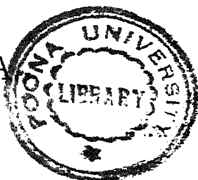
ANCIENT INDIAN EDUCATION

AN INQUIRY INTO ITS ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT, AND IDEALS

BY THE

REV. F. E. KEAY, M.A.



[Thesis approved for the Degree of M.A. in the University of London, and published with the permission of the Senate.]

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK
TORONTO MELBOURNE BOMBAY
HUMPHREY MILFORD
1918

CHAPTER V

POPULAR ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

WE have already seen how from the earliest times we can trace the presence of an extensive educational system in India. In the case of both Hindus and Muhammadans this was connected closely with religion. Hindu education was in the hands of the Brāhmans and mainly intended for them, though the other higher castes were not excluded. Muhammadan education centred round the mosque and was supervised by the maulvis. Certain classes of the community also had their own special forms of education.

Side by side, however, with these systems there grew up at some time and in most parts of India a popular system of elementary education which was open generally to all comers. It must have arisen to supply a popular demand for instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and was made use of chiefly by the trading and agricultural classes.

At the renewal of the charter of the East India Company in 1813 a lakh of rupees was ordered to be set apart every year for the promotion of literature and education. This led to the various local governments of India making inquiries as to indigenous education. The result of those inquiries has been that we have a valuable record of education in India as it existed before Western influences had seriously affected it, and before those modern developments took place which have had such a far-reaching influence upon India. The

inquiry for the Madras Presidency was carried out in 1822–1826; that for Bombay in 1823–1828. It is, however, the report of William Adam, who was appointed by Lord William Bentinck to carry out the inquiry in the Bengal Presidency, that is the most full of interest. It was published in 1835–1838, and throws most valuable light on the state of education in India at that time. In order to get an intensive rather than merely an extensive view of the situation, Adam did not attempt to survey the whole province, but rather to choose typical districts in various parts of the presidency and make a thorough examination into the existing state of affairs. Besides the Hindu *tols* and Muhammadan *madrasahs*, which were places of higher learning, there were found Hindu *pāthśālas* and Muhammadan *maktabs*.

The *pāthśālas* existed in all the larger villages as well as in the towns. The teacher and scholars numbering usually about a dozen or twenty met in the early morning under a tree in the village or in the shade of a verandah. Sometimes a temple shed or other building might be set apart for their use. The teachers were mostly Kayasths (the writer caste).[1] The teaching of reading, writing, and accounts was considered a proper occupation for that caste, whereas Brāhmans, Vaidyas, and Kshatriyas were supposed to degrade themselves by such an occupation. There were, however, some Brāhman teachers, and many other castes were represented amongst the teachers, even those of the lowest castes. In Burdwān Adam found two teachers who were lepers.[2] There were no regular fees, but the teachers received presents averaging about Rs.4 or Rs.5 a month.[3] They often eked out their income by farming or trade.[4] Among the scholars also there were a very large number of castes represented,[5] including some of those

[1] *Adam's Reports*, p. 158.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 168.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 160.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 168.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

considered 'untouchable' by the higher castes. Brāhmans and Kayasths predominated. The age of the scholars was from about five or six to sixteen. The aim of the schools was strictly utilitarian, and Adam laments the neglect of moral instruction.[1] The curriculum included reading, writing, the composition of letters and elementary arithmetic and accounts, either commercial or agricultural or both. Very few text-books were in use, and those that were used were often most unsuitable, such as a reading-book containing an account of the amours of the god Kṛishna with his cowherd mistress Rādhā.[2] There were four stages of instruction. In the first period the scholar was taught to form letters on the ground with a small stick. This period usually lasted about ten days. In the next period the master traced letters on a palm leaf with an iron style. The scholar then traced over the letters with a reed pen and charcoal ink, which easily rubs out. This process was repeated over and over on the same leaf till the scholar no longer needed a copy to guide him. Then he practised on another leaf. He was afterwards exercised in writing and pronouncing the compound consonants, which in most Indian languages are modified when written together. Then practice was given in the combination of vowels and consonants, and this led on to the common names of persons. In the third period the palm leaf was replaced by the larger plantain leaf. The scholar now began to learn the composition of the simplest forms of letters. He was taught the connection of words in sentences and to distinguish literary from colloquial forms of speech. The rules of arithmetic now began with addition and subtraction. But multiplication and division were not taught as separate rules. These were effected by addition and subtraction, aided by multiplication tables which extend to twenty. The multiplication table was repeated aloud by the whole school once every morning. After

[1] Adam, p. 101. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 98 ff.

this the pupil began to learn commercial or agricultural accounts or both. When the scholar reached the fourth period he received more advanced instruction in accounts and began the composition of business letters, petitions, grants, and similar productions. Paper now began to be used for writing, and after this had been used for about a year the scholars were considered as qualified to engage in the unassisted perusal of Bengali works like the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Manasa Mangal.*

It is to be noted that in learning, writing came before reading. Except for the united repetition of multiplication tables and exercises of that kind, the instruction was individual, and monitors were commonly chosen from among the more advanced scholars to help those at a more elementary stage of instruction. Dr. Andrew Bell got his idea of the monitorial system from what he had seen in indigenous schools in India.

