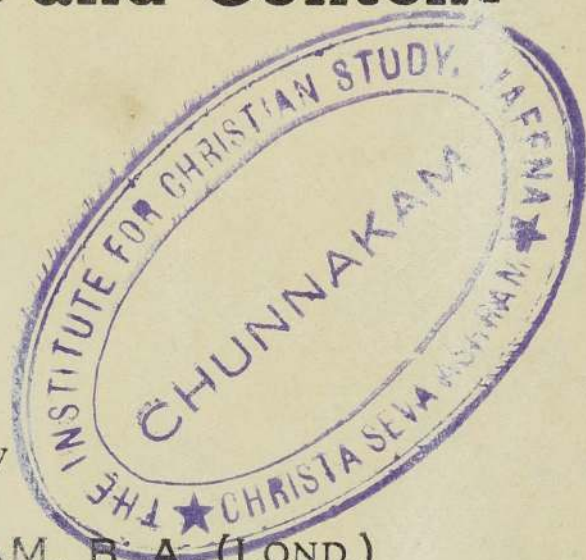
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# NATIONAL EDUCATION

## —Its Concept and Content

by

N. SABARATNAM, B. A. (LOND.)  
(ASST. MASTER, KARAINAGAR HINDU COLLEGE)



FOREWORD

by

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## FOREWORD

The teaching profession forms one of the important partners in the educational enterprise. They form an organic section of the school community; they educate the pupils in and out of the class-room; they contribute to the national thinking on education.

The thoughts contained in this little volume have been formulated by an educator for the consideration of his fellow educators. Mr. Sabaratnam has been an outstanding leader of the All-Ceylon Union of Teachers and represented this country at several conferences abroad. He has heard and read widely on education. He now essays to write on the subject of National Education.

Perhaps he makes no claims to high scholarship in the field but his ideas are the result of his experience and introspection. He commands a readable style. Like me, I dare say, many of his readers would agree with most though by no means all the ideas he has put forward. I am particularly happy that the book seeks to elucidate an ideal for Ceylon which I have tried to describe as : Four religions, one People, two languages, one Voice.

This contribution is the more welcome in view of the scanty literature on the subject in Ceylon. One should like to see more writers enter into this exciting job of examining our system of education. Perhaps Mr. Sabaratnam himself will return in more mature years to producing a major work on education. Meanwhile, a warm welcome to his first effort: NATIONAL EDUCATION—ITS CONCEPT AND CONTENT.

University of Ceylon,  
Peradeniya.  
16th March, 1961

**K. Nesiah**



## To The Reader

This little book is just an attempt to discuss some of the problems in the new educational structure that our country is planning. True, I have had to ignore some important ones and merely to glance at others. But this has been with no desire to evade them, or to belittle their importance but merely because space does not permit their treatment.

Educational reforms are intimately connected with politics, with problems of race, nationality, language and religious and social ideals, that they have become a matter of general interest as the main problem of a democratic government. In the last resort the problem of society is the problem of education; and all our social ills may be traced back to lack of right education. But radical changes in the social order will not come about by the waving of some magic wand nor by wishful thinking. They will come about only if an informed public opinion demands them, and will brook no denial of its demands. The fate and future of this country depends on how we seize the present opportunity for educational reform.

I am addressing this little volume to every teacher, parent and administrator, and to all others interested in the future of our boys and girls, in the innocent belief that it will inform public opinion and stimulate it to demand such a new order as they envisage.

It is not pretended that anything original is presented in this book, but every effort has been made to encourage readers to study works in Comparative Education and gain a proper understanding of our problems. I am greatly indebted to the inspiration I derived from the writings of Kandel, Hans, Brubacher and Mallinson. I am grateful too, to the valuable contacts I have had with leading educationists like Prof.

Harold Rugg, Prof. Lauwerys, Prof. Green, Sir Ronald Gould, Drs. Zakir Hussain, Humayun Kabir, Saiyidain and in our country Prof. Jayasuria and Mr. Nesiiah. It is too much to expect that I have not borrowed a line here or a phrase there from these authors and if I have thus unwittingly infringed copyright, I can only apologise. A special word of thanks is due to Mr. Nesiiah whose labours for Education and the Teaching Profession we teachers greatly appreciate, for his encouraging Foreword.

Jaffna, March 1961.



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## INTRODUCTION

'National Education' is on everyone's lips today and naturally so. But few find it easy to get the hang of this phrase for the concept is still a novel thing for us. It is true that nobody can devise an entirely new system of education for our country which has fairly well-established foundations and that one has to build on them, but the approach is going to be fundamentally different. Our present situation is the result of our past history but the influences that dominated us in the past have become irrelevant and even obsolete today. The needs of the public service which received undue emphasis under the colonial regime must now give way to the needs of the nation.

Education is a social process and countries that have shaken off colonialism must take in this idea and be engaged in the task of organizing their educational system on a national basis. And here comes the rub. If educational systems are controlled by national ends, it becomes the duty of teachers more than others to understand the meaning of nationalism and all the forces that contribute to it. What 'nationalism' has done to the ruin of some countries is recent history. And yet we cannot shirk the task of understanding it aright and redirecting it into channels which will ensure the progress of our country. We speak of education as developing, or tending to develop the personality of the individual. In the same way should education develop or tend to develop the personality of the people as a whole which may be termed Nationality—the expression of a people's life and culture.

Nothing is more nebulous today than the concept of nationality; it raises a host of problems which are peculiar to the political and social conditions of the countries concerned. Loyalty to a common idea is too simple a definition for a con-

cept which can be very complex in a plural society like ours. There are those who are toying with the slick solution that we become a nation if we have a common language and a common homeland which they maintain are basic of other factors, a racial unit and a common culture. Is this adequate or convincing? When we look at bilingual countries like South Africa, Canada and Switzerland, this goes to pieces. It's true that language is vital to national solidarity and yet we cannot swear by one language, as a panacea for all our national ills. Great Britain and the U.S.A. are not necessarily more united through English. Does not a sense of common interest bind the Ceylon Tamils closer to the Sinhalese inspite of different languages than to their Tamil speaking South Indian brethren across the seas? We have to view this question in proper historical perspective untrammelled by the heat and dust of the present controversy.

'Nation' and 'Nationalism' are linked with the concept of a political state; 'Nationality' implies a spiritual tie which binds together a group of individuals, that feels itself as one, so that a number of nationalities may exist side by side within the same political state." Here is Professor Barker's definition: A nation is a body of men living in a common homeland, normally drawn from different races, but possessing a common culture acquired during the course of a common history; and who besides common thoughts and feelings, also cherish a common will, and accordingly form or tend to form a separate state." National character then, is a complex thing, the sum of acquired tendencies which a national society has built through long course of history. We can now realise the variety and complexity of problems that this concept raises for education. And 'culture' is another dangerous term. "Common culture" implies the spontaneous expression of groups in a nation—the interplay between people and their

environment as manifest in their customs, manners, beliefs and all forms of folk-lore. As civilization progresses and becomes more complex, it becomes more and more difficult for any State to direct and control it. Hence one finds the spectacle of groups in a nation demanding self-determination for preserving their own form of culture.

As these problems impinge on education, a national system of education becomes essentially involved and hard to understand. It does not represent one idea. From the administrative aspect it may refer to the central administration which prescribes every aspect of educational organisation, curricula and courses of study etc. But even this is not satisfactory as a country like England enjoys a national system in spite of its freedom from rigid central control. Another idea is that national education is governed by a common purpose. There's the question—Who defines the common purpose? It may be a central authority as in Russia or the common purpose or ideal may be elusive and difficult to define as in England. Even this is an inadequate idea as this common purpose does not really permeate all schools and forms of education. A more satisfying and unifying concept is that it provides a well co-ordinated and carefully integrated level of opportunities open to all and maintained at public expense. This covers the various countries which have different forms of government. Kandel sums up this concept in his definition: "A National System of Education is one in which free and equal opportunities are afforded to all according to their abilities and in which education is actuated by certain common purposes." This concept is examined a little more elaborately later.

Whatever be the controversy over this, it is agreed that without better and much more widespread education, we cannot develop a modern economy, a modern administration

and a modern society. But even this presents a dilemma for we cannot develop such a system of education without a more modernized economy, administration and society. It is a cruel dilemma but inspite of it we are making progress. In fact, education is spreading and side by side, changes in economy are showing themselves and the gradual modernization of society is therefore inevitable. It is the task of expanding educational facilities so that all our citizens may enjoy equality of opportunity that must inspire the planners of the national system.

There has been too long a time-lag between the demands of the new situation and our traditional ways of thinking and living which has created for us a number of complicated and even unnecessary problems.

Education in the new set-up must be given a dynamic approach, because it means success in the other spheres of national reconstruction. It cannot confine itself to the narrow groove of the traditional school subjects and activities and remain indifferent to the wider issues; the students must become aware of them and must be able to adjust themselves properly to the new economic, social, political and technological developments. The building up of a proper system of national education is therefore a matter of the highest priority, not only for the educationist but also for the administrator and the statesman. Every one of their far-reaching schemes is doomed to failure if the men who are to work them out—from the planner at the top to the workers at the bottom have not been educated as efficient and mentally alert persons, possessed of initiative, resourcefulness and capacity for co-operative work. But practical and mental alertness are not enough. Today, the social and moral qualities which are necessary to ensure the good life, are even more important, It is more difficult too, to develop breadth of outlook

and the basic human quality of charity and tolerance without which we cannot make much educational headway in this country.

In the life of our nation today, education is *not* a side issue, *not* a decorative after-thought to the 'real' business of life, *not* a luxury, which only those with means may have nor a concession grudgingly extended to the under-privileged, but a basic activity which determines national progress, if not national survival. Teachers must therefore be able to sense the immensity and the importance of their task. They must also realize that they cannot deal with it by themselves but must secure the intelligent co-operation of all others interested in problems of social and human welfare. And their approach to it must be the social approach—that is in the context of the total social situation.

And the social situation is in a state of crisis today. The seemingly stable environment provided by a foreign ruler has almost collapsed with independence and the old forms of culture have lost their grip on the loyalty of youths and the new 'shape of things' is far from being clear. Teachers have therefore a difficult and critical role to play. They must make intelligent and co-operative effort. No uniform or centralized 'plan of education', however well organized, can fit them for this dynamic role. That would be against the whole spirit of democracy which calls for freedom, initiative and creative participation in the framing as well as the execution of policies. This idea is discussed later in the book under 'Government in Education'. The emphasis on 'The democratic order', I hope is not misplaced particularly when the People's Government has dedicated itself to the ideals of social justice and is concerned with the provision of equality of opportunity for the development of all citizens and ensuring for them a congenial environment for the purpose. The emphasis, however is not

on *political* democracy but on *social* democracy which would reject caste, class and other artificial divisions and on *economic* democracy which seeks to redress the glaring inequalities of wealth and privileges. It is this economic *malaise* that is the key to many a grave problem, including the communal problem that has assumed such an ugly shape today for who can deny that these communal and linguistic stresses to which our country has fallen a prey both have their roots in poverty and mass unemployment? Much of the sting in the language problem can be taken out if the government can implement without delay a co-ordinated plan for all-round economic development; and teachers are vitally concerned with this problem in that they have to turn out employable man-power.

A word again about culture. It cannot be said that I want to belittle the importance of culture in national education. We are a plural society and have been receptive to valuable cultural traits from many different sources, though we inhabit a tiny piece of land. We should not lose our sense of perspective and indulge in abortive attempts at pseudo-revivalism that will impoverish our languages, our arts, our social life and our religions. Let us 'keep the doors and windows of our heart and mind open' not only to the legacy of the past but also to all the modern trends in the East and West. We cannot afford to encourage intolerant ways either on questions of language, religion or the basic rights of minorities who claim this land as their native abode. It is *Tolerance* that will enable our infant democracy to get over this teething trouble and go forward to full-fledged nationhood.

My final emphasis is that as a multi-racial society, we have to insist that educational opportunities should be equal for *all* children, no matter to what community they belong



and that a national scheme of education must develop in our children a sense of common nationhood. This is a formidable problem and calls for sacrifice. The Sinhalese and the Tamils, each must be prepared to study the culture of their countrymen. It is asking a good deal from human nature but there seems no escape.

I have constantly referred to foreign systems of education not in the belief that we can copy anyone of them, but because they help us to gain a clearer perspective of our own problems. We cannot afford to ignore procedures which are being tried out in other countries for the same general range of problems although under conditions which are somewhat different from our own. I have endeavoured to raise our own problems and examine them as characteristically as a classroom teacher would ; for the bulk of my experience has been gathered in front of a black-board with a piece of chalk in hand. But this living experience has been enriched by extensive reading, and contact gained at international educational conferences. The problems are too difficult to permit of easy slogans or solutions, for conditions differ very much from one country to another, and what may be workable in one may not work at all elsewhere. I think it a great thing if all the facts of our situation are stated even in their hostile form and the impression created that the job however difficult can be done. I am deeply indebted to all educationists and educational gatherings from whom I have freely drawn to present this little book in this form.

Jaffna,  
February, 1961

N. SABARATNAM.

The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the  
 subject. It is shown that the problem is of great importance in  
 the theory of differential equations. The second part is devoted to  
 the study of the particular case of the problem. It is shown that  
 the problem is solvable in this case. The third part is devoted to  
 the study of the problem in the case of a general linear differential  
 equation. It is shown that the problem is solvable in this case.  
 The fourth part is devoted to the study of the problem in the case  
 of a general nonlinear differential equation. It is shown that the  
 problem is solvable in this case. The fifth part is devoted to the  
 study of the problem in the case of a general system of differential  
 equations. It is shown that the problem is solvable in this case.  
 The sixth part is devoted to the study of the problem in the case  
 of a general system of nonlinear differential equations. It is shown  
 that the problem is solvable in this case. The seventh part is  
 devoted to the study of the problem in the case of a general system  
 of differential equations with delay. It is shown that the problem  
 is solvable in this case. The eighth part is devoted to the study  
 of the problem in the case of a general system of differential  
 equations with delay and nonlinearities. It is shown that the  
 problem is solvable in this case. The ninth part is devoted to the  
 study of the problem in the case of a general system of differential  
 equations with delay and nonlinearities and with boundary conditions.  
 It is shown that the problem is solvable in this case. The tenth  
 part is devoted to the study of the problem in the case of a  
 general system of differential equations with delay and nonlinearities  
 and with boundary conditions and with initial conditions. It is  
 shown that the problem is solvable in this case.

The author wishes to express his appreciation to the  
 Department of Mathematics, University of Michigan, for  
 the hospitality and facilities provided during his visit.  
 He also wishes to thank the National Science Foundation  
 for the support of this work.

## CHAPTER I.

# Colonial Education

### The Background

In ancient Ceylon learning was always highly valued and the learned man was held in high esteem. The absence of satisfactory historical records makes any pronouncement on matters educational difficult. But the great Pali epic, the Mahavamsa is said to contain evidence that the priestly classes were traditionally entrusted with the duty of education which consequently gained a religious rather than a secular significance. Till the arrival of the first European nation in 1505 the origins of our culture and civilisation have been derived from India. Education never became merely a means for earning livelihood but preserved the intimacy of relationship with religion and was a more integral part of culture than is the case today, taken up by the teachers, generally as a labour of love and by the students as part of their training for culture and citizenship. The idea of passing examinations and taking degrees and certificates with the declared object of securing entrance into government service was practically unknown. It is a feature of much later growth forced by political and technical developments which made knowledge and skill highly lucrative. There was no regular system of education controlled and financed by the State. Education depended partly on private effort, and partly on philanthropic motives and royal patronage. It was rather informal and one could not speak with any statistical certainty of the extent to which facilities were available in education during the early period. Ceylon was the home of Buddhism and both Buddhism and Hinduism created the culture of Ceylon. They inspired our literature, architecture, art and

sculpture and the very lives of the people. They gave them a sense of oneness and unity and that 'vision without which a people perish.'

## Colonial Era

It was with the advent of the foreign rulers, particularly the British that our educational system saw the beginnings of the English school system. The colonial rulers were anxious to convert pupils to Christianity while providing themselves with skilled and loyal clerks. Those who aspired to join the learned professions or Government administration paid fees and joined the English schools. The curriculum was academic in character and the numbers in these schools were relatively small because of the fees that the students had to pay. Education was oriented on the British model and that is why our secondary schools still look like those of Britain. Our secondary education was very good for some in some places, and poor for the many in large areas. The strange phenomenon of Sinhalese and Tamil children studying English buttercups while ignoring tropical vegetation or learning poems about daffodils and the skylark they have not seen is not rare even today. The artificial walls between the school and the world outside stared at us at every turn; the rich diversity of community life was not reflected in the schools and scholars. Every lesson in the classroom was so dominated by public examinations that a teacher indulging in a lively digression would be greeted with a general murmur of 'Syllabus' by the class. The excessive importance given to English had cast upon the educated class a burden which maimed them for life and made them strangers in their own land.

One of the evils of colonialism, they say, is that the colonial power imposes its own culture on the peoples of its colonies and their indigenous culture is crushed. When two cultures come into contact it is often the ephemeral and less

worthy elements that are most easily transmitted, the material comforts of European life—the use of European clothes and drinks, bicycles and automobiles, typewriters and telephones the jazz gramophone records and European dancing—these are easily copied. So are such things as banking and office managements and business methods. But the lasting achievements of European thought and art—Plato, Beethoven, Michael Angelo, Darwin and Shakespeare are much less easily absorbed. Western education here in this colony was running a desperate race against these other influences which often got the better of the nobler elements in European culture.

In the early years of British rule neither the missionaries—pioneers of Western education, nor the government were thinking of anything so remote as self-government. The schools were training individuals rather than training a nation. It was not till after the last World War that the idea came in. The whole educational system needed a radical revision. The Special Committee on education made a start in laying down the principle that our education should be diversified and it created history by introducing Free Education from the Kindergarten to the University. But self-government is a difficult art and it does not become any easier by mere talk about educational reforms or tinkering with problems and producing piecemeal legislation. What is needed is an educational revolution. Yet it is paradoxical that the educational horizon in the colonial era steadily paved the way for such a revolution.

