CHAPTER-V
CHAPTER – V

MRS. ANNIE BESANT AS AN EDUCATIONIST

Apart from her spiritual and political activities Mrs. Annie Besant evinced keen interest on reforms connected with education. Her contribution in this direction is really immense. As an educationist, Mrs. Annie Besant built her edifice on “Simple living and High Thinking”. Mrs. Annie Besant strongly felt that the greatness of Indian culture was being submerged by the westernised mode of education.

In a course of her speech Mrs. Annie Besant said “No greater benefit could be bestowed on a community than that of placing education within the reach of young in it. In order that might be done effectively, two points must ever be borne in mind. First, as regards the nature of education given, it must have a religious and a moral foundation. A scheme of education that was not based on religion, that did not train that did not purify and refine the heart, was not true education at all. To educate only the brain, to nurture and strengthen only the intellect, was a danger rather than a benefit to the community”.

Mrs. Annie Besant always insisted on the establishment of schools and colleges and where religious education should be imparted. She said

“Education in which religion shall form an integral part of the curriculum, that is what India is demanding today, and what many are struggling to gain”²

She laid much stress on the maintenance of the various national customs and of the eastern methods and customs of living as against the western. She urged them to follow Indian simplicity of material life instead of the costly and more luxurious western habits. The great hope for India is to recover the spiritual basis of life, she has become materialized through western ideas, and it had been her object to bring India back to her old simplicity of habits and to her old spirituality.³ She knows very well that this could be possible only through education.

From the beginning, she kindled the minds of the Indian people by propagating the High Values of Education, the Education of Indian girls and Education as a National Duty. Her entrance in the Theosophical Society, in the beginning dealt with spiritual problems, and as years rolled on she began to evince interest in social reform activities also. The society took to the task of educating the youth of the country and tried its best to inculcate in

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them a spirit of Nationalism.⁴ None could deny that she dedicated herself for the spread of education.

VALUES OF EDUCATION AS PREACHED BY MRS. ANNIE BESANT

Education is a powerful instrument of change and progressive improvement of human behaviour and cultivates moral and spiritual values to promote national consciousness. The four fundamental values are generally practiced and propagated through Education.

Politics without Principles  
Education without Character  
Science without Humanity  
Commerce without Morality  

These are not only useless but positively dangerous.  

The end of knowledge is wisdom,  
The end of culture is perfection,  
The end of wisdom is freedom,  
The end of education is character.⁵

⁵. Adyar Bulletin, p.20
The main aim of value-oriented education is to make the students good citizens who may share their responsibilities in the changing set up of the society in order to give the desired shape and image to the society and country at large.6

1. To promote in children such basic and fundamental qualities as Truth fullness, Co-operation, love and compassion, peace and Non-violence, courage, equality, justice, dignity of labour, common brotherhood of man and Scientific Temper.

2. To Train Children to become responsible citizens in their personal and social lives.

3. To enable them to understand and appreciate the national goals of socialism and democracy and to contribute to their realization.

4. To create in them an awareness of the socio-economic conditions and to motivate them to improve the same.

5. To enable them to become open and considerate in their thought and behaviour and rise above prejudices based on religion, language, caste or sex.

6. To help them understand and appreciate themselves and continually strive for their inner development and becoming thus moving towards the goal of self-actualization.

7. To develop in them proper attitudes.
   a. Towards oneself and fellow beings.
   b. Towards one’s own country.
   c. Towards people of other countries leading to international understanding.
   d. Towards life and environment.
   e. Towards all religions.

There are 83 values given which is styled as “Document on Social, Moral and Spiritual values.”(See Appendix-V) These values were very carefully followed and preached by Mrs. Annie Besant. Since the Theosophical Society has its own programme of social reforms and female education in India, Mrs. Annie Besant issued the following appeal for the education of Indian Hindu Girls.