An account given by William Ward in his *View of the Hindoos* presents us with a similar picture of these indigenous schools in Bengal.[1] 'Almost all the larger villages in Bengal contain common schools, where a boy learns his letters by writing them, never by pronouncing the alphabet as in Europe. He first writes them on the ground; next with an iron style or a reed on a palm leaf; and next on a green plantain leaf. After the simple letters he writes the compounds, then the names of men, villages, animals, etc., and then the figures. While employed in writing on leaves all the scholars stand up twice a day with a monitor at their head, and repeat the numerical tables, ascending from a unit to four, and from four to twenty, from twenty to eighty, and from eighty to 1280; and during school hours they write on the palm leaf the strokes by which these numbers are defined. They next commit to memory an addition table and count from one to a hundred; and after this, on green plantain

[1] Ward, vol. i. pp. 160 ff.

leaves, they write easy sums in addition and subtraction of money; multiplication, and then reduction of money, measures, etc. The Hindu measures are all reducible to the weight, beginning with *rattīs* and ending with *manas* (maunds). The elder boys, as the last course at these schools, learn to write common letters, agreements, etc. The Hindu schools begin early in the morning and continue till nine or ten o'clock; after taking some refreshment at home the scholars return about three and continue till dark. Masters punish with cane or rod, or a truant is compelled to stand on one leg holding up a brick in each hand or to have his arms stretched out till completely tired. Masters are generally respectable Śūdras, but occasionally Brāhmans.'

In the Report of the Education Commission of 1882 there is an account of an indigenous primary school in the Bombay Presidency which belongs, of course, to a later date but gives a similar picture.[1] 'The ordinary daily routine of a Hindu indigenous school is nearly the same in all parts of the Presidency. Each morning at about six o'clock the Pantoji, who is in some cases a Brāhman, and the priest of many of the families whose children attend the school, goes around the village and collects his pupils. This process usually occupies some time. At one house the pupil has to be persuaded to come to school; at another the parents have some special instructions to give the master regarding the refractoriness of their son; at a third he is asked to administer chastisement on the spot. As soon as he has collected a sufficient number of his pupils he takes them to the school. For the first half-hour a *Bhupali*, or invocation to the sun, Saraswatī, Ganapati, or some other deity, is chanted by the whole school. After this the boys who can write trace the letters of their *kittas*, or copy slips, with a dry pen, the object of this exercise being to give free play to the fingers and wrist, and to accustom them

[1] *Bombay Report*, p. 65.

to the sweep of the letters. When the tracing lesson is over, the boys begin to write copies; and the youngest children, who have been hitherto merely looking on, are taken in hand either by the master's son or by one of the elder pupils. The master himself generally confines his attention to one or two of the oldest pupils, and to those whose instruction he has stipulated to finish within a given time. All the pupils are seated in one small room or verandah, and the confusion of sounds, which arises from three or four sets of boys reading and shouting out their tables all at the same moment, almost baffles description.'

In the Madras Presidency these schools[1] are known as *pyal* schools. The *pyal* is a kind of bench or platform about three feet high and three feet broad, which is built against the wall of most houses in South India, and has in front a raised pavement or *koradu*. On the *pyal* visitors are received, the family sleep in the hot season, and it has many other uses also. For the village school a *pyal* is usually lent by the headman of the village. The scholars sit on the *pyal*, leaving the *koradu* for the teacher and for their own passage. The main purpose of these *pyal* schools, before modern developments in education reformed them or pushed them out, was to give instruction in the three R's, but of arithmetic only the simplest elements were taught. A great deal of time was spent in construing and memorizing beautiful but obscure poems, written in the 'high' dialect (which differs not only from the colloquial, but even from the modern literary dialect). The average number of children was about twenty-one, and the school had no apparatus except the sandy ground, certain small blackboards, and some *kajan* leaves for writing. A sort of discipline was maintained by a constant and often severe use of the cane. Unruly or truant boys

[1] See article in *Indian Antiquary* for Feb., 1873, p. 52, by C. E. Gover, from which this account is taken.