## **Social Revolution**

Though primary education grossly neglected during the colonial era was inadequate both in quality and quantity, Ceylon had one of the best secondary school systems in Asia. It was Britain's most distinctive contribu-

tion to modern education in Ceylon. It is the backbone of the whole educational system and the best public schools—the finest in Asia—brought about a social revolution. A knowledge of English was open sesame to the professions and people rose to power irrespective of caste or creed. These schools turned out an influential class of well-educated citizens who emerged as the middle class of Ceylonese society and from the first decade of this century they began to dominate the social and political life of the country. This rising middle class bred on English political ideas and the 'literature of revolt' demanded the right to govern themselves. Great changes have come over this picture in the last twenty years, some of them directly due to the 1939 War. One of them is a great increase in the enthusiasm for education among the peoples themselves. The greatest of course, is political independence and the parliamentary system of government.

Colonial education has been an exciting adventure whose achievements are highly inadequate to the national needs. It is true that our students who go to English Universities, normally take good honours degrees. Our students here act Shakespeare, use the calculus, perform chemical analysis, translate Tacitus, play classy cricket and dissect a frog. The landscape of colonial education is varied in matters of curriculum and organization. But it has proved unequal to the expanding demand for education. It never dared to touch the fringe of the problem of National Education.

## CHAPTER II

# What is meant by a National System of Education?

### **The Special Committee**

Education in Ceylon is passing at present through a very critical but interesting phase. This is natural because national life as a whole of which education is an integral part is also passing through such a phase. Political freedom has undoubtedly generated new urges of national life and the State has therefore to hammer out a new scheme that would respond to the genuine aspirations of the Ceylonse people. The last body which surveyed the whole range of educational policy was the Special Committee which issued its report in 1943. That Committee is of historic importance because its recommendations inaugurated free education; it also gave the first impetus to the introduction of Swabhasa into the schools by proposing that the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction in the primary school.

In the seventeen years which have passed since that time, the educational system of this country has undergone many changes some of which were indeed due to the committee's own work but whose scope and consequences could not have been foreseen by that body itself. Free education has come to stay and the State cannot, on any ground go back on this policy. But free education has brought with it the immensely increased demand for more schools. The other, perhaps the more important consequence is the production annually of about 80,000 job seekers whom the economy in its present condition of under-development cannot easily absorb. The other great revolution is the Swabhasa policy which has also proceeded much farther than the limits set by the committee. The old division between English and Swabhasa schools and correspondingly, between the

two branches of the teaching profession is obsolete. Yet the State has still to work out a coherent policy to replace the old categories by one more suited to the new order. Not the least important of the problems is the 'Sinhala Only' policy in the administration which has brought with it yet another question; how are our children who are being educated in their mother tongues of Tamil and English to be fitted to the new order so that they themselves may not be penalised in the competition for jobs?

### **Rigid System**

Reference was made to revolutionary changes like Free Education and Swabhasa since 1943, but in a fundamental sense education till today has been excessively conservative—that is, in the content of education. The Swabhasa policy has altered the medium of instruction but not its content. As was mentioned earlier, the Special Committee did make some recommendations for greater stress on technical and vocational training but apart from the ill-conceived and abortive experiment of the selective test scarcely any attempt was made to provide education suited to the child's age, ability or aptitude. Meanwhile the lack of coordination between education and the needs of economic development has grown more than ever. If planning for national development is to be a reality, there has to be a thorough revision of the content of education in order to ensure that the economy gets the trained personnel it needs. The whole system has become rigid and outworn and needs to be reorganized and made more fruitful to the many whose abilities and aspirations are deserving of a richer reward. The survey of the present position does not exclude the cultural aspect. After a decade and more of independence when our national feeling is probably more wide than during all the years of foreign rule, what changes in education do reflect the need for a new



psychology—to revive the study of our own history, literature, music, ways of life and demand the rightful place and value of Ceylonese tradition in general? Every country has the right to live its own way of life, and the privilege of making its own contribution to the life of other peoples. That all peoples should be indifferent wanderers on the face of the earth, rootless and homeless, with standardised food, customs, tools, thoughts and amusements is a prospect too dismal for contemplation. As Mazzini said, each people represent one line of thought of God. We can discover our native genius and develop it to its full expression only when we use the content of our age-long culture and the media of our national languages that have accompanied our peoples in their sojourn in their native land. A national system of education must go into the question of what characteristics are typically Ceylonese and what contribution this small but significant country has to offer in the present or in the future to the world in general.

## **The Need for a New Psychology**

It can scarcely be denied, therefore that education is one of the fields of national activity which is most badly in need of a fresh look. Much depends on the findings of the Commission that will be appointed to report on the provision, administration and content of education in the National Scheme. Their task would be the practical one of planning for the immediate future—say for the next ten years which may be regarded as transitional in Ceylon's education. The educational policy it recommends has to be acceptable to the people of Ceylon as a whole. Its guiding principle should be to preserve and sustain the growth of the national languages—Sinhalese and Tamil—and their cultures and make for National Unity. National education has even a greater function than mere education; it is a means of social change.

For one thing, the national languages alone can stimulate and enrich the creative life of the nation, serve to discover her peculiar genius and thus help to achieve her individuality among the nations of the world. For another, the national languages play a dominant role in the growth of nationhood fostering on the one hand the national sentiment and on the other the geographical and social unification of the country. A national system of schools need to have a distinctively Ceylonese tradition which will make possible a better type of manhood and womanhood than is often afforded where sectionalism bounds the school horizon. Through its personnel and greater financial resources, the national educational administration can become the instrument for making this higher type of personality possible. "The National tradition in its concrete individuality—to use the words of the Spens Report—must be the basis of an effective education." The eternal springs must be tapped to provide a place for ideals, for inspiration and for use in our new scheme of education. Sir Percy Nunn says, "A nation's schools, we might say, are an organ of its life, whose special function is to consolidate its spiritual strength, to maintain its historic community, to secure its past achievements, to guarantee its future." A national system of education in this sense is a living thing, the outcome of forgotten struggles and difficulties and 'of battles long ago'. It has in it some of the secret workings of national life. It reflects, while seeking to remedy, the failings of national characteristics.

## **Culture Pattern**

Education does not proceed in a vacuum. It cannot escape the influence of the culture pattern in which it functions and proceeds without regard to the particular environment which it is organised to serve. The culture pattern of a people includes the language, the arts, skills, beliefs, values and manners and institutions that make the life of a society

a reality. Laski wrote "People who live differently, think differently." National aspirations are born of a sense of corporate life into which people are bound by common interest, common destiny, common defeat or common glory. Such a corporate life is not necessarily based on race, language, religion, political sovereignty or geographical limitations. Various combinations of these factors will make the sense of nationalism depend on the circumstances at hand. It becomes then a centrifugal force which confers definite educational benefits. Social co-operation on a national scale, however, requires homogeneity of language and ideals on the part of every person. If this is something evolved spontaneously from the life of the people it can be a great force for good. In a multi-racial, multi-lingual society like ours which desires a sense of common nationhood, it is a formidable but not impossible problem to define 'national and cultural aspirations'. Each community must be prepared to make sacrifices. Sinhalese and Tamils who have a lot in common—look back to ancient memories and look into present necessities—must each be prepared to study the culture of their fellow-countrymen. We who trade with one another, and move with one another in various personal and public affairs and worship in common shrines hallowed by history—Kataragama, Nagadeepa, Munneswaram, Madhu—will not find the difficulties insuperable. After centuries of common national life, we should not find the problem of developing a common Nationhood an impossible one. It is in helping to develop the common nationhood that the schools can give most help to the multi-racial society.

Sinhalese and Tamil cultures do not present a picture of conflict. Both had common origins in India which by its close proximity profoundly influenced our social and cultural developments though our insular position has preserved our individuality and enabled us to evolve a culture and tradition

all our own. The Mahavamsa—A saga of Buddhism and of the Sinhalese people, itself recognizes the existence of a civilized people living in cities at the time of the landing of Vijaya. It is not my purpose to delve into controversial problems, but to point out that the two cultures have been co-existent from ancient times in this country. Let us look at the common ideals and outlook that the two races shared as is evident from their literatures. The Buddhist teachings of Ahimsa and Maitriya that make the whole world kin are not different from the tradition of Bakthi—Piety and Tolerance of the Tamil people. It was the other day, Professor J. B. S. Haldane referred to a cardinal concept of the Buddhist way of life in the words ‘Pity’ and ‘Admiration’ (to all living beings) that in no small way went to develop his life as a biologist and mentioned ‘Non-killing’ the common concept of Buddhism and Hinduism in reference to his inability to get good vegetarian meals in classy Ceylon hotels. The picture of the perfect man is painted in a well-known stanza in ‘Thirukkovaiair’ which is the work of a mystic Hindu saint Manikkavacagar who is said to have lived in the third century :

“காரணிகற்பகங் கற்றவர் நற்றுணை பாணரொக்கல்  
 சீரணி சிந்தாமணி அணி தில்லைச் சிவனடிக்குத்  
 தாரணி கொன்றையன் தக்கோர்தம் சங்கநிதி விதிசேர்  
 ஊருணி உற்றவர்க் கூரன் மற்றியாவர்க்கும் ஊதியமே.”

“He is like the very Heavens because he gives unasked ; like the Katpaka tree ready to grant whatever is asked ; guide, philosopher and friend to the learned because he is himself learned ; kinsman of artists, being one with them through common artistic pursuits ; “Chinthamani” indeed that fulfils others’ wishes ; a garland of “Konrai” flowers being a devotee of the Lord of Thillai ; an unfailing patron of the virtuous ; an inexhaustible treasure of the worthy ; beneficial like Fate both to friend and foe ; a haven of hope to those who seek shelter. Thus he is a source of good to one and all.”

There is also evidence to show that Sinhalese and Tamil poets have anticipated by a two thousand years the idea of internationalism ineffectively propounded by the West today.

“யாதும் ஊரே யாவரும் கேளிர் !”

“Every country is my country;  
Every man is my kinsman.”

Ceylon like India, has as a whole stood for the value of the spirit and the riches of the mind which can only be cultivated in an atmosphere of peace and creative living. It is also fair to say that the chief contribution of modern Western civilization is Science and its technique which has increased man's control over Nature. The future of the world cannot be assured unless we have the courage, the imagination and the good sense to combine the best values of both to an integrated pattern of life. Perhaps the most significant contribution that our country can make to the concept of a truly national culture is to reassert the primacy of the Individual over the great Collective, which has been making dangerous inroads into the territory that should belong to the Individual. The power of the State has grown so enormously in the last few decades and science has placed at its disposal such potent instruments for moulding the opinions, ideas and emotions of the citizens into a set pattern that the individual is losing his significance in the scheme of things. Now the traditional Eastern approach to culture has not always accepted this new relationship of the Individual to the great Collective. Communist China is posing a big problem in this context. True, during the long years of foreign rule, we began to forget and some of us even to despise our own cultural idiom and heritage and to copy uncritically the external forms of Western civilization. Such an attitude of inferiority, of cultural servitude did untold damage to the soul of our people. We failed to preserve our cultural and artistic integrity and to

assert our social and ethical values and thus the whole pattern of our life was greatly impoverished in meaning. Our contacts with our great neighbours—the Indians, the Chinese and other Asian peoples were remote and indirect—through borrowed Western glasses and these peoples appeared queer and outlandish.

Ours is a land where all the four great religions of the world have taken root though it is the traditional home of Buddhism pure and undefiled. These religions have always stressed the importance of bringing people together on the basis of common spiritual values. Sinhalese and Tamil cultures have been concerned less with the pursuit of wealth and power and possessive happiness than with the pursuit of Good, Truth and Creative Happiness. They have held in the highest esteem, not the power of the State or the wealth of the great businessmen or the industrialists but its saints and sages, its prophets, priests and poets. This practice still prevails when commercialism has extended its survey over our country too. Though the bulk of the people in our country too bow before power and wealth, their genuine reverence is addressed to men like Buddha, Mohammed, Christ, Gandhi and the Hindu sages whose personality taught their people the lesson of tempered renunciation rather than exploitation. We cannot establish freedom or democracy through mass murder and the use of the Atom Bomb. We cannot reform society through individuals whose own lives are unclean.

## **Felt Needs**

But this emphasis on the reform of the individual is apt to overlook the complementary need of building up the proper kind of social order which the Western countries have built up with considerable success. European civilization, what-

ever country one may go to, presents an impressive picture of better and fuller production of goods and services. We need to learn its scientific techniques in trade to eradicate the poverty, disease and ignorance which inflict the life of our masses and deny us the possibility of a rich and full life. Soviet Russia has tried with success the gigantic experiment of better and more equitable distribution of goods and services and installed social and economic justice as the guiding principle in its social economy. The proposed system of national education must deem it of prime importance to provide for the felt needs of the nation, must embrace this ideal of social justice which would ensure to all and not merely the favoured few an access to the material and cultural heritage of the race.

This concept demands radical reform of the whole educational system. Under modern conditions, a people does not become fit to govern itself by possessing a few hundred men who are well-versed in political sciences and the arts of statesmanship. These men will depend on a large body of trained administrators of all kinds. Behind the administrators must stand the technicians, the engineers, doctors, accountants and actuaries, chemists and agriculturists, and all the rest of the multifarious technicians who keep the machine of the Modern State running. And every technician must have his subordinate; moreover, however solid its technical equipment, a state will come to grief unless there is a certain standard of public virtue; if selfishness and corruption get beyond a certain level, knowledge and skill cannot save it.

What does this mean for the State that takes a positive responsibility for education? The government has to provide schools and specialised training establishments of all kinds and at all levels, so that the country may be provided with at least the indispensable minimum of these skilled people. Primary and secondary schools are not enough; there must

be trade schools and polytechnics. There must be universities, teacher-training colleges and there must be a system of scholarships with which people may be sent abroad for training which they cannot receive here. It is an ambitious programme; it will naturally cost a great deal of money; and it will need skilful planning so that the different pieces of the system are in gear with each other. Our country is not so well off as to afford this educational revolution which alone can achieve so complete an educational system, as is found in countries like Britain and the U. S. A. But it is important that money should be spent so as to provide a working model system, not the unfinished stock of a full-sized machine. This is very often not possible. It means, for example, leaving some children with no opportunity of obtaining any schooling at all, because the money which might have been spent on building and staffing primary schools for them has been spent on a secondary school or some other establishment. That is not a popular decision because people are already awake to the importance of education and every parent thinks a little schooling for his child is better than none. The building up of a balanced educational system is often not practical politics; but it remains the ideal to be achieved; and if it is not achieved there will be waste.

We have so far been concerned with knowledge and skill of various kinds that a complete educational machine is expected to provide. But knowledge is not enough. We have to aim at wisdom and virtue. Wisdom and virtue cannot be taught; but they can be caught from contact with the wise and the virtuous. The quality of education will depend on the quality of staffing; and when teachers have to impart not merely knowledge and skills but habits of thought and standards of conduct staffing should be more generous. It is in this regard that denominational institutions claim great credit for their emphasis on character building. It is a well



known psychological truth that an individual can be educated through cultural goods which are congenial to him and which provide the most favourable stimuli for his growth. Dr. Zakir Hussain an eminent educationist stressed this great educational truth in these words. "All roads lead to the Rome of a cultural life but each individual must approach it along the road designed for him and his like." We should feed our young men and women not only on the resources of our common culture but also on the best cultural tradition and heritage of their particular groups. The fundamental national problem of today is to induce every cultural group not merely to acquiesce but to rejoice in the fact that other groups want to preserve and develop the ideals and ways of life most congenial to them provided only that they do this without disparagement or danger to the national interest. It should not be thought surprising that true national co-operation not only permits but demands diversity. It is not a matter for controversy from what source one derives one's inspiration for a life of service and dedication—the devout Buddhist from the Dhammapada, the Hindu from the Thirumurais the Christian from the Bible and the Muslim from the Kuran and the Atheist from Scientific Materialism. What is important for the schools of the nation is that this particular attitude of looking upon life as an opportunity of service, as an instrument for promoting worthy causes should be carefully inculcated into the young. State interference in religion is generally unwelcome. And in our country which is multi-religious, we have to be on our guard against a highly centralised state system which may easily turn itself into the channels of taking pride in the superiority of one racial, linguistic or religious group and extend its influence in an imperialistic fashion suppressing the legitimate aspirations of the other groups. When a system of state education becomes harness-

ed to such narrow and exclusive aims, broadly patriotic or national education gives way to chauvinism and jingoism.

A word about administration. Throughout the world, there are two different trends in educational administration. Some countries are centralising and others are decentralising their administration. In fact, there is no clear principle which is right for every country at all times. Time and circumstance make what is sound policy in one country absurd in another. Where local government is highly developed decentralization may be right. With the take-over of schools by the government in our country, we have reason to fear as the English people feared, that a national plan might mean an abnormal increase in the power of the State. In a country where languages and religions can divide the people decentralised administration will definitely pave the way for the consummation of the ideal: "Two languages, one nation; four religions, one people."

## CHAPTER III

### A New Era

“More powerful than armies in the battlefield is an idea whose time is come.”—Sir Ronald Gould.

Speaking on the first of December 1960, the day on which assisted schools were taken over by the State, Prime Minister Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike said, “Today marks the beginning of a new era in which I sincerely hope that every child who comes from the poorest home would be given the same education as that I would like to give my own son Anura.” The first woman Prime Minister of the world might have indulged in tall talk, for there are those who believe that it is easier for a camel to enter a needle’s eye than for the poorest child in the country to enter the portals of Anura’s institution. But yet she was referring to one of the common but distinctive elements in education—equality of opportunity.

#### **Equality of Opportunity**

All schools generally and public schools in particular, must be visible symbols of the principle that the role of education is the equalization of opportunity within the community. It is generally agreed that the children are the greatest investment of a nation. Care must be taken to see that these assets are used to the best advantage of the community. This will require that facilities be offered to each child according to its need and services expected from it according to its capacity. In no other way can an optimum use of our human material be made. Even such a state would not lead to absolute equality nor can it be a function of the State to achieve equality in that sense. There must be differences in aptitude, taste and ability between different

individuals. It is however, the function of the State to ensure the equalization of opportunity and thus create within the community a sense of democratic solidarity and well-being. And yet this idea tends to be overlooked by the parents and the public. This is an idea which has an enormous motive power everywhere today. This has caught the imagination of people in different countries at different times, but it is now encircling the entire globe. It provides much of the compulsive power, the energy, the drive and the dynamism behind educational reform today. And what is this idea? It is that in the realm of education, sex, colour, wealth, social position and place of birth are all vulgar irrelevances, that it is wrong to provide for some children facilities and opportunities denied to others.