The education of Hindu Girls must be on National lives; it must accept the general Hindu conceptions of women’s place in the National life, not the dwarfed modern view but the ancient ideal. It must see the woman

as the mother and the wife or as in some cases "Brahmavadhini" of other
days.\textsuperscript{9} Based on these values, Mrs. Annie Besant insisted on religious and
moral education. She said that every Indian girl must be taught in
fundamental doctrine of her religion, in a clear and simple method. The
Mahabharata and the Ramayana in the vernaculars should be largely drawn
on for moral education. The girls should be taught to worship and simple
plain explanations of the worship followed should be given and devotion
which is so natural to an Indian woman should be cultured, and an intelligent
understanding should be added to it and a pure enlightened faith, their
natural heritage should also be encouraged in them.\textsuperscript{10}

The National Movement for the education of girls must be one which
meets the national needs, and India needs nobly trained wives and mothers,
wise and tender rulers of the household, educated Teachers of the young,
helpful counsellors, of their children and husband, skilled nurses of the sick,
rather than girl graduates, educated for the learned professions.

She also insisted that the girls should be given literary education. A
sound literary knowledge of the vernacular should be given, both in reading
and writing, vernacular literature in Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati,
Telugu and Tamil is sufficiently such in original works and translations to
give full scope for study and to offer a store of enjoyment for the leisure

\textsuperscript{9} Kali Kinkar Datta, \textit{A Social History of Modern India}, Delhi, 1975, p.184.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p.185.
hours of later life. A colloquial knowledge of some vernacular other than her own would be useful to a girl, if time would allow her for the bearing. A classical language, Sanskrit or Arabic or passion according to the girl's religion should also be learned sufficiently. She should also be taught to read with pleasure the noble literature. Books should be provided to them consisting of stories of all the sweetest and strongest women in Indian History, so that girls may inspired by this noblest type of womanhood as compelling ideas, and may have before them these glorious proofs of the heights of which Indian woman have climbed.

Mrs. Annie Besant also insisted for Scientific Education to be imparted to Girls. The hygiene of the household should be thoroughly taught, the value of fresh air, sunlight and scrupulous cleanliness; these were indeed thoroughly understood and should be practiced. Essential again is a knowledge of the value of food stuffs and their effects on the body in the building of muscular, nervous and fatty issues of their stimulative or Nutrient Qualities. Some knowledge of simple medicine is needed by every female child. Since she should also be able to deal with accidental injuries, completely with slight ones, and sufficiently with serious ones to prevent lose of life. Sufficient arithmetic should be learned for all household

11. Ibid., p.5.
purposes for quick and accurate calculation of quantities and prices and the keeping of household accounts.\textsuperscript{12}

Woman from her earlyhood must be educated; that is her fundamental need; the treasures of philosophy, literature, science and all must be thrown open to her. For every girl religion must be philosophic and scientific and science must again become the hand maid of religion. She will apply to practice the truths she learns for better than men are applying them, for she is the born administrator as man is the born legislator.\textsuperscript{13}

According Mrs. Annie Besant the knowledge of cooking should always be a part of the education of the Indian girls and there will be little comfort. Instruction in some art should form the part of education for an Indian girl, so that leisure in life may be pleasantly and adequately filled. The singing of "Stotras" to the accompaniment of the veena or other instruments is a refinering and the delightful art in which the girls take the greatest pleasure and one which enables them to add greatly to the charm of home. Drawing and painting are arts in which some find delight and their deft fingers readily learn exquisite artistic embroidery and needly work of all kinds. Needless to say that all girls should learn sewing, darning and the cutting out of such made garments as are used.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} The Besant Spirit, p.115.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, p.117.
\textsuperscript{14} Annie Besant, op.cit., p.190.
The Training and strengthening of the bodies of the future girls must not be left out of sight and to this end, physical exercises for suitable kind should form the part of curriculum. "Swedish" Exercises are good and these are games which give exercise of a pleasant and active kind. These conduce to the health of the young bodies, and girls' grace movement. Such is an outline of the education which would, it seems to all to prove inadequate to the needs of the young daughters of India, and would train them into useful and cultured woman, heads of happy households, "Lights of the Home".

There will always be some exceptional girls who need, for the due evolution of their faculties, a more profound and a wider education and these must be helped according to their own interest and what they need as individuals. 15 Such girls may be born in India in order to restore her, the learned women of the past and to place again in her the diadem the long last pearl of lofty female intelligence.

Mrs. Annie Besant believed that the Indian greatness will not return until Indian girls and womanhood obtains a larger, a freer and a fuller life, for largely in the hands of Indian woman is the redemption of India. The power of woman to uplift or abase man is practically unlimited and man and woman should walk forward hand in hand to the raising of India, else will

15. Ibid., p.145.
she never be raised at all. The battle for the education of girls are the beginning and may the Good God bless those who are vanguard and all beneficent power, to enlighten their minds and make strong their hearts. There is no doubt about the growing consciousness in the country for female education.