were coerced by punishments that partook of torture. The teacher was usually a Brāhman. When a new scholar was to be received into the school the teacher and his scholars came to his house and he was handed over to the teacher by his parents. Various religious and other ceremonies were performed, and amongst other things the master made the new pupil repeat the whole alphabet three times, taught him a prayer to Gaṇeśa, and guided his hand in writing in a flat vessel of rice the name of Vishnu or Śiva. The pay of the teacher might be as much as Rs.15 to Rs.25 a month in the case of pupils whose parents were wealthy; but in *pyal* schools for poorer boys his emoluments only amounted to Rs.5 to Rs.10 a month. The pay of the teacher was received not only by regular monthly fees, but by certain customary presents on festivals and other occasions. Besides learning the three R's, a pupil obtained a knowledge, though generally a very unintelligent one, of about four or five of the great classics of the Tamil or the Telugu language. These books being also the moral code of the people, had value from the point of view of moral training. Some of these books, which had been printed in cheap editions, were in the hands of the scholars, but very often only the teacher possessed the books. Writing was taught in close connection with reading, and the pupil began his writing lessons when he commenced the alphabet. The alphabet was learned by writing with the finger on the sandy ground. Later he began to write with a pencil on a kind of small blackboard or slate (called a *palaka*), the surface of which was prepared from rice and charcoal. Then he had the privilege eventually of writing either with an iron style on *kajan* leaves, or with a reed pen on paper. Trading or agricultural accounts were taught as well as the composition of notes-of-hand, leases, agreements, etc., and the reading of the vernacular current hand. Education began usually at the age of five years. School commenced at

about six o'clock in the morning. In the afternoon of each school day the pupil copied the next day's lesson on his *palaka*, and showed it to the master, who corrected it and heard him read it two or three times. The pupil then took it home and learnt it by heart for repetition to the teacher next morning.

Thus in various parts of India we find that there were existing popular elementary schools having the same general features though differing in some details.

It is interesting to compare with the above accounts a picture given to us of a school in South India by a traveller, Pietra della Valle, who visited India in 1623.[1]

'In the mean time, while the burthens were getting in order, I entertained myself in the Porch of the Temple, beholding little boys learning arithmetic after a strange manner, which I will here relate. They were four, and having all taken the same lesson from the master, in order to get that same by heart and repeat likewise their former lessons and not forget them, one of them singing musically with a certain continu'd tone (which hath the force of making deep impression in the memory) recited part of the lesson; as for example, "One by itself makes one"; and whilst he was thus speaking he writ down the same number, not with any kind of pen, nor on paper, but (not to spend paper in vain) with his finger on the ground, the pavement being for that purpose strew'd all over with very fine sand; after the first had writ what he sung, all the rest sung and writ down the same thing together. Then the first boy sung and writ down another part of the lesson; as, for example, "Two by itself makes two", which all the rest repeated in the same manner, and so forward in order. When the pavement was full of figures they put them out with the hand, and if need were, strew'd it with new sand from a little heap which they had before them wherewith

[1] *Travels of P. della Valle* (Hakluyt Society), ii. 227.

to write further. And thus they did as long as the exercise continu'd, in which manner likewise, they told me, they learnt to read and write without spoiling paper, pens, or ink, which certainly is a pretty way.'

This widespread vernacular elementary education existed side by side with the Sanskrit schools, and there was no mutual dependence or connection between them. The former existed for the trading and commercial classes, and the latter for the religious and the learned. In the case of Muhammadan education, however, we find that there was a close connection between the Arabic schools of higher learning, or *madrasahs*, and the Persian schools or *maktabs*. The latter corresponded to the Hindu vernacular schools. Urdu was the current language amongst the Muhammadans, but this vernacular was not used as the medium of instruction. Urdu is written with Persian characters, and contains a large number of Persian words, but was considered as a patois unfit to be used as a language in the schools. Its place was taken by Persian, which had been made the court language by the Muhammadan Emperors, and continued to be used as such till 1835. A knowledge of Persian was therefore necessary to obtain an appointment in the Government service, and the Persian schools were attended by Hindus as well as Muhammadans, especially by Hindus of the Brāhman and Kayasth castes. Most of the teachers were Muhammadans, and Adam considered that as a class they were superior to the Bengali and Hindi teachers.[1] They were, however, more dependent for their support on single families or individual patrons. A few of them were also Arabic teachers, and possessed high qualifications. Their emoluments, as a rule, amounted to Rs.5 to Rs.7 a month. The subjects studied included elementary grammatical works and forms of correspondence, and popular poems and tales were read. Occasionally

[1] *Adam's Reports*, p. 215.

