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## Dr. Thomas Quayle's Report, 1936-37

THIS document has more than official interest. While those parts of the report dealing with statistics and the general details of the office procedure have an importance of their own, we think that the section, devoted to the consideration of the fundamental problems arising from the residence of a large population of Indian students in Great Britain, deserves special attention. During the period under report there were approximately 1,850 students, distributed all over the University towns throughout Great Britain and Ireland, and this number represents by far the largest single national group which is nearly 70 per cent. of the total from the whole British Empire, and probably nearly 40 per cent. of the combined total numbers of the British Empire and foreign students. Far from showing any symptoms of decreasing, these numbers indicate a marked tendency to increase by the growing volume of the exodus of students from India from year to year. They are not discouraged by the failure of their "returned" compatriots to find suitable employment, though the latter may have earned excellent distinctions in the foreign universities. The cheerful optimism that a foreign degree will considerably swell their value and enhance their prospect of preferment in India underlies the spirit of the annual emigration of young men to Europe. It may be pathetic. It need not be surprising. So long as Government

encourages and upholds the doctrine that academic distinctions in the universities imply a corresponding degree of efficiency in the administrative fields, young men cannot be blamed for cherishing the belief that their salvation lies in acquiring higher qualifications in formal studies at a university abroad. The unemployment of these highly educated young men is a grave problem, and its solution confronts Government and society with issues far more serious than those arising from the unemployed young men turned out by the home universities.

The following passage extracted from the report is interesting in several particulars:

"It is not too much to say that what is sometimes called in this country the 'Indian student problem' is a matter of vital importance from the Imperial point of view. Whatever the future may have in store, it is indubitable that for the present, and probably for long years to come, India, however marked the progress in its available facilities for advance and research work in all branches, will look to the Occident, and especially let us hope, to this country, for the further intellectual stimulus and training of the best of her sons. And if this assumption be well founded, all the greater obligation will rest on the Government and people of this country to ensure that the young Indians who come are helped in every possible and practicable way to get the best out of their sojourn here, not merely from the view-point of the training and degrees which they obtain, but also from the most important aspect that they should be enabled to feel and find themselves, not merely strangers in a strange country, but members of a community ready to welcome them and to make them feel 'at home', so that they may return to India with experience and as interpreters of the best aspects of English life, both public and private. Such students,—

and experience has amply proved how numerous, despite the inevitable failures and misfits,—will undoubtedly prove to be ambassadors of great worth, ready and willing to do all they can to foster the most friendly relations and understanding between the two peoples."

These are noble sentiments, though some of them may be construed as inscriptions on the monument of the modern standards of higher education in India, and others are distinguished for their piety and generous enthusiasm. The implications of this passage are categorically, that the university education in India is definitely inferior, that higher training and a degree in a British University are indispensable for advanced research work in India and that if young Indians are treated with hospitality by the British people, they will establish cordiality of feeling between the two peoples. We suppose that it is pertinent to ask "Who is responsible for the low standard of Indian Universities? What about the standards of Universities in the self-governing Colonies and Dominions?" It is not quite clear to us how higher training in a foreign university confers on its recipient the faculty of undertaking research work of an advanced character. It must be gratefully acknowledged that those who have acquired distinctions at an English or European University have done work often of signal importance and by its merit, such work has been the means of example and inspiration for others. We must also admit with equal frankness that others who had not received the benefits of this superior education, have not permitted their grave misfortune to stand in the way of scientific enquiry and investigation, and their record of work is equally impressive and important. Is it really supposed that the Indian graduates of British Universities, failing to obtain suitable employment and openings



for reimbursing the depleted family funds, will become itinerant preachers spreading in their country the gospel of good-will and fellowship. While remembering gratefully all the efforts made towards promoting their happiness and comfort during the trying periods of life abroad, the Indian students returning to their country naturally look forward for engagements which would be advantageous to themselves and useful to their employers.