At the time the French Revolution broke out at the end of the 18th century, France determined that education was the duty of the State. This was indeed a revolutionary idea totally unknown in England and in most other countries at that time. But there was an even more revolutionary development. France decided that education was the right of all. Men have been treated equal and therefore they were entitled to equal rights, and to enjoy equal rights, France concluded, education was essential. Thus the idea of equality of opportunity was born in a modern state. Translating this idea into practical terms however, was a gradual process. For something like 170 years this idea in education has been, and still is guiding, urging and challenging the French Nation.

## England

In this matter England has lagged behind France. It came late into the field. It was not until 1944 that England declared in an act of Parliament that every child should be educated according to his age, ability and aptitude. There were many reasons why the idea gripped England so late. Its liberal tradition with its distrust of government in the field

of education and its dependence upon voluntary agencies, made equality of opportunity almost impossible of achievement. Further the class structure of English society ran counter to the whole idea. English people experienced Disraeli's two nations and understood Carlyle's dandyism and drudgeism. Educational opportunity was not equal and the majority of the people did not want it to be equal. But the evolution of a system providing state aid while preserving voluntary effort and local initiative and the changes in social structure caused by the two World Wars removed the major obstacle to the practice of this principle.

## Difficult Idea

Today the idea is at work in all the progressive countries of the West and the East. It will continue to affect the tempo of educational advance. Though all this sounds attractive, in practice it is difficult to achieve. Children differ in height, weight, beauty, brain-power, sex, race, wealth and in a host of other things and still we assert that in spite of these differences, all should be given an equal chance. But how? It is comparatively easy to establish strict equality in all the spheres susceptible to statistical measurement; but education, it must be remembered is fundamentally a question of mind and spirit and it is in this sphere of what is taught and how it is taught, that doubts arise as to how equal opportunities are to be provided.

To list a few doubts—should children in secondary schools be taught in common or should there be separate schools for the academic, the technically-minded and the rest? Should children be separated into streams of equal ability? Should some or all children be allowed to specialize? And if so, to what extent? The task of reorganising the school system, to enable the right pupil to receive the right education from the right teacher is by no means easy. The fundamental problem is to discover

what a pupil can do and help him to do it. The heart of the problem is found in an efficient and reliable system of guidance. But perhaps more important and more difficult than that is the task of convincing parents of the soundness of any professional advice. The provision of secondary education for all cannot be altogether separated from a consideration of the absorptive capacity of a nation's economy. The guidance of youth is therefore concerned with the general education appropriate to their ability and with the vocational preparation best suited to their aptitudes. This brings home to us the essential responsibility of the State to reconstruct secondary education—a colossal task indeed and one that cannot be carried out overnight. However, it is necessary to develop at least some schools of a better type in every district. From the nature of the case a vast majority of people must end their formal schooling at the end of the middle school. Even in countries like the U. S. A. or the U. S. S. R. universal free education is available only up to the age of 15 or so, while secondary education proper begins at that stage. In our country too a definite target must be laid down to provide compulsory universal and free education and it must be reached. Higher secondary education will therefore be the prerogative of only a minority. In such a context the attempt to provide a superior type of secondary schools can be justified only if they serve as pilot projects which will ultimately raise the quality of secondary education for the country as a whole. In a community pledged to democracy and the equalization of opportunity for all, such a step can be sanctioned only if access to better schools is based on merit alone. Merely to open the doors of all schools to all pupils will not itself prove equality.

### **Age, Ability and Aptitude**

How is merit judged? It is again a nebulous term. How do we equalize opportunities unless we have schools

which offer a variety of courses. As we all can see one of the main defects of the existing system is that it is unilinear. All pupils in secondary schools have at present to follow more or less the same pattern. This retards their growth for it is obvious that the same pattern cannot suit all. How many of us teachers have taken the Cumulative Records seriously? They are still one of the many meaningless things we maintain in our schools. And yet look at the wealth of information sought about pupils in those sheets. It is of a bewildering variety related to the age, ability and aptitude of pupils. What lies behind these three words—age, ability, aptitude? What lies ahead of them? They summarise concisely what people have come to regard as the essence of national education in any country. It is the child that matters, both as an individual and as a member of society; and our job as teachers is to understand the child, to respect him and to help him in every possible way to develop himself to his full capacity.

## **Adolescence**

This again emphasises the inescapable necessity for a thorough reorganization of education in the secondary schools. The characteristics of childhood are on the whole well marked and uniform. One is therefore on fairly safe ground in dealing with children. They have to be trained to certain habits of thought and action and given a certain amount of information. But secondary education deals with boys and girls just when they are changing from childhood into early youth. The whole period of adolescence is thus covered by secondary education. They are then passing through physical, psychological and emotional changes of profound significance to the individual and the community. They must therefore be treated with special sympathy, care and imagination. Let us remember that adolescents are neither children nor adults and that they pass from one phase to the other with bewildering speed.

Since adolescence is marked by differences in taste and aptitude, secondary schools must cater to the diverse needs of the adolescent. With growing differences in taste and aptitude, the case for a uniform type of education is gone. Each adolescent must find in the school something which calls out its latent qualities. A broad division is generally made of pupils into those who have a practical bent of mind, those who are fond of mathematics and sciences, those who are sensitive to one of the fine arts and those who have an aptitude for the humanities. The problem of secondary education according to this idea in Ceylon is to provide diversified courses for the children, while maintaining a core of common subjects for all. This will ensure that every pupil in the school can find something to suit his or her taste.

### **Observation**

Education according to this idea is not a matter of mere imparting of information but a living contact between the mind of the teacher and the taught. Residence is perhaps the decisive factor which makes education in a public school superior to education in the ordinary type of secondary school. Our ancient civilization realised the importance of residence as an educative principle. In the old oriental system pupils went to live with the teacher. Today all this has changed. The secondary school today is often nothing better than a teaching shop where there is hardly any personal contact between the teacher and the taught. The special responsibility brought by the new idea inherent in the words, age, ability and aptitude to the teacher's job is observation—a vital part of the teaching technique today. This is a very exciting and elusive task but needs to be done. We must know all we can about all the versions of the child, if we really want to assess his abilities and aptitudes.

That leads to team effort—the pooling of experiences of the entire staff as a team. The English Education Act of



1944 which mentions this phrase 'Age, ability, aptitude' brought full public recognition to the fact that teaching was a highly skilled professional job making constant demands on judgment. Even the entire teaching staff needs the parents' cooperation. Teachers should not be secretive in schools and resent the parent. The school is a community, a family of children, teachers, parents and the body of managers. But families need friends to share their joys and sorrows. We must extend this circle of friends, broaden the basis of our own school and study the social problems around the school, which we often tend to regard as nobody's business. This calls for qualities of social conscience in the teacher.

## **Experiment**

How does this idea work in the classroom? What is the kind of fare most suited to the child? No doubt the diet must be digestible at the moment. But we must also keep half an eye on his future. The future of course is not ready made. It may therefore be necessary to break with tradition and experiment. There are a number of barriers in our school system—barriers between one lesson and another, between one subject and another, between one school and another. In this era of the three A's a teacher can only get satisfaction from a feeling of confidence that his pupils have assimilated something substantial and that they are gaining steadily an ability to learn and use knowledge wisely.

What about activities, projects and centres of interest? In some schools they become a fetish and are regarded as ends in themselves. I have sometimes felt fed up with school excursions to irrelevant places at unseasonal parts of the year and gained the pathetic impression that they were done to cover the set scheme. We must avoid such 'bogus' activities and ensure that we are concerned with centres of the children's interest. What about discipline? We deplore a lot

about the decline of discipline in schools. We must train children to understand the need for mental discipline. Nothing worthwhile can be done without it. But we must not impose our adult standards upon them. It may occasionally be necessary to enforce discipline; but enforced discipline is totally out of keeping with the modern conception of education. If there is a colossal need for such a thing, there is probably something seriously wrong in the life of the community. The real thing we must provide in our schools, apart from lessons, methods, projects and so on is the atmosphere and environment and stimulus for developing a good 'way of life.'

## Freedom

What is the role of the administration? Administration must suppress its powers as much as it possibly can. It must give the teachers freedom to use their own judgements, provided they are experienced and cultivated in the art of teaching. It must recognize the essential unity and uniqueness of each individual school with its own aims, ideals and loyalty and provide a well balanced and stable staff and extend the availability of normal recreational facilities.

'Age, ability, aptitude' is at once the children's charter and the teachers' charter. It pays children the respect of regarding them as real people. It confers upon teachers the greatest possible measure of freedom—freedom of thought, action and judgment. It involves an obligation to be always alive and sensitive to the world of today with a high sense of responsibility, because teachers with their own judgments and their own personalities are inevitably moulding the nation of tomorrow.

## CHAPTER IV

# Provision and Organization of Education

Education for children must be the first call on the nation's resources. Compulsory education is one of the cardinal concepts of a democratic state. Perhaps the most stupendous task facing Ceylon and other countries that attained independence recently is the reconstruction and expansion of the system of education. An immense programme of primary education and reorganisation of secondary and higher education and rapid expansion of scientific and technical education has to be provided almost simultaneously. Nor could the task of enriching the cultural life of the nation be ignored. There are many obstacles that have to be overcome and the best way is for the state to step in and assume full responsibility. The English Education Act of 1944 provided a suitable framework for a genuinely democratic system of national education for England. According to the Act it is the statutory duty of the Minister of Education to promote the education of the people of England and Wales and the progressive development of instruction devoted to that purpose and to secure the effective execution by local authorities under the control and direction of the national policy for providing a varied and comprehensive educational service in every area. The duty of the parent is laid down thus: It shall be the duty of the parent of every child of compulsory school age to cause him to receive efficient full time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. This is an exceedingly responsible charge. The success of this Act largely depended upon how conscientiously parents discharged their duty.

It is rather ironic that our country which boasts of free education from the Kindergarten to the University has still

no direct law of universal primary education. It must also be remembered that about 400,000 children do not receive any education at all. This is a great slur indeed on the educational activity of the State. The change-over from colonial to national administration demands sufficient provision for compulsory, complete and free education. The progressive waste of national man-power must be arrested. The government has taken over all assisted schools perhaps in the belief that nationalization in general is a sign of national advance. Whatever that be, this measure makes it obligatory on the part of the State to provide for this important and urgent need.

## **Education for All**

When compulsion is introduced it will be the duty of the State to provide the necessary schools. These schools should be adequate in quality and equipped with such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of the different ages, abilities and aptitudes of the pupils. For this purpose, it will be necessary for the authorities to estimate the immediate and prospective needs of each area and prepare a development plan for such an area. It will also be necessary by suitable legislation to require parents to send their children of compulsory school-age to one or other of the schools provided in the scheme of compulsion, and to enforce regular attendance of the children.

Statutory provision for compulsory education is not sufficient; the state must step in to remove the other obstacles like poverty of parents leading to undernourishment, inability to provide adequate clothes, lack of transport and text books. This problem involves financial considerations for the State and should be a basis for National Planning. Again the question of compulsory education sets a limit to the extent of education available within the foreseeable financial resources.

of the State. At the present stage of national development it must be possible for the state to provide for compulsory education for all children up to the Junior Secondary stage between the ages of five and thirteen.

It is not, however, possible to draw a rigid line between the different stages of education, which imperceptibly merge into one another. Reconstruction of the Primary and Junior Secondary stage in education would not be possible without a corresponding extension of Secondary Education. Teachers at the primary level are products of the secondary schools. Again the determination of national policy depends largely on the decision of the national leaders. They are in the main derived from those who have received higher education. The full benefit from such education cannot however be derived if the preparation at the secondary stage has been incomplete or defective. Secondary education has therefore a vital role to play in any programme of national education. It is the stage which generally marks the completion of education for the vast majority. Even the select group which goes for higher education cannot take full advantage of the wider opportunities offered by the universities unless they are well grounded in a system of sound secondary education. Again, as it was pointed out earlier, it is the few who go beyond the secondary stage that provide the higher leadership but the country needs a vast body of men who are well trained to carry out the programmes of work initiated by the leaders. Secondary education trains this vast group who will interpret the purposes of the leadership to the rank and file. Primary education seeks to provide the basic skills and information needed for survival. Higher education seeks to extend the boundaries of knowledge and is often an end in itself. Secondary education is the connecting link between them and also serves to select those who are to provide higher leadership to the nation.

## Location of Schools

It is necessary that primary education should, as far as possible, be carried to the door of the children. A planned distribution of schools over a district should be the first step towards the spread of education and the introduction of compulsion. One primary school for a population of 1000 is a reasonable amenity. Schools may work in shifts to overcome the shortage of school buildings and staff. Shift system will also benefit the children of poor parents who utilise their children for domestic work. The government must take full responsibility for ensuring that properly trained teachers are available in sufficient numbers for these schools see that they are adequately paid, that school buildings conform to minimum standards in sanitation and equipment and that facilities are available for children that need free meals, clothing and text books.

## One Unit

As far as possible, a secondary school should be one complete unit, so that pupils may have an opportunity of studying under one roof for the full period of their secondary education. This will help to secure for them senior members of the teaching profession and principals of standing and repute to guide the teaching in all classes and give the necessary tone to the school as a whole. Besides it becomes a fertile field for student leadership by retaining the sixth form in the same school, which normally sets the standard in extra curricular activities particularly in the field of sports. Truncated secondary schools can never train character and there cannot be much scope for the development of personality of the pupils in such schools. The principle governing the location of secondary schools should be that pupils should find it possible to live in their homes and attend schools. It is not psychologically sound to deprive pupils of that age from home influ-

ence and homely surroundings. But some of the attractive features of residential schools can be introduced in them. It ought to be possible to devise some adaptation of the House System and other features which are normally found in residential schools and try them with advantage in the Day Schools. Secondary schools should spread out to rural areas instead of being concentrated in large towns. The pupils trained in such schools would find it easy to settle down in rural surroundings and contribute their best to rural life. This will also arrest the estrangement of the educated classes from the rural folk and the unwillingness of educated boys and girls to return and settle down in rural areas.

Agriculture will naturally be the most important industry of the country and form the main occupation in the rural areas. The need, therefore, to educate the youth of the country to a proper appreciation of the role played by agriculture in the national economy must be stressed in all schools. The student should take to its study not with a sense of drudgery but with delight and self expression in productive work. Horticulture and Animal Husbandry can be suitable allied subjects and will prove useful in providing employment during off-seasons. The training in such occupations should be treated as part of the course in agriculture.

## **Residential Schools**

It is well-known that all homes and parents are not in a position to offer an educative environment for their children. Hence residential schools have a definite place in any scheme of secondary education. Parents' transfer from one place to another makes it necessary to have recourse to residential schools. These schools can offer training in social behaviour, community life and social service and pupils can take part more fully in extra-curricular activities than in a Day-school. Some of the salient features of a Public School will be embodied in the

residential schools. They should, however, not be special institutions but must have their roots in the soil of the country and must conform to the pattern of national education. They should place due stress not only on sports but on all other aspects of citizenship, the dignity of labour and a social sense. Their general educational life must be in conformity with Ceylonese culture, traditions and outlook.

## **Regimentation**

There is one aspect of educational provision which causes concern to educationalists throughout the world. This quantitative expansion always carries with it a risk of deterioration in quality. We have therefore to ensure that extension of facilities will not lead to a lowering in the standard of education. We have also to ensure that education will develop the free and creative spirit, while preserving the social values of divergent cultures. There is another risk. Expansion in the facilities of education may also lead to regimentation. Whenever we are dealing with large numbers, there is a temptation to take the line of least resistance and find solutions which will apply by and large to the masses. The problem of regimentation is not so serious at the primary level, since the duration is not long enough and children are resilient and would protect themselves against being set in too rigid patterns. Any attempt at uniformity in the secondary school may degenerate into regimentation. There is the risk of destroying qualitative differences and making it difficult to decide about the choice of a future career. It may also create a kind of society where all existing values are accepted blindly or denied equally blindly.

## **Organization**

It is worth repeating that secondary education is a complete unit by itself and not merely a preparatory stage; that at the end of this period, the student should be in a position,



if he wishes, to enter on the responsibilities of life and take up some useful vocation. Age is, therefore, of considerable importance. It is now generally agreed that the period of secondary education covers the age group of about 13 to 17 years. Properly planned education, covering about 7 years, should enable the school to give a thorough training in the courses of study taken up by the student and also help him to attain a reasonable degree of maturity which would stand him in good stead in later life.

Secondary education at present is isolated from life and does not give the pupils insight into the everyday world. When they pass out of school, they feel ill-adjusted and cannot take their place confidently and competently in the community. In spite of this major defect the present system has produced many splendid leaders and teachers and fine students. We cannot indulge in a wholesale condemnation of the existing system. We can only discover defects and suggest remedies. We cannot wipe our slate clean but only add a little here and rub out a little there though finally we may succeed in effecting a thorough overhaul.

With the expansion of educational facilities for free and compulsory education students with a very wide variety of talents will be seeking education in future. Our secondary schools should no longer be "single-track" institutions but should offer a diversity of courses calculated to meet varying aptitudes, interests and talents which come into prominence towards the end of the period of compulsory education. They should provide more comprehensive courses including both general and vocational subjects ; pupils should have an opportunity to choose from them according to their needs. Diversification of courses does not mean that something called "general" education is to be provided for some select group while others are to be given "practical" or "technical" edu-

cation. It must be remembered that the intellectual and cultural development of different individuals takes place best through a variety of media, that the book or academic subjects is not the only door to the development of personality. It is revealed, indeed, that many children flower forth, with their latent energies unlocked by practical work intelligently organised rather than by traditional subjects which address themselves only to the mind, or worse still, to the memory.