"Education is the Manifestation of the perfection already in Man"

All knowledge of secular or spiritual is the human mind. So we should always give positive ideas, and positive education was the positive thinking of Mrs. Annie Besant. She also stressed that there is the need of education, since by education character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one one’s own feet. The very essence of education is the concentration of mind. The more the power of concentration, the greater the knowledge acquired. The power of concentration is the only key to the treasure house of knowledge. The essence of education is concentration of mind and not the collection of facts.

Female children should be supported and educated with as much care and attention as the male children. Female education should be spread

17. *Wake up India*, p.84.
with religion as its centre. The women of India must grow and develop in the footprints of Sita since Sita is unique.

If the women are raised, the children will be their noble actions, glorify the name of the country, then their culture, knowledge, power and devotion for awakening the country. Kindle the knowledge of women with the help of modern science. Teach them History, Geography, Science, literature and along with these profound Truths of Religion are, the prophetic words of Mrs. Annie Besant.

Education is not merely a matter of training the mind and also not merely acquiring knowledge, gathering and correlating facts, but it is to see the significance of life as a whole. She also propagated that the functions of education is to create human being who are integrated and therefore intelligent.

According to Mrs. Annie Besant education should help to discover lasting values so that people do not merely cling to formulas or repeat slogan; it should help to break down national and social barriers instead of emphasising them for they breed antagonism between man and man. Education should help to discover the true values which come with unbiased investigation and self-awareness. It should awaken the capacity to be self-aware and not merely indulge in gratifying self-expression.

Mrs. Annie Besant stressed that the purpose of education is to cultivate right relationship, not only between individuals, but also between the individual and society; and that is why it is essential that education should above all help the individual to understand his own psychological process.

Mrs. Annie Besant and some of her supporters while denouncing child marriages for stifling female education however questioned the need for widow remarriage and argued for education instead. In an article entitled "Widow Remarriage" in 1903, Besant wrote that she was against early marriages. What the Indian woman needs is not an education based on the Western model designed to fit pupils for a competitive business life, but an education, religious literary, artistic and practical, fitting her to meet the claims of the life which she will pass a life in which competition has no place and which is ruled by the idea of duty to all around her. She also asked women to serve society selflessly in a manner true to what she thought was Indian tradition.

She also stressed that girls needed individual encouragement for a more profound and wider education, believing optimistically that they would lead India at last. Mrs. Annie Besant’s strength lay in her outline of a curricular model for the schools. She felt that education is one’s tradition as

the first essential for girls of all communities as it would give them an ethical base and would develop their vernacular, Sanskrit and Arabic. Mrs. Annie Besant had a fine literary appreciation which enabled her to value this branch of learning.20

When Mrs. Annie Besant was at Adyar, the headquarters of the Theosophical Society she developed the school for the backward communities called the Olcott Panchama School and began her campaign of National Education. The Panchama School was initially started and worked to a level during the time of HPB and HSC. While addressing a gathering of the Pachiayappa’s College, Madras she pleaded for the reformation of the Indian Education System.21

Mrs. Annie Besant equated the education to a lever by which the people might hope to raise. She was impelled to go in for educational reforms for she received lot of representations from the children of the low class (Pariah Community) and other backward classes.22 Hence Mrs. Annie Besant decided to dedicate herself for the cause of educating the depressed classes. She said that the Social reformers should raise the depressed classes to a similar level of physical purity, not to drag down the clean to the level of the duty. The Olcott Panchama School, had its own norms. The children

21. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, op.cit., p.43.
22. Ibid., p.121.
were taught, to take bath, put on a clean cloth and were provided with a meal of clean wholesome food. In the words of Mrs. Annie Besant education is for service. Mrs. Annie Besant preached that the need of the hour as:

First, Comradeship of faiths;
Second, one citizenship, one hand;
Third, The Cultural unity of India.

Education should be for Truth; should be for courage, for Happiness, for leisure, service, study, simplicity and self-control. Education should be taught to all with a long course of human and social experience behind him a very definite character, moulded largely and derived from what may be called the general social experience. That human being should be moulded properly since it is a mass of qualities, a mass of capacities a mass of possibilities, within him and that the “Education” should be therefore based primarily on the study of the individual child as adapted to his or her peculiarities.