a work on rhetoric or a treatise on medicine or theology was studied. The *Gulistān* of Sa'dī was a very favourite text-book. Sections of the Korān were learned by heart, and the schools had a more religious connection than the Hindu vernacular schools, but Adam did not consider them morally superior to the Hindu schools.[1] The Hindu schools were vernacular and commercial; but the Muhammadan schools were also to some extent literary and philological, and employed a learned language. Printed works were not used, but manuscripts were in constant use. In contra-distinction to the Hindu vernacular schools, reading was taught before writing. Elegant penmanship was much cultivated. Adam also found some schools in which elementary Arabic was taught, but these existed merely to give the boys that knowledge of certain portions of the Korān which is necessary for Muhammadans. They taught mere names and forms and sounds, and it was considered sufficient for the boys to be able to repeat the required portions without understanding them.[2] Some of the teachers did not pretend to be able even to sign their names. There were also a few schools in which both Persian and Bengali were taught.

Besides the instruction in the schools there were also a certain number of children receiving instruction at home. William Ward says,[3] 'Hindu women are unable to teach their children their first lessons, but a father may frequently be seen teaching his child to write the alphabet when five years old'. Rich men often employed a tutor to teach their children, and when other children were admitted to share in this instruction it sometimes grew into a school. Girls, as a rule, received no education; but daughters of Rājput nobles or of *zamīndārs* often received a limited education from their fathers or family priests.

[1] *Adam's Reports*, p. 102.

[2] See also p. 140 above, where the report of Mr. de la Fosse on modern Korān schools is quoted.

[3] Ward, i. 160.

There was then, before the British Government took over control of education in India, a widespread, popular, indigenous system. It was not confined to one or two provinces, but was found in various parts of India, though some districts were more advanced than others. In the inquiry made for the Madras Presidency in 1822–6, it was calculated that rather less than one-sixth of the boys of school-going age received education of some sort.[1] In the similar inquiry made for the Bombay Presidency (1823–8) the number of boys under instruction was put down as about one in eight.[2] In one of the districts in Bengal, where Adam carried out his inquiry, he found [3] 13·2 per cent. of the whole male population receiving instruction. In another district he found 9 per cent. of all children of school-going age under instruction. William Ward says,[4] that it was supposed that about one-fifth of the male population of Bengal could read. In some parts of India the number under instruction would probably be less than in the three provinces mentioned. Widespread, therefore, as elementary education was, it did not include a very large proportion even of the male population, and amongst females of course it hardly existed at all.

An important question which arises with regard to this system of popular elementary education is, 'When did it begin?' We have seen that it was in full swing at the beginning of the nineteenth century when investigations were carried out by the Governments of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras, in various parts of India. But how far back can it be traced?

The Brāhman authorities, like the *Sūtras* and the Code of Manu, have no reference to any form of literary education

[1] See *Madras Report for Ed. Com.*, 1882.

[2] F. W. Thomas, *Hist. and Prospects of Brit. Ed. in India*, ch. i.

[3] Adam, pp. 117, 232.

[4] Ward, ii. 503.

outside of the Brāhmanical schools. But silence in works of this kind is not certain evidence that facilities for primary education did not exist, and the Brāhmans may have had reasons for wishing to ignore any forms of education which were not in their own hands. The duties of Vaiśyas, as outlined in Manu, included, as we have noticed,[1] such things as a knowledge of measures and weights, of probable profit and loss on merchandise, of the languages of men, of the manner of keeping goods, and the rules of purchase and sale. Part of this knowledge at least was probably learnt in the course of business, being passed on from father to son, but it is quite conceivable that even in very early times some merchants or others may have employed a teacher, or founded a small school, for the instruction of their sons in the elements of these subjects.[2] There is, at any rate, evidence to show that the knowledge of reading and writing was fairly widespread in India long before the time of Manu.

Writing was introduced into India about 800 B.C., and the elaboration of the Brāhmī script was completed by about 500 B.C. or even earlier.[3] A Buddhist tract called the *Sīlas*, which dates from about 450 B.C.,[4] gives a list of children's games. One of these is called *Akkharikā* (Lettering), which is explained as 'Guessing at letters traced in the air, or on a playfellow's back'. Such a game amongst children seems to show that the knowledge of the alphabet was prevalent at least amongst a certain section of the community, perhaps those who belonged to the trading and commercial classes, for it is they who would have the greatest need for a knowledge of reading and writing, and neither the Brāhman nor the Buddhist sacred books seem to have been committed to

[1] See p. 72.
[2] For present-day 'Mahājani schools', see p. 73.
[3] J. G. Bühler, *Indian Palæography*, p. 17.
[4] Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 108.

writing till a very much later date. The ancient writers Nearchus and Q. Curtius, in the last quarter of the fourth century B.C., refer to the custom of the Indians of writing letters on cloth and bark ; and Megasthenes, at a slightly later date, speaks of the use of milestones to indicate distances and halting-places on the high-roads.[1] In another passage, however, Megasthenes relates that judicial cases in India were decided according to unwritten laws, and that the Indians knew no letters. Taking these passages together it seems that at that time writing was used for public or private notifications, but that it had not begun to be used for the purposes of literature. It is then probable that the knowledge and use of writing, though widespread, was confined to the commercial and official classes, but this does not necessarily imply the existence of schools for teaching these arts.