### **Multi-purpose Schools**

The Secondary Commission Report of India recommends the introduction of diversified courses which will be provided in Multi-purpose schools. A multi-purpose school seeks to provide varied types of courses for students with diverse aims and abilities. It endeavours to provide for each individual pupil suitable opportunity to use and develop his natural aptitude and inclinations in the special course chosen by him. The main advantages claimed for this kind of school are :

- (i) It removes all invidious distinctions between different courses of studies and breaks down the sense of inferiority associated with vocational subjects.
- (ii) It provides a greater variety of educational media and thereby facilitates proper educational guidance in the choice of studies.
- (iii) It helps to solve the problem of the wrongly classified pupil because transfer within the same school is easier to arrange than transfer from one school to another.

All schools need not be of this type. There will be room for unilateral schools also which may be necessary to provide particular types of vocational courses according to the occupational needs of the community.

In Denmark the complete secondary school is of 7 years' duration consisting of a 4 year middle school and a 3 year

senior secondary school. There is a rich variety of courses for young persons wishing to obtain vocational competence or further general education.

In England there are secondary schools of various kinds at which pupils stay for varying lengths of time. The grammar schools prepare students for the university and for other types of higher education. There is a large variety of continuation courses leading to competence in various branches of employment.

In the United States there is a wide variety of continuation courses at various levels, particularly in the Community College offering four different types of courses.

All these point to the necessity of adopting a flexible organizational pattern in our country to cater for pupils who wish to pursue courses either as terminal courses or as preparation for higher courses of study.

There is general support for the system that the first five years of schooling need be of a common type. Thereafter the students may be divided into three broad groups. Those who intend to go for higher education would for three years read in what may be called the junior secondary course. Those whose education is to end at the middle school, would follow a three years' practical course. The third category would not complete their education at fourteen, but would take up a vocational course of two or three years' duration. The most sensible and safe principle one can lay down is to insist that there must be no rigid division between these alternatives. It would be unjustified to insist that the separation of the sheep and the goats must take place at eleven-plus. There must, therefore, be provision for different types of courses after eleven-plus. There must also be perfect freedom of moving from one stream to another at any time

between the ages of eleven to fourteen, if not later. Secondary education must be a preparation for life, for all vocations except those which require high scientific or professional training.

## Language

Another problem in secondary education in our country is the question of languages. The main weakness in the existing system has been the use of English as the medium of instruction. This imposed a burden on the majority of the pupils and arrested their full development. The progressive use of the mother-tongue, as the medium of instruction has settled this problem to some extent though it has created fresh problems in the universities. The other difficulty arises out of the use of Sinhala only as the official language and the disadvantage of using two or three languages as media of instruction in a small country. Different media may weaken the sense of national unity which hitherto has considerably been promoted by the study of English. The claim of the official language as the second language of study for those whose mother-tongue is not Sinhalese cannot be resisted too long. But the current controversy over adequate recognition of Tamil as the other national language, if settled sensibly, will open the eyes of all leaders and statesmen to the sane solution that genuine nationhood can only be built up by the people acquiring a working knowledge of each other's language and becoming familiar with each other's culture. It may be considered a burden to insist on the pupils' studying the three languages—the mother tongue, the other national language and English. The objection would be serious if they were required to study the literature of these languages. For the majority however, the study would be confined to only a working knowledge of two languages. In the special circumstances of Ceylon there seems no escape from this solution.

In countries like Belgium, Switzerland and Russia three languages have not proved an undue burden because of the suitable methods of study used. Let us therefore not be disheartened like the Delhi lad who misread the text in a moving train "Less luggage, greater comfort" as "Less language, greater comfort." Let us understand each other by understanding each other's language and understand each other's language by understanding each other.

### **Admission**

With regard to selection, it is not desirable to impose the strain of admission examination, on tender pupils at this stage. No doubt there is a mad scramble for places. Admission can well be regulated by school records and simple tests. A lot will depend on the principals of schools and supervisors of the Upper and Middle School who are called upon to study and judge the school records of the pupils. They must be on their guard to relate educational opportunity to ability. With regard to diversification of courses the moot point is whether pride of place must be given for multi-purpose schools or for the establishment of different types of secondary schools. There is at times a suggestion of inferiority in the technical or vocational courses provided in separate schools. In a country like Ceylon where tradition exalts intellectual at the cost of manual labour, provision of different courses in different schools would have confirmed the social aversion to manual work. The provision of technical, agricultural or other professional courses in the same school as purely academic courses will be a visible symbol of the equal worth of these disciplines.

To sum up, primary education must be made compulsory for all children from 5 to 11. So, too, should secondary education be at least up to the junior stage of age 13. Compulsion may cease after that age. How far should parents be free to choose among the alternative courses of education available? The principle that secondary education should

be provided to pupils according to their age, ability and aptitude should be followed, due attention being paid to the wishes of parents. But this should not mean that every parent can get for his child exactly what he would like best. His child must reach a certain minimum level of academic attainment as revealed by entrance tests and cumulative records. In the leading schools the standard will naturally be fairly high. Further his child must be vouched for by the headmaster of his previous school as sound in character and of an ability to profit by what the school of his choice has to offer. The really able boy will find no obstacles that he cannot easily overleap. But the less able children will be placed in vocational or technical courses. The stress is on *age, ability and aptitude*; and the wishes of parents, important as they are, take second place to that.

## Handicapped Children

We have so far been concerned with the education of normal children. There are, however, unfortunately other children who, by reason of physical or mental disability, cannot cope with the rigour and stress of normal school life—sufferers, for example, from deafness, blindness, lameness, epilepsy or sub-normal intelligence. It is the duty of the education authorities to inform themselves about children so handicapped and to provide special schools for them in which appropriate medical care is available. There are over 600 special schools in England with 50,000 children and 4,000 teachers. These schools are not awful places. By segregating the handicapped you make them normal. It must be a great consolation to parents to know that, if in their family there is a beloved child who is handicapped, he or she will be cared for and trained in a special school with probably more care and love than could be expected for normal children anywhere.

There still remain what we may call problem children—children not suffering from any physical or mental defect, but who are either eccentric or intractable. and whose conduct no amount of coercion or encouragement seems to improve. No hard and fast solutions can be offered, but the greatest need is patience. Experience as a schoolmaster shows that quite often a boy grows out of his disability later on, if firm sympathetic and just treatment is constantly given. Very often the trouble is due to his powers of body and mind growing faster than his self-respect, social sense and responsibility; and when these catch up the main difficulty is solved. A good psychologist can often be of help, and so can the family doctor and the class teacher. Diagnosis by one whose expert task is to minister to a mind and soul diseased is of great importance in order that, if possible, the deep-seated and sub-conscious causes of the trouble may be discovered. Yet the fact must be honestly faced that for a few boys the community of school life is not satisfactory, and the best must be made of whatever educational facilities are available.

## CHAPTER V

# The Government of Education

Implicit in the take-over of our schools is the assumption of complete responsibility for education by the State. The Ministry of Education which regulates educational policy throughout the country will be responsible for the administration of all kinds of schools under its care. Centralized control is therefore a necessity to provide universal compulsory education, and make equality of opportunity a reality. In the Brave New World we are attempting to build up out of past practices and present conflicts, we cannot escape considerable measure of central control. We are not thinking of the totalitarian system in countries like Russia, or Germany and Italy under the Nazi and Fascist regimes, when it was possible to impose a rigidly centralized administration to the exclusion of the participation of the public or any of its associated groups; but rather the kind of centralized control which will take account of the prevailing culture pattern and of the aims and aspirations of the people as a whole.

### **Different Trends**

The advantages that are usually claimed for the centralized system are that opportunities are equalized, and that the rural and more remote areas have as good educational facilities as the more advanced and progressive urban areas; that the quality of education provided is uniform because all schools are provided with teachers possessing the same qualifications, and that the system is efficient because the same standards are set for all schools. This, ofcourse, is only true to a point. All teachers are not of equal calibre even if they have all followed identical courses and passed the same examinations, nor can we seriously maintain that the more able and more ambitious teachers are willing to bury them-



selves in remote country areas. A more fundamental defect of the highly centralized system, however, is that local initiative and enterprise is stifled and there is no real incentive to individuals and groups to challenge accepted because practised doctrines. "One of the worst consequences of a centralized administration", says Lester Smith, "is that it saps the independence of a school, destroys its sense of being a corporate society, and detaches its loyalty from the neighbourhood it serves". The real merit of the British system lies in the wide diversity of educational provision made possible through a policy of complete decentralization. There is very close partnership between the Ministry, the Local Education Authorities and Teachers in England. Partnership to be real has, as Dr. Johnson said of friendship, to be kept in constant repair. If not in frequent use, it rusts and becomes ineffective. This partnership is very active in England and the three constituents meet constantly to discuss problems of many kinds. French schools, they say, suffered stagnation because of a strongly centralized system that whittled away the power and influence of local authorities to virtually nil. Napoleon himself at the beginning of the nineteenth century blessed this kind of control with the words "My aim in establishing an educational corporation is to be able to direct political and moral opinions." In the purely totalitarian states, there can be no conflicting opinions and no criticism of theory and practice. Democracy for the Russians, considered from the educational point of view, means training in dialectical materialism and in socialism. Though there is some decentralization of administration in Russia in the sense that local bodies are required to maintain school buildings and approve the appointment of teachers and take an active interest in the provision of facilities for the improvement of teaching efficiency and extra-curricular activities, they can have no say in the planning of the school syllabus, in the choice of text books nor in the approach to the teaching of the subjects in the curriculum. As one

Russian university professor once put it : "Our education sets itself the task of creating all-round, active determined possessors of knowledge and of the proletarian world outlook, devoted to communism, builders and defenders of a socialist society." One could not hear of more simple statement of a completely totalitarian aim.

## Democracies

In the democratic countries like France, Belgium, Sweden and Holland, the system of educational administration is centralised in many ways similar to that of the U. S. S. R. But the purposes behind the control in these countries are neither political nor ideological but based on a definite theory of education based in the light of the past achievements and endeavours of each of these countries. Again, control of education is limited to the actual work done in the schools to provide a uniform school system and not extended to cover the private lives of teachers, parents, pupils and citizens outside the schools. A parent or teacher may hold whatever political or religious view he pleases, may send his children to a private "free" school. Generally speaking, the democratic countries that have some kind of centralized control use their power to make certain that the pupils in the schools have gained a certain body of knowledge and a mind trained to think for itself. It is also true that without direct state intervention, the organization and provision of adequate educational facilities for all children would have been impossible in countries like Holland, Belgium and Scandinavia, just as it was proving impossible in England until the passing of the 1944 Education Act which itself proved a step towards a more centralized control.

The ideal to be achieved by those countries which (unlike the U. S. A.) still believe in the importance to the country as a whole of the formation of an intellectual élite is a

balanced control between the central and the local authorities that achieves real liberty with a high degree of conformity. The Dutch system claims success in this direction. In the predominantly Catholic countries—in particular France and Belgium a working solution on the basis of “Liberty without the State System” was achieved. The State has undertaken the maintenance and development of a neutral system of education open to all who care to profit by it. Those who are not satisfied with it may, if they so wish, establish side by side with the State school, private schools which become their entire responsibility. In principle the State adopts a passive attitude towards such schools. The Dutch system can be termed “Liberty within the State System.” Passivity is replaced by active State intervention. Thus the State actively assists the development of such schools as are not state managed, provided certain guarantees are given that the instruction in those schools will be equivalent to, though not necessarily identical with that given in the neutral schools. Since 1945 both France and Belgium have felt compelled to treat the Catholic private schools in their respective countries in somewhat similar lines by granting state subsidies proportionate to those voted for the State schools towards their upkeep and general maintenance.

## Balanced Control

But for a democratic country like ours, which is the home of various communities differing in language, race, religion and culture, Holland is interesting and instructive with her peculiar form of decentralization. Though the Ministry of Education supervises the whole system it does not act as the supreme authority. Its function is to achieve uniformity of standards and of educational opportunity throughout the country ; to pay the salaries of all approved teachers in whatever schools they serve, to regulate the execution of the pro-

gramme of studies, to see that regulations effecting efficiency in schools are complied with and to make a large contribution towards the upkeep of the secondary schools proper. The immediate responsibility for the provision of adequate primary, secondary and technical education falls on the Local Authorities, the public schools being managed by the Municipal Council and a Board of local chiefs, the "free" schools being privately managed but the local authority being held responsible for supplying the necessary school buildings. The Local Authorities appoint local education committees on which parents, teachers and other local citizens are represented. In short, the Local Authorities pay all current expenses and provide the buildings for all types of schools, the ministry pays all salaries and in addition makes adequate grants towards the efficient maintenance of good secondary education. The Dutch love of freedom finds in modern times its fullest expression in the present system which harmoniously combines the benefits of both a centralized and decentralized system of educational administration.

In Scandinavia the decentralized system was imposed on the people by a Lutheran Church which seriously held that Christian salvation came through enlightenment of the people and the only way to work at the people's level was through the small parish community. The Norwegian "People's School" (primary school) is run by the local authority, its management being the direct responsibility of the people. In every municipality there is a school board appointed by the elected municipal council, but which must contain a clergyman of the State Church nominated by the bishop, and a teacher nominated by his own colleagues. This school board is held responsible for the management of the school according to the existing laws of the country. An overall control of primary education is maintained by the Ministry. The secondary schools can be either state or municipally controlled.

A state secondary school has a board of governors consisting of the head master, a representative of the ministry, one representative of the teaching staff, and from one to four members of the local authorities in whose district the school is situated. The school boards act as governors for the municipally controlled school. The final school leaving examination is the same throughout the country and is organized by a special council of secondary education. The total expenditure on education is roughly divided equally between the local authority and the state. Both Sweden and Denmark enjoy the same administrative pattern. An interesting feature in Denmark is that if the parents so desire they may establish a Parents' Council which shall have the power of school inspection and which may assist the Board of Education in the selection of teachers—this for primary schools only, appointments of staff and general supervision of the secondary schools being the direct concern of the Ministry.

### **Academic Education**

One interesting feature in most of these countries,—no matter whether the system be centralized or decentralized—is that they believe strongly in the advantages gained from a strictly academic type of education. As a result, education at the secondary level is generally considered far too important a concern to be left in the hands of local authorities, and the State has increasingly made this type of education its special concern. Both England and the U. S. A. are the opposite in this respect. These two countries have shown a widespread opposition to uniformity and educational monopoly of any kind. In both countries there is strong feeling against delegating the control of education to a central national authority, an equally strong belief in local control as a method of stimulating voluntary effort on the part of the community. Both countries have had to realize the necessity

of making definite moves towards greater centralization to harmonize over-all endeavour and to secure equality of opportunity. The fundamental problems for both the countries are those of how to increase funds for education from the national purse without interfering with the rights of local authorities to adapt education to local or regional needs, and how also to maintain satisfactory standards of education uniformly throughout the country.

The central authority over education in England and Wales is the Ministry of Education with a politically chosen minister who has a seat in the cabinet, and a staff of permanent civil servants divided into two groups: those who serve at the administrative central headquarters, and those who act as inspectors and who are assigned to areas administered by local authorities. The ministry does not maintain, provide, or directly control any kind of educational institution, but through its inspectorate, it exercises considerable influence. The work of the inspectors—who are servants of the crown and not of the minister—falls into three clearly defined areas: that of inspecting schools, consulting with local authorities and teachers and giving advice where necessary; that of representing the minister in their local areas in administrative matters; and that of advising the minister in matters of educational theory and practice and of being responsible for the Ministry's publications. In the matter of finance, fully two thirds of the total expenditure on education in each L. E. A. in England comes from national funds. In the U.S.A., the Federal Office of Education contributes almost nil, the local state boards about 50 per cent., the L. E. A. the remaining 50 per cent.

All these countries are interesting object lessons to us though our own circumstances conditioned by past history and tradition would make it impossible for us to copy any one of these systems. But being a multi-racial society

and having chosen the democratic way of life, we cannot fail to see the stark necessity of making the educational administration decentralized at least up to a point. It is true that decades of local government have not made much headway in our country, but that's no reason why we should not make a start by vesting some kind of educational authority and functions with our local government institutions. Mounting costs in education too demand the sharing of the burden by the local government which must devise ways of enriching the educational coffers for providing an amenity that should largely be within its purview.

### **Private Schools**

The government of education in democratic countries raises the issue of 'Private Schools' and their place in the National System of Education. If the emphasis is upon rigid conformity, then private schools will either be prohibited or permitted under certain sanctions and compelled to adopt the same standards and practices as State Schools. It cannot be denied that private schools in progressive countries have been pioneers of educational reform. But this fact needs to be assessed in the light of our history and background. Too many private schools tend to weaken the national system and develop class distinctions and the cult of exclusive and snobbish attitudes in their pupils. It is too early to say what the future of Private Schools in our country is going to be; but their need in the new system is justified because they afford means for variety of practices, for experimentation, for expression of aims and ideals of different religions or secular groups. They cannot, however, be exempted from the obligation of maintaining the same standard as State Schools in respect of buildings and staff and other essential amenities. Of course, if our State schools are so well organized and maintain decent standards, they will drive out poor and ill-equipped private schools.

## Local Initiative

Whatever the form of administration, a school is not a hot house but an organic growth rooted in the life of the neighbourhood. Unless the people of the area are enthused over its progress, it cannot flourish and influence the community it serves but fade and fail in its social purpose. There is definite need therefore for establishing local education authorities which can make a start by assuming responsibility at least for primary education, under the guidance and overall control of the central government. Secondary education, ofcourse, needs central control and guidance during the formative period of the national system to secure equality of opportunity and provide education according to ability and aptitudes. But local interests need to be tapped and public support should be obtained. Local Advisory Boards will prove unnecessary liabilities unless they are constituted of men of the right calibre who by their ability, experience and interest in educational matters will be ready to help and not obstruct by undue interference in the internal administration of the school. The Parent-Teacher Association can be a positive help in generating public support for the school, if it can understand the limits of its activities. A weak principal will find an interfering P. T. A. a serious liability.