If Children live with criticism,
They learn to condemn.

If Children live with hostility,
They learn to fight.

If Children live with fear,

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23. Wake up India, p.91.
They learn to be apprehensive.

If Children live with pity,
    They learn to feel sorry for themselves.

If Children live with ridicule,
    They learn to be shy.

If Children live with jealousy,
    They learn what envy is.

If Children live with shame,
    They learn to feel guilty.

If Children live with tolerance,
    They learn to be patient.

If Children live with encouragement,
    They learn to be confident.

If Children live with praise,
    They learn to appreciate.

If Children live with approval,
    They learn to like themselves.

If Children live with acceptance,
    They learn to find love in the world.

If Children live with recognition,
    They learn to have a goal.

If Children live with sharing,
They learn to be generous.

If Children live with honesty and fairness.

They learn what truth and justice are.

If Children live with security,

They learn to have faith in themselves and in those around them.

If Children live with friendliness,

They learn that the world is a nice place in which to live.

If Children live with serenity,

They learn to have peace of Mind.

It was Mrs. Annie Besant who states that Education is of the most vital moment to every thinker and every lover of his country, for on education depends the future of the land and no one who has the interest of his country at heart can afford to ignore the question of National education.\(^{25}\) The Theosophical Society during the presidency of Mrs. Annie Besant worked for the promotion of National Education. She states that to ensure the success of this, it has to be popularized and its aims and objects should be brought home to every lover of India.

Mrs. Annie Besant also stressed that true education is similar to gardening that is to nourish the good seeds and stimulate them to develop

\(^{25}\) Ibid., p.20.
and flourish. She also inculcated in the minds of the children that concentration will bring “Will Power” and to develop concentration we must put our whole mind to do useful education. According to Mrs. Annie Besant to concentrate on our education and duties, the following matters should be avoided.

- Purposeless work
- Futile controversies
- Back Biting
- Useless Talk
- Day Dreaming
- Concern for things which are None of our business,
- Finding fault with others;

Because these things will drain the mental energy.

Mrs. Annie Besant in her work ‘Birth of New India’ stressed ‘Education as a National Duty’ since to be successful in all aspects it must be taken up, designed, guided and carried out by those who are not only the lovers of their country, but who are also men who understand its needs and are well aware of its peculiarities, of its characteristics and traditions. To be truly useful, Education must be founded on the knowledge of the past of the

26. *Theosophical Digest*
27. *Ibid.*,
country as well of its present; it must be designed in accordance with the ancient traditions and national habits, and adapted to modern necessities, to meet at every point the growing needs of an every increasing nation.\textsuperscript{28} She took efforts to streamline the men and women of India by saying that India wants men and women of wide knowledge of the country on the one side and educational experts on the other. One can gain a good knowledge of education only as a student of national life, as a student of the needs of different classes in society and of the ways in which those needs may be met, as a student of politics and social questions; the useful results in the shaping of Educational schemes.\textsuperscript{29}

During her presidenship in the Theosophical Society Mrs. Annie Besant preached that young boys and girls are the creator of India in near future. She quoted the great men like Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury, the way they concerned themselves with the education of the young. Along with moral and physical education, intellectual education should go, so that India may be what she really should be, a nation with all sides of national life fully developed.

Mrs. Annie Besant took initiative to open primary and secondary schools as well as colleges in many places. Some of them were the Boys' School, Girl's School and Colleges at Benaras, the college and school at

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{28} Annie Besant, \textit{Birth of New India}, Madras, 1917, p.89.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p.91.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Madanapalle, Adyar and the Girls' School at Mylapore, Madras. These above mentioned educational institutions are run by the Theosophical Educational Trust. This schools and colleges were dedicated for the promotion of National Education at that time. The educational work of the Theosophical Society had been started by HPB and HSC. A Theosophical Sanskrit school was opened at Mylapore in 1883 and thereafter, another Sanskrit school was started at Triplicane. The Theosophical lodges throughout the country started schools in their premises. Vedic Patasalas were started in the Theosophical branches for the revival of Sanskrit. A Sanskrit class was formed under the auspices of Kumbakonam branch of Theosophical Society. At Guntur, Calcutta, Naldanga, Moradabad, Nellore, Gorakpore and Gooty, Sanskrit and other schools were started by the Society. In Lucknow the local branch raised a popular subscription of Rs. 7000 to open a Sanskrit college. In 1893, when Mrs. Annie Besant entered into the Indian Theosophical Movement, we find a major development in the educational spheres of the country. The Society had founded several girls’ schools as well as boys’ in different parts of India and the Theosophical Trust includes a college and some twenty schools. The educational work of

