

Modern Education in India.

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Gentlemen,

Excuse me troubling you by encroaching upon your most valuable time for a short discussion of my present topic, which deserves special attention now-a-days. We are now in the midst of an intellectual age and all our energy is more or less applied to all our intellectual faculties. Therefore our first and foremost concern would be to note carefully whether we are following a wrong track and lag so far behind other countries.

First, I would like to speak something about Japan, the most enlightened country of the East, and at the same time how our system of education is being hindered. The question that calls our attention first is "How has this nation that was in a primitive stage of culture only the other day made such a speedy progress?"

In Japan there prevails an air of full liberty; in every sphere of life natural flows of thoughts have never been hindered, their sweet smiles have had no outward hindrance, their joyful hearts dance merrily on the wide open fields. They are quite free in their movements. Freedom is the order of nature. It is the birthright of every animal in this world that lives and moves. The Peacock dances at the approach of the rains, the bees and the cuckoos sing at the advent of the spring, the lilies bloom in autumn—this is the order of Nature. If the natural flow of their work is checked they shall revolt against and shall try to remove the obstruction.

And we are in such a plight at the present passing moment as acts against Nature. It is the duty of the guides to direct the course and not to destroy the free innocent spirit. Now, we can easily mark that their system of education shall be quite different from that of ours.

We have realised quite a wrong meaning of education while they (The Japanese) have not. Education ought to be understood

in its wider view. This is the main root out of which springs forth their progress. The main cause that has paved for their countrymen a smooth and clear-cut way is "Fellow feeling".

Now, Gentlemen, it is a matter of great regret that this important element is highly wanting in us, the poor Indians. It is deemed by us as self humiliation. When we go through the past history of Japan their unfathomable darkness of superstition, ignorance and regular domestic feuds in the near past appear before us. We at once find that they led a life of pomp and luxury. They hardly felt any necessity of acquiring learning. But they luckily responded to the call of conscience which made them progressive.

I would now call your attention to the most important part of my topic and I request you most earnestly to turn to it. The number of literate people in our country is as miserable as the world has ever seen. We have been made most backward of nations from all sides. The writers say "The 20th Century has approached the door of India to dispel its glory by enlightening them" At once the question arises, "Is it true?" Gentlemen, please consider the plight of yourself, your youngsters, your sisters and your mothers. Just ponder over this for a moment. You will at once realise the plain truth. Oh, how plain it is to call a black cow white! You yourself is constantly suffering, your mother sheds bitter tears in a corner of her lonely hut, your brother dies for want of proper treatment, your sister commits suicide and the reason of all this is want of food. And do you think it proper and just that you should pass them by on a motor car smoking a pipe and casting a look of contempt and derision on the passers by and sacrifice your wealth, intellect, wisdom (and even humanity if need be) only to worship the Goddess of Luxury? Now what do you think its cause to be? Is it the education of the so-called far advanced 20th century or the imperceptible influence of following the fashion of some other country?

Gentlemen, you well know the miserable plight your superiors were in. It is your bounden duty to remove their agonies, to relieve their distress and to solace their troubled heart and thus

to turn a golden chapter in your History. But the point is how to do that. How to solve this intricate problem? "It is by preaching the virtue of education." The modern learning has been totally undermined by the accidental education. If we are to bring back its former glory we must at first replace our system of education by the fresh air of the East. Heart renders to look at the result of education of India. Just cast a look at the flickering lamp going to die out by some outside blast. Your most cherished object, your hearty treasure, the ever memorable glory of your mother is coming to its end. Does it behove you to sit idle at this hour? (Is it proper for you?) Should you yet dream sweet dreams of luxury and make resolutions in meetings? Come, prepare and be ready to face the dangers and "difficulties that may come in your way by actual work. Respond bravely to the call of duty. You are to follow the dictates of your conscience. You are to put before others the glorious picture of a bright future. You are to raise the voice of your dumb fellow brethren, you are to wake up the lie-a-bed fellows.

We no longer hear evening songs (hymns) in the groves of India. The holy Ganges no longer murmurs in the evening as she flows by. It seems the Sun's rays reluctantly enter into the Indian bowers. The grand-mothers no longer tell stories about the happy tales of Indian Heroes, but remain ever busy in teaching them modern fashion. Please notice the remarkable change which has taken place in the system of education in India. The plain process of teaching through stories has died out and the step-mother's influence has taken possession of our brethren. If we consider all these points we are at once led to the conclusion that the main cause of our degradation is nothing but our following the modern fashion.

If we intend to revive our former glory we are to follow the ideal of our ancestors. Gentlemen, you see, the root of all progress is education. So in order to wake up a drowsy nation like ours it is necessary first of all to develop the scope of our education. Our females also should be properly educated.

For, it is the mothers who shape (or should) the future of their children. The ideal of our mothers, and sisters should be Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, Gargi, Maitrai, Kṛṣṇa, the ideal Hindu women of India of the past. We should remember the heroism of Rāma, the fraternal affection of Bharata, and the truthfulness and honesty of Yudhisthira, and the vow of Bhishma. India will once more hold her head aloft seeing her sons learned, strong and virtuous. But mere lectures will not suffice. We should keenly realise the ideal and proceed with our work. All our efforts should be directed towards the well-being of our country. We are to explain before our neighbours what we have learnt and what we have heard about the daily news. Should we not look to our ignorant brother? We should consider deeply before turning aside that he also shares the same affection with us. Maybe that his faculties lie dormant for want of proper care :—

“Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And wastes its sweetness in the desert air.” - Gray

Gentlemen, excuse me for taking so much of your time. My last request is that you should just consider what I have said and, I am sure, you will one day find that the lost glory of India has been revived and peace and prosperity along with it. Once more you will find the flag of victory fluttering in the free open air of your native land. Every nation will then be reminded that India is not inferior to any civilized country.

Every student of history knows (best) that other countries owe their civilisation to India. What a shame that such a glorious country has nothing of her own which she can boast of! Now, Gentlemen, time has come when you are to be up and doing in your attempt to revive the lost fame of your mother land. With this request I wish to bid you good-bye.