### “ Square Pegs ”

Of course, the major task of building the individual school rests on the broad shoulders of the principal. He is the hub of all forces working for the uplift of the school. The quality and atmosphere of a school depends largely on his personality and interest. A great educationist once said, “ Give me a good headmaster and I will give you a good school.” With an alert, efficient and sympathetic head, the tone of the whole school improves. Without support from a good principal even energetic and well-trained teachers with



the best intentions cannot do much. Our country can justly boast of a galaxy of men that have adorned our educational history. But are there enough men of competence today to meet this expanding demand? Is there an efficient machinery to recruit the right men who are crucial to the whole cause of education? Many start their career with excellent ideas, but due to uncongenial environment and the pressure of routine, they tend to lose their early enthusiasm and are quite content to carry on the work of the school in a routine way. There are far too many square pegs in round holes. The system of recruitment needs to be reorganised.

### **Competent "Bees"**

The Inspectorate too needs reform. Since teachers, unlike the doctors and lawyers do not start off at a fair level of competence, inspection of schools is inevitable to protect schools from incompetent teaching and unscrupulous administration. But the problem today is also that of the incompetent inspectorate. Men and women of high calibre must be enlisted to the service, if it is to rise to the levels expected of it. As administrators they have to be efficient, acceptable and fair; as colleagues in the educational service they must be able to inspire esteem and unite the bonds of fellowship between them and their fellow teachers. Schools look up to them for fresh ideas which they are in a unique position to gather from their varied experience of schools under their care. They should be like bees that 'pick up the pollen from one flower and deposit it in another'.

An essential element in administration is the need for a co-ordinating committee consisting of the departmental heads concerned with the various aspects of education. This committee should review the whole educational structure and draw up a master plan of how best could integration be

achieved smoothly in the different types of schools established by the state. The whole object of this planning would be to avoid duplication, to improve and expand facilities needed for different kinds of schools and to lay down a programme for special types of education in separate institutions or in multi-purpose schools.

## **Advisory Boards**

Equally important are the Central Advisory Board of Education consisting of representatives of educational interests, to advise the Central Government on all matters pertaining to education at different levels and a Provincial Advisory Board to advise the provincial administration in all matters pertaining to education, particularly its improvement both in quality and quantity. It should be composed of representatives of the teaching profession, Boards of Management, Departmental representatives, representatives of Religious Bodies, Industry, Trade and Commerce and the general public.

The need for an efficient and incorruptible administrative service cannot be overstressed particularly when the scope of democratic control grows greater and greater. When the politician interferes with the functions of the administrator, the administrator with integrity is bound to be placed in an embarrassing position and the effectiveness of the administration is certain to be impaired. It must also be realised that in a democracy sovereignty passes from one party to another and from one ideology to a different one and if there is to be continuity of administration and not a revolution every time one political party gives way to another, the machinery of government must survive these periodic changes and provide the necessary stability.

Any service, but especially the education service, if it is run smoothly must be free from tyrannies, at whatever level they may arise—from heads of schools, or from administrators or inspectors, or from parent organisations or from political or other pressure groups. One of the best bulworks against all forms of persecution is the existence of professional associations of good standing held in repute by the the public and able to protect the interest of their members. The steady increase in status of our teachers' professional unions is greatly to be welcomed. By their unceasing efforts they must get the administration to promote the environment and conditions in which the eacher can best practise his art in security and freedom.

## CHAPTER VI.

# Curriculum : General Principles

In a national system of education, the whole question of the character of the curriculum and of curriculum-making is determined by the national concept and its definition of the relation of the State to the individual. In one sense the curriculum may be regarded as a kind of indoctrination determined by the necessities of the State; in this case the curriculum and its details are controlled wholly by the State. In another sense national culture being considered as the interplay of individual and group interests—freedom and local initiative are encouraged.

### Common Purposes

Differences between national systems of education consist not so much between the list of subjects taught as in the selection of content of each subject and the use to which it is put. History, Geography, even Arithmetic may all be governed by subtle national attitudes. The teaching of literature, art, music and other subjects of the same category is determined largely by the type of national outlook that prevails. In a national system education is actuated by certain common purposes. Controversy centres round the question, "Who defines these common purposes?" The safest course to take is to be concerned with the needs of the community.

The adaptation of the curriculum to community needs is especially important in countries like Ceylon that had long been under foreign rule. The tendency in these countries is to imitate the pattern of the foreign ruler which quite often does not fit in local conditions. The school is a vital and invaluable part of the community. I cannot forget how a

brilliant boy in my village famous for its Caesurina Beach, had managed to maintain his ignorance of this plant throughout his whole school career till a government scholarship to Coimbatore opened his eyes to the mysteries of its botany! A general curriculum, which may be prescribed by the Education Department for a whole school system, must be capable of adaptation to local needs and situations.

### Four Aims

Basic changes in the curriculum are caused by the basic aims of education which need to be redefined from time to time. Only if these aims are clearly realized can we attempt to relate what may be called general education to specialized education. There is general support among educationists for *four* related but distinct purposes which together form the end of education. Its *first* purpose is to develop the personality of the individual. It *also* seeks to give him knowledge of the world in which he lives. A *third* purpose is to develop skills needed to support and promote social life so that he can be a creative member of society. Connected with all the three but at the same time distinct from them is the *fourth* purpose which is to satisfy the individual's search after values. These aims need to be examined more specially and in relevance to the different stages in education.

When we speak of the development of personality we refer to the growth and maturity of a man's physical, mental and spiritual powers. What does health mean? It is not just the absence of disease, but rather the ability to do things. The W. H. O. defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease and infirmity". Similarly an undeveloped mind not only lacks intellectual freedom, but is a source of superstition, fear and hatred. The failure to grow and flower has an adverse effect on the individual as well as others. Most

of us know the story of Alice in Wonderland. She finds that she has to run for she is worth merely to stay where she is. Again, education must equip one with a knowledge of the world—the physical and social environment. Without a knowledge of the world in which we live, we cannot survive much less develop as individuals and as members of society. The third purpose stresses the social aspect of education. The individual can function only in a social context. If one is to be a creative member of society, one must not only grow oneself but contribute something to the growth of society. Social progress means an addition to what society has already achieved. Since a major part of our energy is needed to keep society functioning, it requires extraordinary effort to advance it. We must be capable of this effort in some measure. We cannot take unless we give. The task is rather hard to understand and harder to fulfil. Every man apart from his role as a member of society has an individuality of his own. He has an inner nature hungering for values. These values go beyond social needs. His life is not complete by merely satisfying the demands of his society or fulfilling effectively the functions of his profession.

## Primary Stage

It can be agreed then that the development of the personality and acquisition of general knowledge of the world must begin at the primary level. There can be no question of developing any specific knowledge. The only aim of education at this level is to give the child a body of knowledge which he can share with others and develop in him physical, intellectual and social habits needed for his survival and progress. Since his abilities and aptitudes are not well formed education in the primary school has to be general. But while primary education is general in its purpose it must be embedded in the local experience of the community. Since such

experience is concrete in quality, primary education is the most specific in content of all forms and stages of education.

## Basic Education

Mahatma Gandhiji's Basic Education needs mention in this context. Basic Education seeks to develop the child's personality by giving him knowledge centred round a craft with which he is familiar. A craft means a socially useful activity and the child is from the start taught to fulfil his function as a member of society. A local craft stresses the educational principle of learning the unknown through the known. This implies that the content of primary education must differ from place to place and region to region. The personality of the educand is of primary importance. Gandhiji attached little value to literary education in his scheme. In his view the unsophisticated shepherd who is possessed of character is a much better citizen of the world than one who has received a literary training in a modern school. This is Rousseau's view too. Education must draw the whole man out of the boy and girl. This revolutionary concept implies a radical reform of the Primary School curriculum. In the words of the Spens Report, "The curriculum should be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored"—an indictment of the prevailing system here. *The ideal of the primary school is not to teach much but to teach well.* The child learning in the primary school does not know everything, but what he knows, he must know well.

## Secondary Stage

With regard to secondary education a new principle comes into operation. The power of analysis makes man superior to all other animals. It is this power that needs to be consciously developed at this stage which is broadly equal

to the period of adolescence. Differences in aptitudes and interests are clearly seen and demand a larger variety of studies. There are those who argue that this is the stage where children should develop specific skills leading to a profession. But the demand for general education is great, particularly great in view of the increasing complexity of modern life. Man's powers of analysis need to be deeply strengthened by acquiring a sufficiently large and varied body of knowledge. Again at the adolescent stage which is subject to severe variations, it is too early to take a final decision about future life. Secondary education should therefore be a general or liberal education. The essence of learning is the power to generalize. If broad skills are acquired they can be applied to a variety of situations. Modern society is dynamic. The practices of today are superseded tomorrow. It is therefore risky to specialize in skills at an early age before the power of generalization has developed since it leaves the individual resourceless to meet the challenge of changing times.

It is at the level of higher education that specific skills are acquired on an intensive scale. General education has by that time made men fit for the specific roles they are called upon to play in society. They may become men of affairs following certain professions or men of learning. But side by side with the acquisition of specific skills which is the main purpose of higher education, it should deepen the social understanding and insight of the individual and bring out the liberal values implicit in professional education.

## **Narrow Groove**

One criticism about the prevailing system of secondary education is that it does not always give the individual the necessary knowledge of the world nor develop in him the reflective wisdom one may expect at its close. What often



happens is that specialization along some narrow groove starts before the pupil has received the broad-based education which alone can make him a creative member of society. That is why we sometimes come across specialists who outside their own field are intellectually and emotionally immature. This makes it necessary to orientate courses at the post-secondary level that the sense of values is not lost. There is a distinction between education and training. Education is a drawing out of the innate qualities of the individual, and therefore it has a social content. It is essentially general in its purpose. Training on the other hand, is essentially preparation for the performance of specific functions. As such, primary and secondary education, are primarily processes of education, while the stages after secondary education are primarily phases of training. However, an element of training cannot be avoided even in primary education, while professional training must have an element of education in the broadest sense.

## Common Content

When we evaluate the above consideration from the national point of view, it becomes essential that the introduction of syllabuses common to all schools in the country is a crucial requirement of educational policy in a national system. Once all schools are working to a common content syllabus, irrespective of the language medium of instruction, our country will have taken the most important step towards establishing a system of education which will satisfy the needs of the people and promote their cultural, social, economic and political development as a nation. This is not to deny *local variations* conditioned by the diversity of local culture; but such diversities should help and not hinder the evolution of a common culture. This does not imply a revivalist outlook, a kind of obscurantism that will tend to take the country back

to some irrelevant golden age of the past. Such blind revivalism is threatening to bring about distortions in our national life and create conflicting groups—with their stress on separatism, their technique of exploiting differences, their narrow and intolerant outlook. What happens in the classrooms of the nation at this formative stage is vital to the national mind and character. We need men of wisdom and vision at the helm, that will not misplace their emphasis on an 'exclusive' culture,—men that will not cry out nostalgically for a 'cloth and banian' or 'kiributh and kavun' age, closing their eyes deliberately on all the good things that a liberal tradition had given to us through centuries of English education.

### **National Unity**

Our curriculum must be so devised as to fight against the darkening menace of sectarianism or narrow nationalism and ensure that geographical, linguistic and religious differences are not allowed to disrupt the sense of basic national unity. There is nothing wrong about our attachments to our traditional homes, our language and our religion; these things are woven as so many strands of different hues into our culture. But there is no reason why these attachments should come in the way of our devotion to wider ideals and loyalties. Our curriculum must stress on this broader view and our teachers must refuse to swim with the current but should inculcate in the younger generation a liberal outlook, a broad vision and the gracious spirit of tolerance.

### **Productive Labour**

Finally curriculum reform must take note of the basic fact that our education must try and develop in our boys and girls *a love for work*. The curriculum of the Soviet school gives a prominent place to polytechnic education which is closely connected with general education and the fundamentals

of sciences and mathematics. The emphasis is on material production. Labour is ingeniously linked to learning. The present system in our country tends to produce the typical 'bourgeois' mentality which aims at securing the maximum for oneself in return for putting in the minimum of effort possible. It should be the business of our national schools to order their course of studies in such a way as will inspire their pupils for work throughout their life like good labourers and craftsmen. An education that fails to inspire students to break down the barriers of caste, creed and colour, to instil a love for honest work and an attachment to national outlook is unworthy of its high status and purpose. In Gandhiji's scheme of Basic Education every boy and girl is required to engage in a major craft and a subsidiary one irrespective of any distinction of caste or class. Gandhiji sought to build up a society that was just, peaceful and democratic. He found "no instrument in the armoury of man which is sharper than education" for his purpose. Basic education brought about a fusion between work and learning and linked the school with the society outside. The curricular content is intelligently related to the three main centres of correlation—craft work, natural environment and social environment.

## Child-Centred Schools

The basic idea of educating through activities and situations is much older than the Basic Education of Mahatma Gandhi. The Project Method, Activity Method, Dalton Plan were in existence much earlier. Nor is Basic Education radically different from Dewey's child-centred education. Thousands of children in our country today do not attend any school. Basic education can bring in money that can be utilised to provide free midday meals, or clothes or books to needy children. This would be an effective method of implementing compulsory primary education. With all its shortcomings

the Basic System is well worth trying on children between the ages 5—13. Even our big secondary schools can well experiment with the salient features of the scheme which will tend to forge a personality more suited to the socialist society which we are pledged to evolve. Let us examine this system more closely and find out if it can suit the genius of our people with the necessary modifications to suit local conditions.

## Freedom

To sum up, content is conditioned by the purposes of education, purposes must vary from region to region and from school to school, because history, traditions and aspirations vary. Each school must define its own purpose, though all schools must subscribe to the larger cause of loyalty to the nation. In preparing curricula, we should not be anxious to change everything and abandon the traditional as being useless and old-fashioned. People who do this are just as dangerous as those who want to leave everything alone. According to Dean Inge, the English theologian, there are two kinds of fool—those who say “this is old and therefore good”, and those who say, “this is new and therefore better”. The worthwhile is not necessarily old or new. It could be either or both. So if we are going to improve the curriculum, we should make selections of old or new material, but all must be relevant not only to the capacities of children but to the purposes to be pursued. We must also beware of any tendency from without the school to direct and control the curriculum unduly, and that is one reason why we should cherish diversity and foster enterprise and experiment if we wish to preserve the foundations of democracy.

## CHAPTER VII

# What Shall We Teach?

It is useless to speak of the value of a subject unless we know the boy who is to benefit by it. We have seen too many parents pressing their children into a particular course—science is the present craze—as though they could follow it regardless of their capacities. There should certainly be variety in the curriculum to allow for individual differences. Any attempt to force uncongenial subjects on children unfit to take them up is bound to end in disaster. There are, of course, certain areas of knowledge which all children must be familiar with, in their primary and middle stage; and these should be kept to the minimum. We should not expect the same standard of achievement from all. At the higher stage it is important that a child should study those subjects for which he has the most liking and aptitude; he should drop at some stage those for which he has none, provided that the resultant combination is sound.

### Exploratory Curriculum

Besides the need of the student there are the needs of society. If too many decide to do medicine or engineering, these professions would eventually be overcrowded. The choice of subjects should not depend entirely on a particular vocation. It must be able to fit him for others too. The middle school must continue in some ways the curriculum of the primary school. Therefore the emphasis should be on activities. The pupil is introduced *in a general way* to certain broad fields of knowledge and interest. We do not emphasize the depth of knowledge at this stage. The special abilities and interests of the individual child tend to take shape at this stage. Hence the curriculum must be of an *exploratory* character. The U. S. A. provides an excellent

illustration of this principle. There are no separate schools or streams for pupils of varying abilities. Diversification is done by providing for individual variations through electives—optional subjects. The Danish and English schools divide children according to their abilities and interests and put them in different schools or different streams within the same school for all. A glimpse into the broad outline of the middle school curriculum in the U. S. A. will make the point clear.

Form I	Form II	Form III
Health & Physical Education	,,	,,
English	,,	,,
Social Studies	,,	,,
Arithmetic	,,	Business Arith.
Practical Arts	,, $\frac{1}{2}$ year	Science $\frac{1}{2}$ year
Art $\frac{1}{2}$ year	Science $\frac{1}{2}$ year	
	<b>Electives</b>	<b>Electives</b>
	Art	Algebra
	Music	Science
	English	Music
		Art
		English

The exploratory character of the curriculum is evident from the fact that what forms part of the "core"—English or Music in Form I can be offered as electives by the talented in Forms II and III. The same measure of knowledge in certain basic subjects is not thrust on all. Minimum knowledge of English is compulsory for all but those with aptitude are given more of it. Half year of science is given in Form II and Form III and one year in the Upper School. Science teaching there with modest laboratories unlike in our big secondary schools here is a challenge to our country in respect of achievements. It would also be interesting to note that in

the U. S. A. every pupil is expected to do one year of mathematics at any period during Forms IV, V and VI. The gifted have more of it as an elective.

Curriculum-planners in our country must take note of this appropriate approach at this crucial stage and eliminate waste and backwardness which are the basic features in the attainments of pupils at our schools. The vast majority of children come into our middle school without the basic knowledge and skills expected of them in the Primary School. We have a tendency to overload the curriculum and to accept low achievements in the basic skills. Again, the load is rather heavy in individual subjects at the Middle School and the curriculum is crowded through lack of integration of subject matter. This is particularly true of subjects like Arithmetic and Mathematics. A drastic revision of syllabuses in the various subjects is urgent to make the course lighter.

The Middle School curriculum should generally consist of:

1. Languages
2. Social Studies
3. General Science
4. Mathematics
5. Art and Music
6. Craft and
7. Physical Education

But in the Upper School we have to provide varied courses with a fairly wide choice on the basis of abilities and interests of pupils which crystallize at this stage. This, however, does not mean specialisation but provision for the development of the special interests of pupils. The Upper School must reckon with the need to give students a training in their practical aptitudes for definite vocational work later. Not that the programme should be narrowly vocational but it must have a definite vocational bias. For example, a student

may take a course in agriculture not necessarily to become a farmer, but because he is interested in agriculture as a valuable human occupation. Here as in the Middle School, the courses will consist of certain core subjects common to all—differentiation according to individual variation is a desirable need—and certain electives.

It would be instructive to look at the structure of the Upper School curriculum recommended by the Secondary Education Commission of India which lays great emphasis on an integrated course. The subjects are grouped under certain broad headings so that pupils may not be allowed to choose from a wide range of option according to their particular fancies.