Dr. Quayle makes a passing reference to the grievous complaint against the inequity in respect of dispensing overseas scholarships. It may be necessary to rouse the public opinion in Britain to the importance of ensuring that Indian students should have the amplest opportunities of becoming acquainted with the best side of English home and family life, but that the same public opinion both in India and in England should be intensely agitated over the injustice perpetrated by the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, regarding the award of scholarships under their scheme of Overseas Science Research. Till 1937, India was totally excluded, though the contribution from Indian public revenues for this fund was voluntary and generous, and in that year a solitary scholarship was awarded, and in 1938, two scholarships were granted. It will be remembered that during this whole period extending over two generations, the Dominions and Crown Colonies almost exclusively enjoyed the monopoly, in addition to other important Empire Scholarships. The report observes that "if Indians, in common with other overseas students, could become eligible for such scholarships, and if financial assistance, in some measure at least, from official sources in this country were also made available for the best men from the Indian Universities, to enable them to come here for research or advanced course of study, it

would in my view strike a note which would be warmly appreciated and welcomed by Indian opinion". What is wanted is not an expression of excellent sentiments, but the adoption of energetic steps to get the long-standing injustice redressed. By ignoring the claims of India to participating in the benefits of these scholarships, the authorities who are charged with the responsibilities of awarding them, have definitely placed India in a most unenviable position, for which there can be no conceivable justification, and from which she can be extricated by the Inter-University Board acting with spirit and in time in collaboration with the High Commissioner for India. Their joint action should be supported by a well-organised public opinion from the responsible leaders of the cultural life of India, insisting on equity and fair play to their gifted young men.

There is another significant passage in the report which we should like to quote not only for its general importance, but also for its practical bearings: "It is no exaggeration to say, as has been constantly reiterated in these Reports, that India ultimately gains little or nothing, either materially or intellectually, from an appreciable proportion of her young students who annually proceed abroad, and it can scarcely be denied that each year there is a grave wastage which calls for the most earnest consideration." This inability to derive any benefit from their sojourn in Britain is attributed to the fact that many students are not fitted by physique, temperament, training and the assurance of adequate financial resources profitably to prosecute further studies in the West. The remedy proposed to combat this wastage, is to foster the growth of a strong public opinion by Government and the Universities for discouraging the annual migration of such misfits. The implication of the passage we have quoted would seem that

Indian students more favourably endowed, have, on their return from foreign studies, contributed largely to the material progress and the cultural advancement of their country. It is so. But we doubt if it is so as a result of their residence abroad. There is more truth in the general statement "that the young Indian student who leaves his own country for further study or training abroad apparently continues to do so in the belief, only too often encouraged by parents at considerable sacrifice to themselves that on his return his chances of suitable remunerative employment will be considerably increased". The reaction of the young Indian student to the strange and new surroundings, complex and foreign, can be explained only on the basis of his psychological make-up.

Indian students when they leave their parental houses, may be reasonably supposed to have attained the age of mental maturity, duly fortified by the sobering discipline of family life and by the exacting demands of those responsible for his instruction. However, lurking behind his character there are the persistent remains of an instinctive sensitiveness and imaginative sympathy which, when confronted with a bewildering multitude of new social phenomena, and of strange attractions of new points of view, must inevitably disturb and produce even instability of mind. He can hardly struggle out of "the web of the obligations of the family life," nor does he completely throw off his traditional loyalty to the social system with its sanctions and disciplines. His cultural inheritance renders his temperament cautious and conservative, inaccessible to unexpected stimulus. When thrown into the vortex of a virile and unfamiliar civilization, the young man is naturally in a painful dilemma, with his loyalty divided

between the attractions of "an agitating social and political institution charged with feeling and aspiration" and the convictions of the moral certainty of his social philosophy and racial tradition. This tension in thought produced by the dual appeal of Western influence and of Indian culture must account for the manifestations of zeal and energy for the social institutions of Europe on the part of some young men, more self-confident than their compatriots, and for the grievances and humiliations of others whose response to the new surroundings must be "involuntary rather than deliberate". Though these two types of young men cannot be presumed to be entirely insensible to some of the influences of the Western political and social ideals, it is too much to suppose that they are fully conscious of their deeper significance to the traditions of Indian cultural institutions and the philosophy of ultimate human values, which they have imbibed from infancy. It is true that the eddying currents of Western civilization are gradually overflowing the backwaters of Indian life and thought, and if India becomes submerged and ultimately forfeits her power of rolling back all the flotsam and jetsam brought by these currents, she must inevitably lose her ancient character, as the deliverer of the message of peace, harmony and understanding. Who would be responsible for stripping her of this power?

"Is it just possible" Doremus Jessup sighed, "that the most vigorous and boldest idealists have been the worst enemies of human progress, instead of its greatest creators? Possible that plain men with the humble trait of minding their own business will rank higher in the heavenly hierarchy than all the plumed souls who have shoved their way in among the masses and insisted on saving them."

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