

**Address delivered by Giris Chandra Bose, Chairman  
of the Reception Committee, at the All-India  
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**FELLOW-EDUCATIONISTS AND DELEGATES.**

As Chairman of the Reception Committee of this session of the All-India Federation of Teachers' Association, it is my pleasure and privilege to extend to you all a most fraternal welcome. We can give you but a poor reception, so far as out-ward show is concerned, but believe me when I say that our hearts go out to meet yours in all the abundance of a love that is full and sincere.

I do not propose to tire you with a long sermon. But as an educational worker of 50 years standing, however humble and unrenowned, as one approaching the end of his labours, I cannot resist the temptation to speak out a few, straight words on an occasion like this. They may not edify you—but I will have at least the consolation of having unburdened a not over-easy conscience.

Gentlemen, we in the different provinces of India, have tasted the sweets of Western Education for six or seven decades. The English Government acting on the advice of Lord Macaulay established schools and colleges in the country for the purpose of turning out not good Indians but imitation Englishmen, who are denationalized to such an extent that 30 years ago there were many Indians who wanted to be considered Europeans and prided themselves

in not knowing any thing of the art, literature and philosophy or the regions of their own country. The University of Calcutta, with which I have been closely associated all along my life, is now seventy years old ; that is also the approximate age of many of the sister universities. There are some of more recent growth which are still in the stage of formation and about whose work the time is not yet come to pass judgment.

But speaking of Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Lahore and Allahabad, can we honestly lay our hands on our hearts and say we have done very well ? Western civilisation has rendered some material and intellectual services to India, but at the same time it has harmed her from a moral and spiritual point of view, and it is the moral and spiritual side of man which is after all more important than his material and intellectual life. We have indeed taught Western Literature and Science through the refracting medium of a Western tongue to thousands of eager learners ; our curricula and syllabuses have often stunned outsiders by their portentous magnitude and wild variety. We have manufactured B. A.'s and M. A.'s, B. Sc.'s and M. Sc.'s, even Doctors of Art and Science in any number—but what is the net gain to the individual and the nation at large ? Have we substantially increased or added to the output of the world's scholarship or of the world's discovery or invention ? Have we built up an average of high character ? Have we increased the productive capacity of the individuals under training and put the country on a sound economic basis ? Have we conserved the old and stimulated the new ? Have we built bridges of intellectual, spiritual and moral communication between our country and the rest of the world ? Have we been able to harden the sinews of youth and fitted them

for the relentless struggle for existence which grows sharper from day to day ? Have we opened wide the gates of joy and wonder in the heart and heralded a new burst of poetry, a new wave of song, a new flowering of art, a new orientation of architecture ? Are our homes more joyous because of this education ? Are our women more alert and more disciplined ? The dear sanctities of hearth and home, the unresting strivings of the spirit of fellowship, the consoling values of religion, the gladdening art-sense, and the joy and the beauty and the wonder of new creation—what has this vaunted education done to invigorate these fundamental springs of nationhood ?

I am afraid answers to these and allied questions must be a plain negative. Western Education has acted on our minds as a blister and an irritant ; it has rarely been a soothing ointment. We have tried to reach the sphere of the moon by toy-balloons ; we have tried to learn and assimilate ideas through obscuring media of transmission ; vaguely comprehended phrases borrowed from the storehouse of a foreign language have done duty for real, stimulating ideas ; we have tried to sow wheat and reaped tares. A cramped system of dull memorising and mechanical experimentation has turned our alumni into automatons and puppets 'moving about in worlds not realised' and dancing to tunes which are not our own. Imitators, parrots, marionettes—ghostly apparitions of men, thin-blooded, husky-voiced, barley-fed—these we have produced by thousands. Real men, where they have blown forth, have come in spite of this system of half-baked unrealities where instruction acts as a dead weight on the budding soul and kills all natural growth.

From primary education, through secondary stages, up

to the higher university training—the tale is the same unrelieved story of super-imposed effort, misdirected, mishandled, overlaid with red-tape prolixity and spun with the cobwebs of artificial theory. We have not spread out the table—we have been bidden by the foreigner as beggars to a feast, where the menu is strange, the servers are strange. The educational policy of this vast continent has been shaped for us by extraneous agencies and influences. This policy has been made to rotate round a policy of political serfdom and vassalage. The sacred car of education has been dragged at the tail of a not over-scrupulous political machine. The result has been disastrous. The brand of helotage scars the fair brows of learning—and our scholars are all taught in a vitiated atmosphere to be aspirants for mere jobs and offices.