The curriculum consists of the following :-

- A. i. Mother tongue
- ii. Another language from a given list
- B. i. Social Studies — general course (for the first two years only)
- ii. General Science and Mathematics—general course (for the first two years only)
- C. One craft to be chosen from a given list.
- D. Three subjects from *one* of the following groups :-
 

Group	I. Humanities
,,	II. Sciences
,,	III. Technical Subjects
,,	IV. Commercial Subjects
,,	V. Agricultural subjects
,,	VI. Fine Arts
,,	VII. Home Science
- E. Besides the above a student may take at his option *one* additional subject from any of the above groups irrespective of whether or not he has chosen his other options from that particular group.



A general course in social studies and general science is provided in the first two years of the upper school; but they will not be examination subjects. Their main purpose will be to explain more fully the social movements which are shaping their lives and the contributions that science is making in changing the social pattern. All should know something about them in order to live intelligently in the fast changing world of today. These two subjects together with the languages and a craft will really form the common core. To this will be added the group of special subjects chosen by the pupil according to his abilities and interests. A craft is included not only on economic grounds but for experiencing the joy of creative work and learning the dignity of labour.

We in this country have to plan our own pattern based on our ideals and aspirations but we have a lot to learn from our neighbours who are wide awake to their problems in many ways parallel to ours. We must not also forget that a new curriculum by itself, however good and carefully planned, cannot transform the educational system. Much will depend on the details of the curriculum and on the methods of handling it. While we stress the need to improve the courses of study in the schools, one doubts whether suitable progress can be made unless syllabuses are prepared with an understanding of the needs and possibilities of pupils. In the U. K. and the U. S. A. the schools have freedom to prepare their own syllabuses and the Education Departments give suggestions based on research and experiments. In the Soviet Union, all the schools follow the same syllabuses, but the syllabuses are prepared after efficient study and experiments by the Academy of Pedagogic Institute. We in Ceylon follow prescribed syllabuses, but there is no machinery for preparing them on a scientific basis. Unless the syllabuses are suitably prepared the time and efforts of the pupils and teachers cannot be fruitful.

The school text-books are one of the essentials of an effective curriculum. Unfortunately the quality of most of the text books is very poor in content and get-up and it can be said that this is one of the reasons for the low standards in our schools. In most of the progressive countries a great deal of research is done on the preparation of text books ; and only books written by competent authors and published with good quality will be accepted. In the U. S. A. and the U. K., the schools have the freedom to choose the best books available and well-established publishers produce excellent books for them. In the U. S. S. R. where the state publishes and prescribes the text books, the Academy of Pedagogic Institute which conducts research and experiments, gives directions for the content and methods of the text-books. The authors are chosen by competition and the manuscripts for the books are scrutinised chapter by chapter as they are written. The State Department for school publishers pays great attention to the quality of production of the books. Our educational authorities should evolve a good system to ensure that the school text-books are of good quality.

## **Mother-Tongue**

No subject can assume greater importance in a national scheme than the mother-tongue. One has to recall with utter regret the colonial neglect meted out to the mother-tongue during centuries of political slavery. Any teacher, however poorly qualified, had been considered good enough to teach the mother-tongue. The esteem in which the Tamil or Sinhalese Pundit of the secondary school is held by his students is illustrated by the apt retort one such teacher made to his Principal who pulled him up for carrying a cane to class. "In self-defence, Sir," explained the humorous Pundit, his apparently unprofessional conduct.

Today the situation is slightly different since the medium of instruction for the vast majority of pupils in our secondary

schools is the mother-tongue. This is as it should be. There are very few places in the world where the medium of instruction at school is a foreign language. It should be a language in which the pupil can comprehend and express with ease and this for most pupils, is the mother-tongue. In the words of a well-known educationist, "To make any other the vehicle of education is not merely to add immeasurably to the pupil's labours, it is to lame his mind in its freedom of movement." Or as the Sadler Commission observed, "A man's native speech is almost like his shadow, inseparable from his personality. And it is through our mother-tongue, through our folk-speech, whether actually uttered or harboured in our unspoken thoughts, that most of us attain to the characteristic expression of our nature — Hence in all education, primary place should be given to training in the exact and free use of the mother-tongue."

But learning the mother-tongue or through the mother-tongue does not imply the mere capacity to read and write it anyhow. It is a most potent medium for the education of the student's entire personality. Through it a pupil can be trained in clear thinking and effective self-expression. He can also acquire good taste and educate the emotion. Mother-tongue is also the right medium through which he can gain the insight into the mind and culture of the past. We have a long way to go to make the study of the mother-tongue educationally sound and worthy of a national system. We need suitably qualified teachers, a suitably oriented curriculum and general books of quality. If these priorities are promptly provided for, the whole level of education is bound to rise and the national scheme of education will be rich in content. The numerous problems that crop up in this field of study need research that calls for special institutes, one for Sinhala language and culture, and another for Tamil language and culture.

## CHAPTER VIII.

# The Academic Course

### English

There was a time when the quality of a man was decided by the quality of his English. This must now cease. A section of our people was swept off their feet by its study that they deliberately gave up their own language and culture. English did create a gulf between the educated classes and the vast masses of the people. The English educated at times became frankly contemptuous of Swabasha. Today after a decade and more of independence there are groups who go to the other extreme and would seek to banish English from the shores of Ceylon. After centuries of association English has become an essential of modern education and a part of our national heritage. In the national scheme it does therefore play an important role. It might appear incongruous that in a free country we should consider English a foreign language, a very important subject for study. Yet that is what the parents in the most remote areas of our country want. Ask a boy in one of the backward schools in the countryside what subject he wants to study most. His reply will certainly be 'English'. There was an attempt to organise parallel science classes both in Tamil and English media in the S. S. C. classes in one of our schools. The Tamil medium failed to attract even the few who were almost congenitally incapable of comprehending English. Let us also not forget the boy in one of the village schools in India who, when asked why he persisted in his study of English, promptly retorted "How can I become the Prime Minister of India, if I do not learn English?" Foolish as the remark might seem, Truth often comes out of the mouth of babes and infants.

In the modern world it is not enough to know only about one's own country. Leadership today cannot be won without vast general knowledge—knowledge of the history and economics, the politics and social developments of many lands. English is a symbol of this contact with the outside world and that is why the simple village child wanted to study it more than anything else. Let us imagine a Ceylon from which all foreign languages have been banished but the national languages which have been developed by the addition of all sorts of technical and scientific terms. In such a country the difficulties of communicating with the rest of the world will have been magnified a thousandfold and participation of the common intellectual and scientific life would have been reduced to almost nil. One feels frightened as to what would happen to this island as a result of this kind of intellectual isolation. It is true that the continuance of the English medium imposes a handicap on undergraduates who leave secondary schools with less mastery of English than before. But immediate substitution of the National languages for English will deprive students of the sheet-anchor of English books which are still the main repositories of knowledge for higher education. Moreover the academic unity and emotional integration of the nation—whatever cynics may say—are to some extent possible through the medium of English. But the different uses of English in the context of Independent Ceylon need to be distinguished. To provide opportunities for the vast majority of our countrymen to study English—nay for every citizen on terms of equality with any other citizen—does not mean that we should impose a study of the language or for that matter any other language except the mother-tongue. A large number of people in any country are generally content to live their life in traditional surroundings and many of them may not need English, may not care to learn the language or may be devoid of the bare linguistic

ability to master the rudiments of a foreign language. This therefore means that English cannot be thrust down their throats, though they may feel its impact indirectly through reading books in the national languages produced under its inspiration.

But there are those who require English as a means of communication with others at the level of ordinary intercourse. The main emphasis will be on the use of the language as a medium of communication rather than a vehicle of culture. There are others who will learn it as a medium of Western Culture. A few will seek to go further and use the language creatively.

English in the new national scheme cannot be studied as a literature even in the secondary school. A shift in the attitude towards English is inevitable. We must re-model our courses of English at the secondary stage and recognise that the learning of English is not an end in itself but only the means of adding to our knowledge. The emphasis must therefore be from literature to the simple language of every day and the objective from appreciation to mere comprehension.

In the University, the change in the medium cannot be a sudden one, but should be achieved by stages. We must continue English not only to help us to bridge the transition but to sustain us in the future. The necessary preparations of providing text books, reference books and books supplying a background of knowledge and of training teachers who must be familiar with their subject and proficient in both English and the National language chosen as the media are tasks of no small proportions. Education must not suffer and standards should not fall because of hasty or intemperate action dictated by political or other reasons,

## Mathematics

It is widely claimed that Mathematics, whatever else it may lack, certainly provides a supremely good training for the reasoning powers. All boys and girls must be given a little of it and some with special aptitudes or looking forward to vocations that require it, a good deal. Surveyors and accountants cannot dispense with it. No student of Physics can do without it. Engineering, Statistics and Economics are greatly aided by it. But it must not be pressed unduly upon others.

It is certainly not every man's meat. But the mere knowledge of mathematical rules and proceedings learnt parrot-wise, useful though it may often be, is certainly not educational. Nor does the syllabus matter much. The Cambridge Conference of 1952 discussing the school curriculum agreed that the main need in our schools was a *livelier* and *freshcr* approach to teaching. A bad syllabus in the hands of a good teacher will produce better results than a good syllabus in the hands of a bad teacher. The delegates to the Delhi Conference of the New Education Fellowship were delighted with Dr. Caleb Gattiebno, an Italian, a U.N.E.S.C.O. expert in the teaching of mathematics who introduced them to the novel method of using 'Cuisenaire' with infants in teaching arithmetic and mathematics. Cuisenaire material consists primarily of sets of coloured rods used by school children in the learning of number concepts and their relationships. In the use of the rods the emphasis is on learning rather than teaching. Each child is expected to think for himself from the start. Rote learning is definitely discouraged, as also is the uncritical acceptance of statements made by the teachers. It was wonderful to watch what young children could learn through this method and how spontaneous was their response. Our schools need an approach of

this kind in the teaching of this subject. No boy can be trained to think in this way with only half his mind. He is forced to focus his attention sharply and concentrate his thought. Practice in that form cannot fail to be valuable in any walk of life.

## Science

Science with its many and growing dimensions of Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Medicine, Agriculture etc. is priority *Number One* in our practical needs—the improvement of health, the abolition of grinding poverty, the dissemination of education and culture and the raising of the material and cultural standards of the masses. Not only Ceylon, but other underdeveloped countries in Asia need the inventiveness, the resourcefulness and the critically creative awareness of the West. Science education is therefore an essential ingredient in the national scheme of education of every such country.

Our students today are ignorant of the wider implications of Science; they merely tinker with a few testtubes and regard Science as a laboratory issue. Teaching science is vastly different from talking about it. In our country learning science is like memorising the sacred texts. Prof. Lauwerys speaking at the Delhi Conference of the N. E. F. said that there was plenty of pre-scientific knowledge available for a child in the West, which a child in the East lacked. He remarked that Asia needed more science but it was not easy to produce teachers of science overnight. He characterised Ceylon's attempt to produce science teachers quickly as "puerile hoarding." His advice to Ceylon was, "There is a certain minimum quality in education. Pseudo-Science is more harmful than no Science." "Shut up", is anti-science. "I don't know, go and find out", is science. The greatest achievement of science is the *scientific attitude* which is not a way of doing things but



a way of thinking about them—accuracy, the refusal to accept any verdict unless it can be proved by evidence. Again, the dominant characteristic of the natural sciences is that they interrogate Nature by observation and experiment. In Chemistry a boy can make experiments for himself to see what responses Nature gives to various provocations provided he does not blow the school laboratory to pieces ! This 'scientific attitude' is the greatest need for our country where the prevailing concept like Fate and popular beliefs derived from animism and demonology limit the extent and speed of modern scientific techniques in, say, medicine and agriculture. When people still believe that sickness is caused by spiritual forces emanating from enemies or other external agents, it requires courage to teach something else.

The educational content of scientific education in a national system must be based on local environment, and social pattern of living. The emphasis should be rural rather than urban and the biological sciences will loom large in the curriculum. Since the bulk of our children will not receive a maximum duration of schooling for a long time, science education must begin as early as possible. Again, as the majority of people who will make use of science, will not be scientists, a compulsory course in General Science from the Primary school to the end of the Secondary school is an important requisite of the school curriculum. Equally important therefore is the training of science teachers in such manner as to re-orientate their attitudes. With regard to the question of language in science teaching, there is no reason at all why the national languages should not in the course of time become suitable vehicles for the teaching of science. However, economic and other considerations may prevent these languages from being used at all levels of education. In such case, it often becomes necessary for an international language to be used. Languages that have scientific and technical voca-

bularies are frequently international languages and there seems to be every reason why such a language should continue to be used in Ceylon. It seems reasonable therefore to hope that along with a steady development of the mother-tongue should proceed a reasonable study of an international language such as English.

The major tragedy of science teaching in our schools is that much of it has stressed the usefulness of applied science rather than the beauty of the Universe it explores. This produces a hard and narrow type of mind. The greatest scientists have been men of imagination and fancy. Joy and adventure is evident in the labours of such men as those who discovered radar, penicillin, and nuclear fission. The main value of teaching science is in rousing the emotions and the imagination. If through the adventurous mind of a teacher, through his passionate interest in his subject and his capacity to point to beauty and light a flame of love, boys are enabled to see what science really is, then a vital piece of imaginative education has been achieved. It is not true to say that Arts is liberal and Science is illiberal. There are no liberal or illiberal subjects. There are only liberal or illiberal ways of *teaching* them.

### **Social Sciences**

Modern education is unbalanced as it emphasises the training of the mind. Mental training to be useful must be accompanied by a quickening of social conscience. One must admit that even for the sake of securing one's own individual interests in an effective manner, it is necessary to take a broader view of the problems of life. The life of groups, communities and nations has a relevant meaning in our subjects for study. Problems of life broaden out gradually from the purely individual to the social, from the personal to the collective, from the national to the international. Social

Studies, History, Geography, Civics, Economics and even Politics gain special significance in a national system, as they enable students to adjust themselves to their social environment and acquire attitudes and values which are essential for group living and civic efficiency. They should all be taught from a new angle. How many of the ninety-nine nations in the U. N. O. have our children heard of? How many of our children really know how other peoples live? It sounds paradoxical but it is true, that the best way of infusing the concept of national unity in our country of different races and religions is by teaching about the brotherhood of peoples in the rest of the world. The study of History enables a boy to acquire sympathy and understanding. If History is not a commentary on human nature and human affairs it is nothing. But much depends on the way it is taught. Boys always judge their History teachers by their capacity to make History "come alive." But at the national level, books on History need to be rewritten, to emphasise trends that make for national unity. Geography awakens curiosity and wonder. The wonders of the world can be brought before their eyes. A good teacher has in such things as the pyramids of Egypt, the dykes of Holland, The Taj Mahal and all other achievements of mankind, a splendid weapon to his hand. Geography makes our children more familiar with their country—its present problems and future possibilities; it stimulates foreign travel and is valuable for international understanding. In short, these studies should endeavour to give the students not only a sense of national unity and an appreciation of national heritage, but also a keen sense of world outlook.

The schools should base their social studies in the first stage on the neighbourhood. It is in the initiation into his home locality that the growing child discovers his social roots. G. D. H. Cole says, "I do not believe that any state or society can be effectively democratic in great affairs—in national or

international affairs—unless it is so organised as to be democratic in small things, and to give the small groups, of which the great society is made up—real opportunities for democratic action”. Such an idea should be an inspiration to local study in our schools. For older pupils it may be a larger economic unit like an urban settlement or a rural district. Beyond this, the wider territory is the region. The older pupils will be able to discuss regional planning of service, of location of industry, and of settlement. Through an *intelligent regionalism* we may broaden and deepen the social roots of our future citizens. Our cultural diversity demands the initiating of our youth into *regional consciousness*, well-based on regional experience and knowledge. From the region the next hop is the nation. Our plan of social studies must be founded upon experiences extending their horizons progressively from neighbourhood to town, from town to region, and from region to the nation as a whole. The final stage is the world. The topic of Food is an excellent example of how the locality is linked to the region, the region to the nation and the nation to the world. Social studies are not merely confined to the classroom. It is important that a school should afford opportunities to take on various kinds of responsibility and to learn by experience. The school offices should be elective and responsibilities should be shared by all children.

## Foreign Languages

Is the learning of a foreign language so difficult that only selected children can cope with it? The existence of bi-lingual communities suggests not. It is generally claimed that the benefits of learning a foreign language are great. Since foreign travel will become easier to the average citizen and the world is becoming more closely—knit the whole question deserves consideration. Whatever modern language a boy undertakes, it is vital to remember that the study of a foreign

language and literature is an essential element in the study of its civilisation and the mind, attitude, and thoughts of its people. A curriculum planned in a national system should therefore give priority to the national languages of our neighbours on the continent whose close co-operation we should seek in increasing measure in the near future. Modern languages are important for boys not only in the Foreign Service, but also in business and in almost all professions. From a wider point of view it should help to build up sympathy and mutual respect among nations: "In the Republic of Letters there are no wars."

## The Classics

Western Classics today have become the Cinderella of the curriculum. They have been ousted by Science. Many boys are of the belief that the true fruit of classical learning cannot be compared to the technical efficiency and material prosperity Science gives. What are the careers open to the student of Classics? Even Teaching, the only profession generally open to him is not so popular as students fight shy of Classics at school. Law today does not regard its study as essential. But we must ask the question — "What is more important, technical qualifications or trained minds and character? The talented boy who reads Classics up to the University with a moderate degree of success need not be anxious about his future. A boy lives, to a large extent, in what he reads; responds to greatness, his is a heroic world. Can any track of learning seek to do more for him than to train him in accuracy, and to foster his idealism? Western Classics must still be taught to those blessed with linguistic aptitudes. Of course, a national scheme must stress the study of Sanskrit and Pali that are a treasure-house of History, Literature, Philosophy, Art and Politics of the Orient,

## CHAPTER IX

# Other Subjects and Out-of-School Activities

### The Arts

The Delhi Conference of the N. E. F. had "The Arts in the Curriculum" as one of its six themes for discussion. Dr. Mulk Raj Anand the leader of the group emphasised the point that there was a crisis in society which was essentially, the crisis of man. This crisis could be resolved if there was some measure of peace. Lord Russell has said, "Man is the only animal which eats its own kind." This aggressiveness derives according to the psychologists from all kinds of repression and frustration. These forces can be rationalised by education, balanced by creativeness, which is a very important force in the development of personality. Art is creative expression—a form of catharsis or release. All children are creative and it is not art they bring forth but evidence of their development when they draw or paint. or mould or make things. A child's creativeness is developed by imagination. Fantasy and imagination play a big part in it. Quiet guidance by the teacher is necessary to help the child along. A child must be accepted as he is whether he is aggressive or shy; and this tendency channelled properly leads to creativeness.