In the *Mahāvagga* there is an interesting passage which is translated as follows[2]:—

'At that time there was in Rājagaha a company of seventeen boys, friends of each other ; young Upāli was first among them. Now Upāli's father and mother thought: "How will Upāli after our death live a life of ease and without pain? If Upāli could learn writing (*lekhā*), he would after our death live a life of ease and without pain." But then Upāli's father and mother thought again: "If Upāli learns writing his fingers will become sore. But if Upāli could learn arithmetic (*gaṇanā*), he would after our death live a life of ease and without pain." But then Upāli's father and mother thought again: "If Upāli learns arithmetic, his breast will become diseased. But if Upāli could learn money-changing (*rūpa*), he would after our death live a life of ease and comfort and without pain." But then Upāli's father and mother said to themselves: "If Upāli learns money-changing, his eyes will suffer." The result was that it was decided that Upāli should

[1] J. G. Bühler, *Indian Palæography*, p. 6. [2] *Mahāvagga*, i. 49.

become a monk and join the *sangha*, and he and his companions were all admitted, but on account of their unruly conduct it was laid down that persons under twenty should not in future receive the full, or *upasampada*, ordination.

This passage seems to show that at the time when the *Mahāvagga* was composed it was not uncommon for some boys at least to learn writing and arithmetic, and that there were some facilities for this, and that these were outside the monasteries. It does not seem likely that at this time the monasteries had begun to be schools of popular instruction, and it is indeed probable that at first the only teaching given to those who joined the *sangha* was a knowledge of the precepts and doctrines of Buddhism. This passage bears witness to the existence of elementary schools of some sort, and it is remarkable that the three subjects of the curriculum mentioned bear a striking resemblance to those of the indigenous primary schools of India in much later times. *Lekhā* (writing),[1] *gaṇanā* (arithmetic, *i.e.* addition, subtraction, and the multiplication table) and *rūpa* (literally 'forms', but meaning arithmetic applied to simple commercial or agricultural purposes) are still the three subjects which are most prominent in the modern types of indigenous schools. According to the Elephant Cave inscription of the year 165 of the Mauryan era (about 157 or 148 B.C.), King Khāravela of Kalinga learnt these subjects in his childhood.[2] The *Lalita Vistara*[3] refers to the learning of writing and of the alphabet by children. *Jātaka*, No. 125, mentions the wooden writing-board (*phalaka*) known (as well as the *varṇaka*, or wooden pen) also to the *Lalita Vistara*, and still used in elementary schools.[4] There is a Sutta in Pāli which is called the *Sigalovāda Sutta*[5] which

[1] J. G. Bühler, *Indian Palæography*, p. 5. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] Ch. x. [4] Bühler, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

[5] Quoted in *Buddhism* (1890) by T. W. Rhys Davids. Translated in *Contemp. Rev.*, Feb., 1876, by Childers.

enumerates the chief duties which men owe to one another in everyday life. Amongst the duties which are mentioned for parents are training their children in virtue and having them taught arts or sciences. It also contains a section which details the duties of pupils and teachers. The pupil should honour his teachers by rising in their presence, by ministering to them, by obeying them, by supplying their wants, by attention to instruction. The teacher should show his affection to his pupils, by training them in all that is good, by teaching them to hold knowledge fast, by instruction in science and lore, by speaking well of them to their friends and companions, by guarding them from danger. The mention among the duties of parents of having their children taught arts or science need imply no more than passing on to them the knowledge of their own particular craft or trade; but the mention of the duties of pupils and teachers in a manual relating to everyday life certainly seems to point to the existence of schools of some sort, though we cannot say that this implies the carrying on of secular instruction at the Buddhist monasteries. It seems rather to imply the existence of some facilities for popular instruction outside the monasteries, though not necessarily widespread.