The control of our primary schools and the administrative policy behind them have been responsible for the weeding out of thousands of elementary schools with which the country-sides were dotted before the British came and to-day after 170 years of British suzerainty the mass illiteracy of India is appalling. The secondary schools are nothing like the public schools in England or similar institutions in Germany: they are ill-housed, ill-managed, over-controlled, dummy organisations catering for shortcut passes in the examinations. Our colleges are mostly factories where instruction is given at so much dose per lecture, the dosing being uniformly mechanical, and where a hybrid conglomeration of inert, insipid, inane, vapid entities are all pressed into the same identical moulds by mass lecturing and mass examinations. Many of the universities have grown to be unwieldy and lumbering machines shutting out any chances of effective supervision

and salutary reform. Many of them are infected with the gangrenes of civil strife—party struggling to over-ride party, faction writing down or shouting down faction. The insidious trickeries of dirty politics have invaded many of these sanctuaries of learning which should set an example of honesty, purity and open-minded effort and set the pace for other organisations. The canker of communalism also is not absent. There are voices raised in defence of communal cultures, of communal agencies, of communal representation even in the domain of education which is a liberalising release of mind and intellect devoted to the universal ends of human fellowship and inter-cultural approximation.

Gentlemen, the time has come when we, educational workers scattered all over India, must not let judgment go against us by default. We must gird up our loins, rally our energies, organise and agitate, and agitate and organise, till the voice of the real teacher makes itself heard above the din and bustle of the shouters and the intriguers in the market-place. The teacher is one of God's elect : he is the pioneer of reform and progress ; the sower who sows the seeds which later on sprout and rear themselves to tall heights of gladness and glory ; the fighter who fights the demon of ignorance and evil with clear weapons forged in the furnace of the spirit ; the missionary who deriding mere worldly benefit goes out to spread light in darkness ; the man who with unbared head looks tyranny in the face and pushes on where the voice of duty leads. The teacher should refuse to be a mere spoke in the wheel of administrative machinery ; he should refuse to be used as a pawn in the chess-board of party politics. He should not allow ambitious intriguers

to walk over his head to office and power.

I am sure that if the rank and file of our teachers are imbued with such high aims, the rest should be plain sailing.

The teachers' organisations province by province need strengthening ; and inter-provincial meets like the one we are having to-day should be arranged year by year. The All-India Teachers' Federation should be run by a strong Central Committee of educationists and experts of courage, initiative and experience. They should persistently agitate for and educate public opinion about the necessity of a living wage for the teacher, of ensuring him security of tenure and provision against sickness of accident. They should not rest till they secure that effective representation on all public bodies for the teachers which ought to be theirs by right. They should have an all-powerful voice in the choice of text-books and framing of syllabuses and direction of examinations. Theirs should be the dominating voice on the management boards of schools and colleges, where non-teachers and financiers and men of other professions should always be welcome to offer advice and assistance but hardly anything more.

For the development of nationhood, nothing, to my mind, is so important as the stimulation of Indian art and music and the study of provincial vernaculars. It would be a happy day indeed when our universities should inaugurate officially courses in painting, music and other fine arts and confer degrees and diplomas in these branches. A joyless education is no education and the art-sense of the modern Indian requires cultivation.



The study of the Indian vernaculars is another big question. Bengali and Hindi and Urdu, Tamil and Telegu, Marathi and Gujrati—these are all highly developed languages with a virile literature and nothing would so stir national consciousness as the inter-study of these languages and their mutual interpenetration and enrichment.

The physical training of our boys and young men is another direction where our federation must exert itself. Our youth must be trained in the arts of manly defence and if other agencies will fight shy of the work, the schoolmaster certainly can start physical culture, clubs in his own school and lead a movement fraught with immense potentialities for the country's future.

There is further the question of social service and national work. The curse of untouchability sits on India like a horrid nightmare and the sooner the blight is removed, the better. There are periodic floods and famines in this unfortunate land—who will rush to the saving work of rescue and succor if not our youth? Here the schoolmaster again is the national leader, feeding with spiritual fuel the impulses of youth, directing and controlling them. Every school and college should have its Social Service League where teacher and taught may co-operate in works of beneficence.

Practical politics may not be the work of boys : but boys grow to be men and unless right understanding of national political, economic problems is given to them, they will muddle things and work distractedly, when they grow up. Free discussion on all matters of national import should be encouraged in all educational institutions. The teacher who

sings the hymn of hate is untrue to his vocation, but even more false is the cringing, cowardly teacher who will teach wrong things, inculcate false history and give lessons in dwarfed patriotism, for the sake of paltry gains in job or lucre.

Gentlemen, I have already told you I was not going to inflict an over-lengthy discourse. I keep my promise and desist.

You have met here for a very noble object—the assertion of the privileges of the teacher and the extension of the boundaries of his service. You have found an eminent educationist of international reputation to preside over your deliberations. May the Spirit of God descend on you all and make your gathering the turning-point of a new chapter in the history of Indian education. Strive for the truth, acknowledge it wherever you find it, pay homage to it from whatever quarters it might come and success is bound to be yours—and even if success does not crown your endeavours, the striving itself is its own reward. For to strive is to live and India is just beginning to learn this lesson. Remember, dear teachers, your vocation is a mission, God's mission, and not a mere profession.

In conclusion, I have a personal apology to make. My first impulse was to speak in my mother tongue, which being unsuitable to the occasion, I have been constrained to use a foreign tongue, which however much I might appreciate is only next best to the mother tongue in which I first learnt to lisp and which will sit last on my dying lips.