Creative Arts are essential activities in the middle-school curriculum and they must find a special place in it. But the creativeness should permeate the entire range of studies. For instance, the teacher of literature, of mathematics, of history, of science, and of physical education, should regard it as his chief objective that something creative or original should emerge from the learning activity going on in his class. This

point is particularly liable to be forgotten under the pressure of examinations in the secondary school.

## Rich Heritage

Artistic pursuits possess certain general qualities. They give elevated pleasure. Every boy can distinguish the kind of pleasure he gets from reading an ingenious detective story and say, Tolstoy's "War and Peace" or an amusing political cartoon and a scene by Constable. The one is trivial and ephemeral, the other has depth and leaves an effect behind. It was said of Mr. Churchill's speeches during the last World War, that they not merely gave pleasure but stirred millions to sacrifice and endurance. "The song that nerves a nation's arm is in itself a deed." Secondly, Arts like music, painting and sculpture or architecture call for effort. A man must train himself by a humble study of great examples. One feels impressed by the important place given to music and art in the school curriculum of Western countries. We have a glorious heritage of Art. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy perhaps the greatest exponent of Indian Art and Culture has in his volume of "Mediaeval Sinhalese Art" made a complete review of conditions and consequences in Sinhalese Art of the eighteenth century. It contains separate chapters on Architecture, Stonework, Woodwork, Painting, Sinhalese Weaving, Embroidery and other crafts such as Pottery, Smithery, Matmaking, etc. The greatest gratitude Ceylon can show to this great savant for his brilliant exploration of our arts and crafts in all their art-aspects is to set the renaissance of our indigenous arts and crafts afoot through planned courses in our national scheme of education. It is tragic that in a country whose best brains were absorbed in political problems, so little attention was paid to our cultural heritage. It was perhaps inevitable that as a subject country we developed a kind of inferiority which discounted our own art and culture and spent

a century copying the dress and art of England to the detriment of our own. And yet, we had rich treasures not only in the field of literature but also in the field of art. Rock-carvings, magnificent sculptures, frescoes, ornaments, handicraft in silver, copper and brass—these treasures were not sufficiently prized by the bulk of our people. Kala Yogi Ananda Coomaraswamy did a magnificent service in opening our eyes to these riches in his monumental work “Mediaeval Sinhalese Art.” It is only fitting that our new scheme of national education should accord a rightful place to the Arts and honour the man who first cleared the forest of our ignorance and unearthed such treasures for our delight.

Every pupil must be given continued experience of working in some form of handicraft. This could be done either by providing a single course in a locally predominant craft or by providing a number of courses of shorter duration in handicraft activities of basic importance, such as woodwork, metal work, pottery and gardening. Pupils must be afforded opportunities to acquire the basic skills in handling tools for shaping the common materials of everyday use, such as wood, metal and earth.

## Literature

The greatest risk in education today is that in the rush and complexity of modern life the arts are apt to be forgotten. When the Sputnik was put into the orbit, many rushed to the conclusion that education should be revolutionized and devoted to technological ends. And indeed the emphasis today everywhere is on higher living standards. But other things need emphasis too. Prof. Whitehead reminds us that “a man may know all about the laws of light and yet may miss the radiance of the sunset and the glory of the morning sky. “Education must produce not better scientists and men of intellect but men who are aesthetically and spiritually alive”.



Charles Darwin wrote, "If I had to live my life again, I would make it a rule to read some poetry and to listen to music at least once a week." A man who can sing or play an instrument is a social asset; just as is a man who can make a good after-dinner speech, or what is more difficult—refrain from making a bad one! In our schools the study of literature—Sinhalese and Tamil are rich in ancient literature—must develop in our pupils their appreciative powers. External examinations tend to distort this end with their emphasis on secondary aspects of the set text-books. The personality of the teacher of literature is a decisive influence, both for the interpretation and for the appreciation of a book. The right study of literature will naturally exert the influence it should upon the pupils' use of the mother-tongue and make it a richer vehicle of cultural expression. But the right study of it depends upon special qualities in teacher and pupil and it is concerned with values which must be caught rather than taught.

## Music and Other Arts

But the usual reference, when we speak of arts is to music, drawing, painting and the artistic crafts, woodwork, sculpture, pottery, modelling in clay, plaster, drama in the form of school plays. "Music calms the fever of the soul", says Mahatma Gandhiji and every school must provide opportunities for learning music particularly between eleven to thirteen years of age. Children who after tuition are incapable of singing or playing an instrument, if they are found to derive great enjoyment in listening to music must be taught the power of appreciation which calls for exceptional skill on the part of the teacher. But many pupils can be trained to take part in choral singing. As for the other Arts all children should be enabled to see the place of Art in the spiritual and social, and economic life of the present and the past. Every school must provide facilities and encourage a study of

them, partly in the pupil's free time and partly as alternatives to one or another academic school subject. It is sometimes asked, "What is to be done with children who have no artistic aptitudes?" Nobody demands the compelling of all pupils to study arts; only the providing of facilities for study is what is asked for. But there is a further answer to the question in the wise statement: "Headmaster, no boy has no artistic aptitudes."

Headmasters have not always been appreciative of the value of the Arts, though they have been confronted with various difficulties like the pressure of subjects, the utilitarian demands of pupils and parents, lack of space and equipment etc. and above all lack of teachers. The last is a serious thing. Though some schools are fortunate in getting gifted teachers, many of them are starved in this respect. Small schools find it impossible to appoint a specialist teacher in all these subjects. Part-time teachers are a definite disadvantage. This difficulty can best be overcome by getting teachers to qualify in one or more of these subjects or to combine them with other subjects in the curriculum. There is merit in this kind of training besides convenience.

## Technical Education

People regard technical education as a group of classroom subjects. It is much more than that. It is an educational philosophy. The historian, the engineer, the agriculturist and the geographer can stand together and look at the same landscape; and without being blind to what others see, each will focus attention on his own special aspect. The historian will look at the age of the buildings and the pattern of land settlement; the engineer at the problems of irrigation and flood prevention; the agriculturist at the use of the soil; the geographer at evidence of river action. There is room for all these points of view.

We are living in an age which has seen enormous advances in applied Science and Technology. Time was when any occupation which involved getting sweaty and oily was utterly despised. Today technical education is regarded as the key to wealth and power. National education must think in terms of damming our own rivers, and manufacturing our own materials, and increasing our national wealth and thus catch up with the material comforts of the West.

### **The U. S. S. R.**

We cannot fail to be struck with awe and wonder at the Polytechnical instruction that the Soviet children receive in their schools. It is given in the general-educational schools, and it solves a large number of educational tasks. It acquaints the young people with the laws of nature, with the laws of society which form the basis of material production and with the general scientific principles of production. It also contributes to the development of scientific thinking. Polytechnic instruction in the Soviet schools gives the pupils an ability to handle the most widespread instruments of work, inculcates in them abilities and readiness for work in industry, develops in them a power of endurance and various skills, and helps them in a conscious choice of profession.

The idea of technical education covers several different activities. The first is the high-level education for a profession such as engineering in the University which is becoming the object of ambition. Then there is the middle-grade vocational training which turns out technicians such as surveyors, builders, draughtsmen and electricians. This may be given in a technical school of secondary level. There is the lower grade training which aims at turning out a village handy-man who is something of a mason, of a carpenter, of a metal worker. This training is often much favoured by the advocates of a rural bias in a national system of education.

It may be given in a junior trade school or a handicraft centre or it may be given in a suitably biased primary school itself. But this is not enough.

## Education vs. Training

Technical education is not vocational training—the kind of education which trains a man to design a bridge, to repair a faulty radio or to make a table or plough. Its teachers are not handicraft instructors. Technical education is education; four hours a week in the workshops may do as much for a boy as four hours in the science laboratory or history and geography rooms. In our country technical education has often been regarded solely as vocational training. We still aim at turning out skilled technicians, not educated men. Every department—the P. W. D., Surveys, Agriculture, Forestry and the Postal Departments train their own technical people. Only the Government Clerical Service would look for recruits with a secondary education. Lack of economic development and the consequent lack of prospects for technicians has tended towards the neglect of technical education. It is no use blaming it on the schools because they need to be helped by economic forces.

## Public Relations

The technical men have been usually restricted to technical jobs in our country. We have always acted as if we thought of technical education as vocational training. The problem of popularizing technical education is a problem in public relations. The administrators cannot make the people believe in technical education unless they believe in it themselves and give them tangible evidence in the form of good jobs carrying a good salary, prospects and social status. For this sort of evidence we must look to the business men and others who bring about economic development of all kinds.

Let us remember that education is not the affair of schools and colleges alone and if they are left to do it alone they will fail.

## Women's Education

There is a famous saying, "Educate a man and you educate an individual; educate a woman and you educate a family." In many of the remote rural areas it is much harder to get girls to school than boys. There are plenty of people who still say that a boy must be educated for a job, but a girl's job is matrimony. It is certainly inconvenient in many homes to send the girls to school for they assist their mothers in the arduous task of looking after the home. However, conventions are crumbling from within as new ideas and new economic forces come into play. Women's emancipation is a recent event even in progressive countries like Britain, and it came about more through the invention of the type-writer and the bicycle and the experiences of war. The idea of the career woman is so catching to any casual visitor to England who meets hundreds of such women in the Tube, strap hanging on their way home from the city to their bachelor flats.

### Career Woman

Such economic and social forces are beginning to work in our country too. It was almost impossible ten years ago to convince a girl and her parents in anyone of our villages that nursing is a noble occupation or that as a telephonist a woman can earn an honest livelihood. As teachers doling out this dutiful advice to needy parents in quest of suitable jobs for their 'S. S. C.' daughters, we could not persuade them out of their special preference for teaching. But today conditions are fast changing. We are a monogamous society

and we have a surplus of women over men and women are driven by sheer need to support themselves. Yet in isolated backwaters there is still the need for convincing evidence that schooling does not spoil a girl and that a professional qualification of some sort will enable her to bring good money into the home. A lot more must be done to popularize girls' education. Already a vicious circle has developed in many places; there is a dearth of qualified women-teachers, particularly in Science, because few girls proceed to higher studies. Because there is a scarcity of qualified women-teachers, the number of girls able to profit by academic education is restricted. The circle is being broken fast, and a national system of education must provide unlimited opportunities for more girls in the academic course. There are professions where women can play as useful a part as men. The need for educated women is therefore great. Teaching in the primary schools, and in the secondary schools for girls can be largely in the hands of women. In the higher spheres of education, and in professions like Medicine and Nursing the need for educated women is rather pressing.

### **Co-education**

Co-education can be a satisfactory thing within limits. True, a teacher notices obvious differences in temperament; the boys tending to be slap-dash over details, to be interested in the wood and not so much in the individual trees, while the girls are incredibly persevering and fond of the trees and indifferent to the wood as a whole. The school curriculum is largely dominated by examination requirements. Co-education is excellent in the primary classes provided they are manned by well-trained women-teachers. Co-education can be resumed in the university and professional courses, but in the secondary stage it is not always suitable or desirable as it denies to the girls the larger life that they would experience in a girls' school,

A good department of Domestic Science should be an essential part of every girls' school. Art and music and other allied subjects should be well taught in girls' schools. It would be good to make compulsory, subjects like hygiene, the care of the household, mothercraft and the care of the child.

## Physical Education

Physical education is a compulsory subject in the school curriculum and the P. T. I. is a familiar figure in the school staff-room. In fact, he is expected to aim at Physical Education, and not merely physical training. There will be regular periods in and out of school hours, of physical exercises. These periods under a competent master or instructor can be interesting and fruitful to the mind and spirit as well as the body. The exercises should be devised in such a way as to exert and train the whole body, and they will be varied to suit the capabilities of different ages. The result would be not only increase in skill in many games, but also a general confidence and moral courage which is reflected in other directions.

### In the Villages

Though our 'big' schools have regular playingfields and employ a specialist in this activity, the position in the primary schools and in the smaller secondary schools, especially in the countryside, is far from satisfactory. Very poor are the amenities for ordinary drill and common games. Team games are rare in these schools. Western forms of sport and games are no doubt expensive and outside the reach of the less well-to-do and country schools. But where are our national forms of sport? One hears of only a few names. They are almost obsolete. A Drill Display on a National Day reveals

the low standard in physical education in the schools. The national system of education must make provision for elementary facilities for physical education and the revival of national games, particularly in the villages.

## Fair Play

The value of games lies in the magnificent training they give in moral discipline. Their tradition is to play fair. There is a great need to cultivate and strengthen this tradition at this time of our country's history. Games train us not merely not to cheat, but not even to want to cheat. They also train us to take hard knocks and hard luck without complaint or loss of temper. Games provide an admirable preparation for the "great game of life." If a boy becomes reasonably good at a game, that helps him to self-respect and self-confidence. To feel oneself reasonably good at something is an excellent thing. And most healthy boys can become reasonably good at some game. In team games, there is companionship, co-operation in a common effort, the *esprit de corps* of the team and, for the leaders, practice in leadership and responsibility.

## Fetish

There are dangers and disadvantages to be set against the various merits of school games. Boys tend to think that games are the main part of life. I often feel amused when a captain of cricket is extolled as a more glorious figure than a budding scientist or poet in the school. Boys in their keenness for games get their values wrong. Here is a serious risk to the character of star performers. Their heads may be turned by the admiration of their school and they think themselves much finer fellows than they really are. The Press, too, may do harm by turning skilful boy players into national heroes.



Should boys be compelled to play games? Physical exercise is a *must* for pupils. As for games, most of them will find something interesting in a reasonable variety of choice. There is a good case for compulsion to play some sort of game for two or three days a week.

Let me sum up by quoting one of the main resolutions adopted at the annual conference of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession that discussed the theme "Child Health and the School" last year at Amsterdam. "Every school should provide for an adequate program of physical education for all its children designed to improve their physical and mental health and their social adjustment. In the primary school, physical education should mainly be the responsibility of the class teacher with access to the assistance of a specialist when necessary. Adequate time should be provided for physical education activities."

## Religious & Moral Education

Few will dispute the fact that religious and moral education plays a vital role in the growth of character. Opinion may be divided, of course, on whether religious instruction should be imparted in state schools. The state is secular, they say, and as such should not actively assist in the approval of any particular religion. While this is true, it does not imply that because the state is secular there is no place for religion in the state school.

### Atmosphere

In the new set-up, the State is planning to provide religious instruction to pupils according to the tenets of their faith. The problem is simple in schools where all chil-

dren belong to one particular faith. Where children of different faiths are mixed, it would become a Babel of Creeds. Whatever that be, the benefit of such instruction will be derived not from its being treated more or less on the lines of classroom instruction but from the spirit of the school and the influence exercised by the teachers. The development of the religious consciousness is not, and cannot be, the subject of a syllabus. It is a growth from a life that is lived. It is obvious that intangible spiritual values come not so much from what teachers say and teach, from curricula and examinations, but from what they are, and what they are seen to be, inside and outside the classroom. The Norwood Report mentions that a wise and famous headmaster once said that the rules for a school master were as simple to state as they were hard to fulfil; they were only that he should know what he wanted his boys to know, that he should be what he wanted his boys to be, and that he should add enthusiasm. On this depends mainly the religious life of the school. Properly organised religious instruction, may supplement the influence and improve the climate prevalent in the school community. In a residential school which commands the whole life of the school it would be easier to fulfil programmes of religious education. But even the day-school can do much. It can make of morning assemblies something of which the school can be proud, if the pupils are trained to take part in general non-denominational prayers offered in song and speech. Unforgettable are the Christmas I spent at Sevagram in Wardha in 1959 and the soul-animating strains of Mahatma Gandhiji's universal prayer which are set to music at every prayer meeting. The effect of the choral singing is magical indeed!

Om Tat Sat Sri Narayana Thu,

Purushothama Guru Thu!

Siddha Budha Thu, Skanda Vinayaga

Savidha Bavaka Thu

Brahma Majdha Thu, Yahava Shakti Thu,  
Jesu Pitha Prapu Thu!

Rudra Vishnu Thu, Ramakrishna Thu, Rahim Davho Thu,  
Vasudeva Ho, Viswa Rupa Thu, Sidhananda Hari Thu!  
Avidya Thu, Akala Nirpaya Anma Linga Siva Thu!

Four religions, One people! There can be no other ideal enshrined in the majestic cadence of this piece of music. It will drive all unhealthy trends of religious hatred and bigotry in our schools. Effective moral instruction in the form of inspiring talks on the lives of great personages of all times and climes will help to drive home the lessons of morality. There can also be at least one, and perhaps several to be chosen from forms of social work which can be supported or pioneered by the school. These should be concrete and social in character. In many such ways Religious Education can be made more real.

## Examinations

Examinations have a proper place in any scheme of education as long as they are not preposterous attempts to fathom the depth of human ignorance. External examinations have a stimulating effect both on pupils and on teachers by their objective standards of evaluation. They help a school to compare itself with other schools.

But there should not be too many external examinations. The subjective element which is unavoidable in the present purely essay-type examination should be reduced as far as possible. It gives undue weightage to the power of verbal expression. Objectivity tests of attainment should be introduced. Tests must be so devised as to discourage cramming and encourage intelligent understanding. Final assessment of the pupil should not be based entirely on the result of

external examinations. Other important and revealing documents such as school records, cumulative sheets maintained by the teachers should be taken into account. In order to find out the pupil's all-round progress and to determine his failure, a proper system of school records should be maintained for every pupil, indicating the whole work done by him from time to time and his attainment in the different spheres.