The oldest known inscriptions in India are those of King Aśoka, who reigned from 272 to 231 B.C. This monarch had erected in various parts of India edicts and inscriptions on rocks and pillars, many of which have been discovered. His chief object was to promote amongst his people *Dharma* or moral duty. These inscriptions are in the vernacular. Aśoka also erected many monasteries. The existence of these edicts in the vernacular has been taken to imply that there was a widespread popular education going on in India at the time of Aśoka. Thus Mr. V. A. Smith says [1] that the care taken to publish the imperial edicts implies that a knowledge of reading

[1] *Aśoka*, p. 138.

and writing was widely diffused, and that there is the same inference from the inscriptions being in the vernacular. He says also that it is probable that learning was fostered by the numerous monasteries, and that boys and girls in hundreds of villages learned their lessons from the monks and nuns, as they do now in Burma, and that it is likely that the percentage of literacy among the Buddhist population in Aśoka's time was higher than it is now in many parts of British India. The vernacular inscriptions of Aśoka certainly seem to imply that there was a considerable amount of literacy, but what proportion of the population could read and write it seems quite impossible to conjecture. Even if only a few possessed these accomplishments it might have seemed quite worth while to Aśoka to erect his monuments and have inscriptions put on them, for the few could read them to the many. But it is very doubtful whether the Buddhist monasteries had become as early as this centres of a widespread popular instruction, and it is not certain that they ever became such in India. There is, however, evidence, as we have seen above, that before the time of Aśoka facilities of some kind existed for giving elementary instruction, and the welding together of a large part of India into one empire, under the strong rule of the Mauryan sovereigns, must have given increased opportunities for trade and commerce, and this may have also led to an increased demand for popular schools where the three R's could be learnt.

Buddhism placed both religion and education on a more popular basis than Brāhmanism, and by breaking down the monopoly of higher learning which had been in the hands of the Brāhman teachers, it may have also indirectly helped to increase the desire for primary education amongst the people. There was, moreover, about the first century of our era a most remarkable laymen's movement in India. This is illustrated by the production of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, which belongs to

about that period, in which the possibility of the attainment of salvation by an earnest layman who does his duty is expounded, and also by the growth of the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism which holds out hopes of spiritual progress to those who are not able to forsake the world and become monks. This upheaval, both in Vaishṇavism and in Buddhism, is the evidence of a widespread movement amongst laymen in India, and it would be not unlikely that it would be also characterized by a growing desire for education. It is, perhaps, from this period that the Buddhist monasteries began to undertake secular as well as religious education, and there may also have been a large growth of popular elementary schools.

The effect of the Muhammadan domination upon these Hindu vernacular schools must have been considerable. The growth of a large Muhammadan population, who resorted to the Muhammadan *maktabs* for obtaining an elementary education, must have lessened their numbers, and the use of Persian as the official language by the Muhammadan rulers made even Hindus resort to Muhammadan teachers in order to obtain a knowledge of this language, and with it the possibility of obtaining Government employment. These Persian elementary schools must then have become numerous during the Muhammadan period, and the reference in the *Āīn-i-Akbarī* quoted above[1] shows that they were widespread at the time of Akbar. This extract does not refer to Hindu vernacular schools, although it mentions the Hindu Sanskrit education. But such schools, no doubt, continued, and would be used by the Hindu trading and agricultural classes. The school which Pietra della Valle saw[2] in South India in 1623, being held in a temple porch, was evidently a Hindu vernacular school. Adam in his report mentions[3] that one of the text-books used in the Hindu vernacular schools was Subhankar's

[1] P. 124. [2] See p. 151.
[3] *Adam's Reports*, p. 97.

rhyming arithmetic rules, which he says was evidently composed during the existence of the Muhammadan power, as it was full of Persian terms and reference to Muhammadan usages. This shows how even the Hindu vernacular schools had to accommodate themselves to some extent to the altered circumstances which were brought about by the Muhammadan rule.

When the Education Commission of 1882 was conducting its investigations the witnesses were asked whether in their respective districts there existed an indigenous system of primary schools, and if so whether they were relics of an ancient village system. The replies given by witnesses in all provinces of India show great diversity of opinion. Some witnesses confidently affirmed that the primary schools were relics of an ancient village system, while others as confidently denied it. The evidence on which these opinions were based was not asked for, and very few of the witnesses attempted to support their opinions by any form of proof. The diversity of opinion can, however, be explained by the ambiguity of the question. The antiquity of this popular system, and its being a relic of an ancient village system, are really two distinct questions, and even the matter of antiquity largely depends on whether the system as a whole or separate schools are considered. The evidence seems to show that these schools were started in various places under various circumstances. There seems no reason to doubt, as we have already seen, that facilities for primary education existed in some places and among some classes even before the time of King Aśoka, but new schools were often springing up where they had not existed before, and sometimes a school might become defunct. The Muhammadan *maktabs* were in most cases closely connected with the mosque, but with regard to the Hindu vernacular schools it seems possible to trace at least four ways in which they came to be started.

