

THE ANATOMY OF INDIAN EDUCATION
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THE EDUCATIONAL SITUATION IN INDIA

There is a general awareness of the importance of education for national development and progress, which has from time to time expressed itself in the form of a demand for reorganization of the Indian educational system so as to make it accord with our national objectives and serve as an instrument for translating our dreams into reality. The attainment of Independence has aggravated our uneasy sense of the inadequacy of the present educational system, through which we hope to redeem our ancient civilisation and to establish a new social order.

It is astonishing that in our country, which has always set great store by education as a means of refining the human spirit, a policy of drift and a general apathy to educational tasks, born, perhaps, of the knowledge that education rarely figures as an election issue, have marked the leaders' and the Government's attitudes and actions in educational matters. Notwithstanding vehement condemnation by the public and the leaders alike whenever things have gone wrong in our educational institutions, few attempts have actually been made either at the Centre or at the State level to formulate a comprehensive educational policy capable of affording scope for pioneering and experimenting in order to fashion our education as an instrument of social and economic transformation, if not national regeneration. If our country is to take its rightful place in the comity of advanced countries we have to give up our habit of believing that if only we vote considerable sums of money for the use of our educators and administrators our education will somehow take care of itself and take us to the fulfilment of our national objectives.

The widespread student unrest and indiscipline, which has become rampant in many parts of our country and

is threatening to assume alarming proportions, has been dealt with as a law and order problem, with the authorities resorting to the extreme measures of arresting student leaders and victimising the administrators who have refused to toe the official line. There have been incidents in which students took the law into their own hands and caused deep anxiety to the public; political leaders have merely made political capital out of such unfortunate occurrences by using them as occasions to accuse the opposition parties of interfering with student affairs. The real task would be to enquire into the root causes of the trouble and find a lasting cure for the malaise, of which the incidents are but the symptoms. Most of the leaders of our country have readily abdicated their responsibility in the matter of rectifying the situation created by student indiscipline in order to court cheap popularity and win the support of student-politicians for the promotion of their own narrow interests, or to embarrass their opponents or the Government. Few leaders have thought it fit to trace the student unrest and misbehaviour to the out-moded pattern of education and the unsatisfactory working of our educational institutions, which are ill-fitted to carry out the national tasks entrusted to them. Many of our administrators seem to be unaware of the need to end the disharmony between the outward sources of power, which scientific and economic development has placed in our hands, and inward resources of spirit, which through our thoughtlessness are being steadily dissipated. While extolling the students on every possible occasion as the leaders of tomorrow and the hope of the nation, our public leaders have done precious little by way of inspiring them with lofty ideals through their own precept and example, or of infusing into them such qualities as would make them wisely courageous and impatient of injustice and lack of progress in our country.

The widespread unemployment among the educated in our country is usually regarded as a chronic disease for

which no radical cure seems possible and which may remain with us for a long time to come, or till all our great plans of national economic development come to be fully implemented. No concrete attempt has been yet made to relate this frustrating phenomenon to the prevalent pattern of education, which has undergone very little change since its introduction a century ago and which has been too narrowly conceived, mainly in academic terms, to be capable of fitting youth for the tasks and the jobs that our country has to get done. Education in India being mainly oriented to either Government service or certain crowded professions and not to agriculture on which the majority of our population is dependent for a living, has virtually created a class of persons who are unemployable, and has thereby caused in the most sensitive section of the population frustration and discontent, which are likely to undermine the social stability of our country.

Student unrest and the large-scale unemployment of the educated have been cited here only as symptoms of a deep-rooted disease that can be eradicated only by addressing ourselves resolutely and courageously to the problem of reorganisation and reformation of our entire educational system from the primary to the University stage, which alone will bring about a radical cure of the disease that is steadily poisoning the very springs of our national life.

From time to time Education Commissions, Conferences and seminars have examined the various aspects of education although nothing concrete has yet emerged for reasons which are not far to seek. The piece-meal legislation enacted with a view to eradicating the educational ills of our country has resulted in a lop-sided development of our education or, worse still, in the creation of an imbalance that has given rise to more problems than have yet been tackled. It is hoped that the Education Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. Kothari, with a very wide range of terms of

reference concerning all aspects of education, will succeed in suggesting a comprehensive, positive educational policy for our country calculated to make our education a very effective means of moulding and fitting our students for the tasks that await them in life. It is further hoped that the recommendations of the Kothari Commission will be acted upon by the Planning Commission in its formulation of the objectives for the Fourth Five year Plan and the subsequent Plans, treating them as a veritable blue-print for the reconstruction of our education system in the years to come. Even eighteen years after the attainment of our Independence no resolute attempt has yet been made to carry out one of the Directive Principles of our Constitution, which we have given to ourselves with great expectations; I am referring to the eradication of illiteracy in our country about which nothing has been done except for starting a large number of ill-equipped primary and secondary schools, whose number is inadequate for meeting our national needs and whose existence helps only to boost up the official figures concerning the expansion of education but not to further the cause of education in our country. It is to be expected that the Kothari Commission charged with the formidable task of suggesting a new pattern of education for the New India that we are striving to bring into being will suggest suitable measures for the speedy eradication of illiteracy in our country. The need for formulating imaginatively conceived plans for revitalising our educational system and for providing for the rapid spread of education cannot be over-emphasized, especially in the context of Dur setting out to establish a Sovereign Democratic Republic based on Democratic Socialism. The following pages set forth the writer's views and opinions on some of the important aspects of education in India, to which he has had opportunities to address himself as an accredited representative of the teachers in the Legislative Council and as a member of the University Bodies and Committees concerned with educational matters.