In the final assessment of the pupils, due credit should be given to the internal tests and the school records of the pupils. It is not educationally sound to have more than one public examination throughout the entire secondary course. The certificate awarded should contain besides the results of the public examinations, the results of the school tests in subjects not offered at the public examination as well as the gist of school records.

If it is contended that the teachers' judgements are not reliable, it must be stated that the teachers' judgments should be made reliable; and the only way to make them reliable is to rely on them. In the beginning there may be stray cases of wrong judgment but before long they will come to be more and more reliable and more trustworthy.

“No one can examine better than the teacher who knows the child, and a method of examination by the teacher, combined with school records could be devised which would furnish a certificate giving information of real importance to the employer or college or profession and yet would preserve intact the freedom of the school and would rid teacher and pupil of an artificial restraint imposed from without.”

—*Norwood Report*

A word about 'S.S.C. Massacre.' Year in and year out we hear about the very low percentage of passes in the S. S. C. examination in spite of the minimum marks being moderated.

to help 'hard' cases to pass. In America, the U. K. and Russia, the minimum for a pass is 60% or more and in Russia if 90% do not pass in a school examination, it is considered a reflection on the efficiency of the teachers. It is obvious that there is something seriously wrong in our system. Is it ineffective teaching due to unsuitable syllabus, text-books and inefficient methods? Or is it the inefficient system of evaluation or some other factors? Our boys and girls are not less intelligent. This problem needs close study.

## Out-of-School Activities

There are many activities outside the general curriculum organised voluntarily by teachers and students. There are sound educational reasons for encouraging them in a school. They offer pleasure not often found in the more formal part of school life. They foster a sense of fellowship, and that fellowship is deepened when the project is not only enjoyable but also worth-while. Out-of-school activities also provide an outlet for a boy's individual tastes and interests. A virtue of a large number of voluntary activities in a school, conducted on a small scale, is that somewhere among them a boy should be able to find one which is satisfying and fruitful. We shall not, of course, expect all the possible activities to flourish in the same school. Some of them will be impossible at day-schools; and much will depend on the varied interests and abilities of the teaching staff.

Most schools have Debating Societies, and many have Science Societies, Historical and Civic Associations and religious associations like the Y. M. B. A., the Y. M. H. A., the Y. M. C. A. and Y. M. M. A. There are Discussion Societies. They meet and discuss topics of particular interest which are not adequately covered by formal teaching. Debating societies are valuable because a boy gains in experience of public

speaking. One tendency that must be deprecated is for the fluent talker to gain more attention for his fluency than for the substance of what he says. A discussion is superior to a debate because a true rather than a popular issue to the subject discussed is more likely to emerge. Then there are societies which seek to provide, not so much discussion as entertainment, sometimes serious, sometimes light-hearted. Musical societies, Literary and Dramatic societies and Art societies can do this. The great thing is that boys should produce, with the guidance of a teacher, shows of their own. There is great gain merely if boys learn how difficult it is to act a play really well. All kinds of craft and skill can be enlisted and new interests aroused. A good library is a very valuable asset to a school. There are few activities more rewarding than an hour spent in a good library. It is a wise school that sets aside quiet rooms or quiet periods for that purpose. The habit of reading is one which will lay up stores of untold pleasure throughout life. Scouting and girl guiding are also useful activities that regulate students into constructive enterprises. Young Farmers' Club, Photographic Club and several other clubs cater for special and specific interests. There is the school magazine which gives opportunities for the publication of youthful literary efforts.

## Character-Training

Life at school today is immensely varied. Some even think that it is too hectic. But we must not forget that the enthusiasm of youth is almost inexhaustible. Let us remember two things in controlling the spate: One is that boys with diverse gifts should be discouraged from expressing themselves in too many ways. The other, more important, is that *all* boys should be encouraged or even cajoled into taking part in some of the activities at school. There is no room

for passengers in the life of an independent country. They should not be encouraged in the schools of the nation.

More potent than any particular activity is the all-pervasive influence of the life of the school as a community with its wisely planned schedule of functions and duties, its mutual give-and-take, and its willingly adopted discipline, its chances of leadership and its opportunities for social service. The success and the psychological understanding with which the school can be organized as a community will largely determine how far it can effectively function as an agency for the education of character.

## CHAPTER X

### Teachers

At the entrance of the Central Institute of Education in the Delhi University is inscribed a message from Gurudev Tagore : "A teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another unless it continues to burn its own flame." In the ultimate analysis, the efficiency of a system of education rests on the quality of teachers. Without good teachers, even the best of systems is bound to fail. With good teachers, even the defects of a system can be largely overcome. It is therefore essential to attract and retain the right type of men and women into the profession, give them the necessary training to increase their efficiency and create conditions in which enthusiasm for work is maintained throughout their professional life. The process of education is not a case of imparting information as water is poured from one bucket to another. It is more like the process by which one lamp enables us to light a hundred other lamps. The personal contact between the teacher and the taught is what matters most in any educational process.

#### **Unified Service**

What is urgently needed in a National System of Education is a unified system of the teaching service. On account of historical reasons, the profession has been far too compartmentalised with many types of teachers, each with his or her own salary scale and with little or no opportunity for promotion from one grade to another. In Britain there is one national salary scale for all trained teachers with special additions for graduates, for high honours and for special responsibilities. Teachers are free to move from one place or school or authority to another without loss of pension rights or privileges. Such a system leads to greater efficiency and contentment.



But when we speak of the teacher's freedom it is not an absolute freedom. In the exercise of his political liberty, his social conduct, or his choice of curriculum and method he cannot do just as he likes. This freedom is conditioned by certain unwritten obligations. The National Union of Teachers in England rightly stresses the tradition among teachers in that country of taking care not to abuse the trust imposed in them. Indeed the paradox is true that teachers in Britain owe their liberty in large measure to their scrupulous restraint. They are normally ready to show reasonable respect for the customs of the neighbourhood in which they serve. Too often we speak of freedom in education only in a negative sense, as immunity from interference. While that is important, we make a sad mistake if we forget the more valuable positive attribute—freedom to originate and inspire. If you interfere, you soon destroy the sense of responsibility. You cannot have it both ways—the right to interfere, and the right to expect initiative and imaginative leadership.

### **‘Government Teacher’**

In the unified teaching service all qualified persons should be registered as teachers and such registration should give entry to the profession and not to a government service. There should not be government teachers and non-government teachers; English school teachers and Swabasha teachers; nor should there be education officers, graduate teachers, trained teachers and certificated teachers etc. There should *only* be teachers. The term ‘government teacher’ is in a sense self-contradictory. A qualified teacher, a truly professional person can never be a mere employee of the government. In countries like the U. K., Japan and the U. S. A. there is no such person called the government teacher. Teachers are employees of either local authorities or of denominational bodies. They have the right not only to vote but also to comment freely on public issues, to criticise govern-

ment policy and programmes. It is a pity that in our country a large section of teachers have been government officers and for that reason deprived of certain civic rights. Transcending all problems of educational reform is that of safeguarding the freedom of the teacher from being used as an instrument of government propaganda. The teaching world should not forget so soon how the German teachers under the Nazi regime pledged to train the youth of Germany in Hitler's ideology. In such an extreme form education becomes a kind of advertising medium. Teachers must be free to save education from such misuse.

## Quality

Quality in teachers is a crucial problem in education. Many want to get education on the cheap. If the country is not prepared to spend money for the conditions of service which teachers need and deserve, it should accept inefficiency in education as an inevitable consequence. The cost of employing good teachers is inevitably high; to keep the cost down quality is conveniently over-looked. It seems strange that persons who would hesitate to employ an untrained mechanic to repair a valuable instrument should readily surrender the most precious wealth of the community—its future generations—in the hands of persons who are often ill-trained, ill-paid and discontented. An experienced teacher once said in bitterness that since society starves teachers in the body, they will take their revenge by starving children in the soul. A society which ill-treats its teachers is undermining the foundations of its present welfare and future progress.

The fault, however, does not lie with society alone. The teacher too has forgotten his vocation. He must do his best to *deserve* a generous deal. There is nothing more pathetic than a spectacle of one who has lost his ideals. Poverty and social neglect may be contributing factors. But the chief

point is that many persons come to the teaching profession without any sense of vocation. They become teachers because they can do nothing else. It is thus the rejected, the misfit and the disappointed who often crowd the profession and stay there against their will because they have nowhere else to go. So long as such a state of affairs continues, how can there be any improvement in the status of the teacher or in the type of education which he imparts? If people really believe in the democratic way of life, they must be prepared to pay for quality in teachers and the education service. And why? Because the ill-educated weaken and threaten the democratic way of life. Democracy does not mean just what people want it to mean. In this method of government, decisions on what is to be done emerge from discussion; so men must be convinced not coerced. Even when a majority decision has been taken, the minority has still its rights and amongst them the right to be treated with respect, and the right for a reversal of the decision. Obviously such a way of life casts a great responsibility on education and the teaching service. Democracy cannot survive unless virtually all the people are educated and wise. If they are not, what survives is not democracy, but a sham, a facade behind which the few control the many, an autocracy masquerading as democracy.

## National Service

Again, on a national level the teacher's role is unique. Really, the present situation in our country contains within itself a challenge powerful enough to stimulate all the courage, intelligence, and devotion of which teachers are capable. They have to play an even more significant part than politicians. We have to fight today for something really precious—the integrity, the decency, and the salvation of our national soul. We have to build up national unity by our dedicated

labours in the classrooms of the nation. Teachers in both the communities must approach this problem of national unity, in the right way and bring about a psychological revolution in the minds and spirits of their pupils. They must also help in the emergence of a better social order. By developing a free and socially sensitive personality, they will not only enrich the lives of their pupils as individuals but also train disciplined workers and leaders in that cause.

## Leadership

Let us in the new national set-up devise measures to restore teachers' leadership at various levels. Let us give up sweeping condemnation of the existing system of education or the teaching profession. Such unqualified condemnation tends to demoralize the teacher, and create frustration among the students. One of the first measures must be for improving the quality of recruits to the teaching profession. The McNair Report of England presses strongly for a widening of the field of recruitment. The impact of education on society makes it desirable that teachers should not be 'a race apart'. The report reminds us of the ever-widening scope of the modern teacher's function and his potential influence as a builder of society. If we are to build up a wise democracy, we must recruit men and women of the highest calibre. The minimum educational standard must be uniform throughout the country. Types of training could be reduced to two; one for those with a creditable performance in the S. S. C. or H. S. C. and for whom a two-year course is essential and the other for graduates for whom there should be one-year training. The N. U. T. in England is carrying on a sustained campaign for increasing the duration of training eventually to four years for non-graduates and they have achieved signal success in making it a three-year course from last year. Their goal is to make Teaching a Trained Graduates' Profes-

sion. Teachers must resist any attempt in this country to dilute existing standards by shorter or emergency courses to transform untrained teachers into finished products overnight.

## Teacher-Training

The government seems to be a bit concerned at the large percentage of untrained teachers who are directly in charge of the education of our country's human potential. The only possible explanation perhaps for the long neglect is that the destruction of the human personality is tolerable, because the repercussions are not immediate or directly obvious. But shoddy training is a poor substitute for lack of training. There is as yet no comprehensive plan where the whole question has been fully worked out.

Such a plan, it may be pointed out, should consist of two fundamentally important aspects—the one of the progressive elimination of the 'untrained' teacher and his replacement by the trained one, and the other, the re-orientation of the training itself to the social and economic demands of the nation. This involves a thorough reorganisation of the present institutional pattern provided for teacher-training and also a revision of the content of the training course in our Training Colleges. These institutions do not enjoy adequate facilities—no libraries worthy of the name, no laboratory facilities—nor workshops and gardens. Thus the dead hand of academic tradition still weighs heavily over these institutions. The World Bank Mission said, "The education system in this country, trains pupils to reproduce knowledge rather than use knowledge." The basic reform in education they said, should start with the training of teachers "for it is only teachers imbued with the importance of *using* rather than *storing* knowledge who can realise these objectives in the classroom." The new teacher has to assume the role, of 'leader in the shared experience of learning.'

But the important point in teacher-training is not to lay undue emphasis on teaching methods or even acquisition of knowledge important as they are. A good teacher will evolve his own methods; and knowledge, as Whitehead says, "does not keep any more than fish." But the creative and thinking mind of the candidate should be developed. A good teacher is nothing more than a well-developed person. The objective of Teacher-education is "to allow and help the person to become himself". Training Colleges should assume the role of leadership in the task of educational reconstruction. This is a job which they have hitherto ignored. If they are organized on right lines and become dynamic centres of progressive educational movements, the whole task of educational reform will be greatly facilitated.

Again, economic measures are essential but are not by themselves sufficient for raising the status of teaching in society. There must be measures for increasing the professional competence of teachers. An appeal to the idealism of teachers should be effective. Schools need teachers with a real sense of vocation and a true professional spirit. Teaching is not just a job. It is a vocation which involves dedication to ideals greater than ourselves. What is taught, why it is taught, and how it is taught may all be important, but what the teacher **is**, is most important of all.

## Security

Security and certainty of employment for all teachers with satisfactory professional qualification at an adequate wage, build a firm morale within the teaching profession. Fair and equitable tenure legislation adds to a teacher's sense of security and frees him from haunting uncertainty. It is also necessary for teachers to be removed from transitory punitive movements and vacillating public opinion because of the peculiar nature of teaching. Tenure legislation is necessary because it gives a teacher assurance of employment as long as

he is competent. Knowing that he is not subject to removal for political, religious, or other irrelevant reasons, the teacher is faced with the responsibility of maintaining a high level of professional service. Such security enables him to assume a normally active part in civic matters. An Education Service Commission on the lines of the Public Service Commission can well be engaged in the solution of all problems affecting the teaching service.

## **Status**

There must be special measures for improving the social status of teachers. In Turkey, whenever the government contemplated any important legislative measure, they appointed a committee of university teachers to examine it from an academic and expert point of view. In India, the Government has initiated a step which can add to the status of the teacher at negligible cost to the State. Presidential receptions for primary school teachers were held in the Rashtrapathi Bhavan in New Delhi. Invitations issued to men and women whom the villagers have till now regarded as of little importance caused a stir in the countryside, we are told. Our state could organise similar receptions attended by the Head of the State and the Prime Minister. The story of the N. U. T's (England) struggle for greater recognition of the teaching profession reads like a romance. Our teachers' unions have a long way to go and greater victories to win according to the N. U. T standards.

## **'Captains of Character'**

Another measure of great importance is to raise the status of the headmaster. A good headmaster can make all the difference to a school. One of the secrets of the great success of the British Public School System is the status and quality of the headmasters. Our country needs headmasters who can

win reputation. Education is a kind of warfare and the educational army must be led by captains of character—men who know what they want and have the courage and determination to get it. Once the right choice is made, and the responsibility for the reputation of the school is placed squarely on his shoulders, he can be expected to rise to the occasion. It is said, "Know your Headmasters, accept them and let them be Headmasters."

While the principal must accept responsibility for the working of his school, it is now common for most principals to leave most of the procedure of class management to the individual teachers so long as they are satisfied that certain general requirements are met. There is, in fact, nothing in the formal organizational requirements themselves which prevents the staff from working together as a co-operative organization. The staff meeting can be a worth-while group experience. It will need to delineate clearly the goals it is setting out to attain and to work objectively to achieve a group decision upon action, towards which each individual has made some positive contribution and with which he feels himself positively identified. This sort of group does not just happen; it can be created only gradually by individuals aware of the dynamics of social interaction and ready to make objective assessments of their own group behaviour. A co-operative social climate among the school staff would be the best guarantee of a similar climate in the classroom.

### **In-Service Training**

A great enemy of the quality of teaching at the primary and secondary levels is boredom and monotony. Teachers tend to lose interest by repeating the same lessons year in and year out. Measures must therefore be taken to break this monotony. The value of in-service training in improving the quality of teachers cannot be over-stressed, We must, there-



fore increase the provision for refresher courses and in-service training for teachers. One way of doing so is to organize seminars and study-circles for teachers at all levels. It should not be difficult for our government to organise two seminars—one for the primary school teachers and another for secondary schoolteachers every year. This would help to raise the entire tone of secondary education in the country in the course of a few years. The value of Teachers' Conferences on national and international levels cannot be over-emphasized. Discussions and personal contacts at such conferences are more valuable than decisions. "The true blessedness of mankind is not to arrive but to travel", said Robert Louis Stevenson. Modern education needs teachers whose interests and abilities are always on the move. Prof. Ben Morris echoed the same wisdom when he told the Delhi Conference of the N. E. F. last year, "A teacher is never a finished product,—but is continually growing."

## **Holiday Camps**

We must also offer teachers the opportunity of restoring spiritual and physical health through holiday camps and convalescent homes. Few head masters and fewer teachers in our schools can afford to enjoy a holiday because of financial reasons. Yet they are in greater need of such amenities than people of most other professions. Classroom work year in and year out drains the energy and vitality of the teachers. Unless there are breaks which enable them to recuperate, their work tends to become dispirited, lifeless and mechanical. Provision for holiday camps and convalescent homes even on a modest scale would have a most striking effect on the morale of teachers.

## **Partnership**

What is the role of the teacher in the administrative set-up of a National System of Education? "From patronage to

partnership" is the current idea in educational administration. The teacher has a greater stake in the welfare of the school than any other individual factor in the entire set-up of a school's management. Just as in industry where employer—worker partnership tends to promote efficient production so in education the administrator—teacher partnership cannot but be productive of educational progress.

## Public Support

My final suggestion would sound like preaching and yet it cannot be helped. Teachers can never hope to carry through any scheme of educational reform unless they can win public support for education. Sound work in schools, high standards of professional behaviour, produce the best publicity and generate public esteem for the teacher and public support for education. In the words of Sir Ronald Gould who reminded the teachers of the world in his stirring address at the Rome Conference of the W. C. O. T. P., "The bad teacher, the weak teacher, the teacher who undertakes work for its publicity rather than its educational value, the teacher who is disloyal to his profession—all destroy faith in teachers and education. Only the highest professional standards can stand the test of constant public scrutiny." The heroes of New Ceylon are not soldiers and airmen who seek happiness in dying for their country, but schoolteachers upon whom the mind of the new generation depends.

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