(1) Some were connected with temples. The Bengal Report of the Education Commission of 1882 says[1]: 'Another class of educational institutions owed its origin to a different branch of the priesthood. Each village community of the Hindus had its tutelary idol with a Brāhman specially attached to its worship. Offering worship to the idol on behalf of all the different castes of the village people, this Brāhman naturally took under him in his tutorial capacity the children of all those who, as either belonging to or connected with the twice-born, felt themselves under the obligation to acquire letters. Thus originated the village *pāthśālas* which are still so much cherished by the people. The *pāthśāla* teacher subsisted on the *deottar* land of the idol, and received from his pupils free-will offerings and occasionally fees.' So in the Panjāb report also it is mentioned that some schools were connected with temples, and the school seen by Pietra della Valle was probably a temple school. That this, however, was not the only origin of such schools, even in the case of Bengal, is clear from Adam's reports. The schools were not always held in proximity to a temple, and both teachers and pupils included even the lowest castes.

(2) Other primary schools owed their origin to the enterprise of some village *zamīndār* or local magnate, who was anxious to have his own children taught, and was not unwilling to allow other children from the village to study under the same teacher along with his own children, and in some cases to allow the school to meet on the verandah of his house or in some other building that belonged to him.

(3) In other cases the school was started as a commercial venture by some enterprising person, who might be of any caste, in some place where he could secure sufficient pupils to make it worth his while to do so. This would be specially the case in the towns where trade and commerce would compel

[1] *Bengal Report*, p. 1.

many persons of all castes to desire a knowledge of the three R's.

(4) Sometimes, as in the case of the Mahājani schools,[1] a number of local traders would employ a teacher to teach their sons writing and accounts, so as to prepare them to follow their own calling. It is not unlikely that the earliest primary schools came into being in this way.

It does not then seem possible to speak of these indigenous primary schools, taken as a whole, as being the relic of an ancient village system. If they had been so we should expect to find that the teacher was in the same position as others in the village, like the carpenter, blacksmith, barber, village priest, and others, who receive fixed customary grants from the agricultural community of the village in return for the performances of their services, and pass on their rights from father to son. Not only did the manner of paying the teacher differ, generally at least, from the way that men of other professions and trades in the village received their remuneration, but the teachers were not confined to one caste, and there is little trace of their office being hereditary. In the case of a Brāhman teacher his position in the village community was no doubt due to his priestly office, and the ancient method of rewarding his services was continued even when he undertook vernacular teaching. But in the case of teachers of other castes, if in some cases they have established a similar position in a village community, it is hardly sufficient evidence in itself of the antiquity of the system. Apart from the Brāhmans there has never been a caste of teachers in India, and the teaching work of the Brāhmans was originally in connection with the Vedas and the higher Sanskrit learning given only to the three 'twice-born' castes rather than the imparting of primary education to all comers. It seems likely that the village primary school was an institution of

[1] For the Mahājani schools, see p. 73.

much later growth than other parts of the Indian village system.[1]

The character of these popular primary schools must have varied greatly in different places, and depended largely upon the efficiency and ability of the teacher. But as a whole they must have been very deficient, judged by modern European standards. They were intensely narrow in their outlook and had a strictly utilitarian aim. They had no idea of developing the higher mental life of their pupils or cultivating their æsthetic tastes. Any thought of helping the pupil to improve his character or realize the best that was in him was at most only a very secondary aim. The purpose was merely to enable the pupil to acquire sufficient mastery of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and a few applications of these, such as the composition of letters and business documents or the keeping of simple accounts, as would enable him to perform successfully the business of life. Subjects rather than pupils were taught. Memorizing of rules and tables was given a very prominent place. Even where, as in the Persian schools, some literature was included in the curriculum, there was no real cultivation of literary taste.

Moral and religious instruction was not apparently given very much place. The Muhammadan *maktabs* taught the Korān, but it seems to have been often little more than the memorizing of those passages necessary for the performance of Muhammadan devotions. The Hindu vernacular elementary schools were unconnected with the ancient system of Brāhmanic education. The Saraswatī Bandana, or salutation to the goddess of learning, was learnt by heart in some of these schools, and repeated by the whole school each day, and where the teacher was a temple priest, or other Brāhman, he may have given to his pupils incidentally a certain amount of

[1] For a different view, see *Village Government in British India*, by Mr. John Matthai, ch. ii.

instruction in the mythology and sacred lore of the Hindus, but beyond this there does not seem to have been much attention paid to the moral and religious side of education.

The discipline, as a rule, was not satisfactory, and the position of the teacher as dependent almost entirely on the fees or gifts he received from parents, or the good will of a *zamīndār* or other patron, was such that he was almost bound to become subservient and lacking in independence. Indian boys are often more passive than their Western cousins, but by no means without the desire of playing mischief when opportunity arises. In his Introduction to *Adam's Reports*, the Rev. J. Long quotes[1] from the *Calcutta Review* an account of some of the tricks played on teachers by Indian boys. Among them are the following. In preparing the teacher's hookah boys mix the tobacco with chillies and other pungent ingredients, so that when he smokes he is made to cough violently, while the whole school is convulsed with laughter. Or beneath the mat on which he sits may be strewn thorns and sharp prickles, which soon display their effect in the contortions of the crest-fallen and discomfited master. Some of the forms of punishment mentioned in the same number of the *Calcutta Review* as formerly common in Indian schools strike one as particularly brutal. The following are examples. A boy was made to bend forward with his face to the ground; a heavy stick was then placed on his back and another on his neck; and should he let either of them fall, within the prescribed period of half an hour or so, he was punished with the cane. A boy was made to hang for a few minutes with his head downwards from the branch of a neighbouring tree. A boy was put in a sack along with some nettles, or a cat, or some other noisome creature, and then rolled along the ground. A boy was made to measure so many cubits on the ground, by marking it along with the tip of his nose. It must be hoped

[1] Introd. to *Adam's Reports*, pp. 10 ff.

that such punishments were used only on rare occasions with the most recalcitrant offenders, or that the very possibility of their being inflicted was sufficient to preserve discipline.

In spite, however, of many deficiencies and weaknesses, there were many good points about these schools which must not be overlooked. Individual rather than class teaching was the rule, and each pupil was free to develop at his own speed according to his own intellectual power. In small schools, such as they were, with pupils of varying age, this must have been a distinct advantage. The employment of monitors to help the master must have been a most valuable means not only of helping him in his work, but of giving the more promising pupils a training in responsibility and also an opportunity for testing and practising the skill they themselves had acquired. The teachers, if somewhat narrow in their intellectual capacity, and dependent upon the good will of those who employed them, seem to have been nevertheless hardworking and conscientious, and although their aim was not very wide, it seems to have been accomplished. The schools were closely connected with life outside the school, and teaching for the most part only that 'useful knowledge' which is so highly regarded by the 'man in the street,' they had no temptation to develop theories of formal discipline. If some of the methods employed in teaching were antiquated and unsatisfactory judged by modern standards, others were fully in accordance with modern theory. In the Montessori system we find it advocated that writing should be taught before reading, and that in teaching to write the child should first be made constantly to run his fingers over grooved or sandpaper letters in order to fix the forms in the muscular memory. Both these ideas were long ago current in Indian schools. We have already had occasion to refer to this in connection with the extract from the *Āīn-i-Akbarī*[1]; and in

[1] See p. 125.

the description of some of those primary schools in the early part of this chapter it has been shown how a boy is taught to learn his letters by writing them with a small stick on sand, and not by pronouncing them, and how he learns to write by tracing over the letters already made by the master with an iron style. It must be remembered also that these schools, though they might receive help from a local patron, had no public grants for their support. With only the shade of a tree, or a verandah, for schoolroom, with hardly any manuscripts, and practically no school apparatus except a few plantain or palm leaves or a little paper and a few styles for writing, with a mere pittance for their support, and with a meagre intellectual training, it must be admitted that the results achieved by the teachers of these primary schools were not altogether unworthy, and they helped through long centuries to give to India some elements of a popular education, and to prepare for that time when it should be possible for education to become more widespread among the people.

Although the Hindu primary vernacular schools were unconnected with the Brāhmanic schools of higher learning, they probably derived many of their ideas of teaching as well as their methods from those schools; but as the Brāhmanic learning tended more and more to be separated from the ordinary concerns of life, they supplied a popular want which would not otherwise have been met. And if they did not concern themselves very much with the teaching of religion, it must be remembered that there has always been in India a wide diffusion of moral truths and religious ideas by means of the allegories and fables (like those of the *Panchatantra* and the *Hitopadeśa*), and the epic poems (*Rāmāyaṇa*, etc.), which are handed down from generation to generation by means of the family and the social intercourse of the people as they gather in the evening, after the day's work is done, for gossip and song and story.

The introduction of education on modern lines has had a far-reaching effect on this popular indigenous system of elementary education. Different policies were adopted in different provinces with regard to it. In some provinces these schools were slowly replaced by new schools instituted by Government, or at least under Government inspection. In other provinces they were reformed and absorbed into the modern system. One still hears, even nowadays, of a school being started, as a pecuniary venture by an enterprising teacher, or by a *zamīndār* or other local magnate for his own children and others; but such schools can seldom survive for long without the aid of a Government grant, which means that they become absorbed in the general Government system of education. Still, even in the schools most closely under Government inspection and control, many of the features of the old indigenous schools, both good and bad, can still be traced.