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* Madanapalle in Andhra Pradesh – First Rate College in arts in the Presidency of Madras. It was a unique achievement of TS under the Presidentship of Mrs. Besant.
Theosophists in India is of pioneering nature. Even to this day the members of the Theosophical Society are running number of schools.

**OLCOTT PANCHAMA SCHOOL**

As early as 1894, HSC pioneered a movement for educating children of ‘untouchables’ by setting up several Harijan schools in and around the Madras city. Col. Olcott found that not single person of the submerged classes like Cherumans, Pariahs, Malas, Haleyas, Chakklians and Madigas, who formed a bulk of population in Madras can read or write. Their presence in schools was very rare. These communities were considered as untouchables, whose touch defiles the higher caste men, whose shadow pollutes the food or water upon which it falls. Col. Olcott felt that the education was the evident panacea for this social disorder and that led to the establishment of Olcott Panchama School in June, 1894.

Mrs. Annie Besant devoted her full attention to the Olcott Panchama School founded by Henry Steel Olcott in 1894.32 The work of HSC was truly followed by Mrs. Annie Besant. Like HSC, she was deeply moved by the pitiable and pathetic condition of the unfortunate ones who were initially given the name untouchables, as their very touch would cause pollution. She found them steeped in ignorance and misery. So only she laid much stress upon education which could alone dissipate their ignorance and made

them honourable and enlightened them as members of the society.\textsuperscript{33} This school which was founded by Olcott, was taken in charge by Mrs. Annie Besant in 1907.\textsuperscript{34}

Mrs. Annie Besant pleaded for the reformation of Indian Educational System. She also laid stress to educate the students in several branches of science and knowledge.\textsuperscript{35} She always insisted on religious education in schools and colleges. Influenced by the educational work of Mrs. Annie Besant Hon. Rao Bahadur Ramabhadra Naidu, a wealthy Zamindar in the Madurai disctrict, who was also the president of the Theosophical Society Lodge in Periakulam, built a school named Victoria Memorial High School. The Zamindar invited Mrs. Annie Besant and the school was opened by her.\textsuperscript{36} The Madras Mail reported about the work of Mrs. Annie Besant and her influence upon Theosophist. It remarked about the school as “The new building is a large and handsome one, and stands on a picturesque spot on the edge of a river issuing from one of the hills that encircle the town. The local Theosophical Society has charge of the religious instruction of the boys of the school. The Sanatana Dharma text books are taught in every class, and it is proposed to affiliate the institution to the Central Hindu College, Benares, for the purposes of religious instruction”. To encourage girl’s education the

\textsuperscript{33} S.S. Dikshit, \textit{Nationalism and Indian Education}, Jullundur, 1966, p.81.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Indian Review}, December 1911, p.856.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Central Hindu College Magazine}, Vol. X., August, 1910, p. 203.
Periakulam Theosophical lodge distributed prizes for talented girls in the Victoria Memorial School. Thus we find that the women's education and religious education had been taken by the Indian Theosophist on the instructions of the Mrs. Annie Besant.

On September 9, 1908, a girls school was opened at Tiruvalur, under the name of Thiagaraja Girls School. It was supported by the generosity of Mr. T. Somasundra Mudaliar, a Theosophist and the school was placed under the auspices of the The Tiruvalur Theosophical Society Lodge. This school laid stress on the right lines of education for Indian girls, remembering the importance of religious and moral training and never losing sight of the Indian ideal of womanhood as instructed by Mrs. Annie Besant. To a greater extent Annie Besant had made it possible by her sincere efforts the revival of Hinduism and the education of women.

At that time in hundreds of mission institutions the crafty missionaries were trying to implant the Christian faith in the minds of Hindu youth and in order to prevent the young men from being converted to other faiths Mrs. Annie Besant said that 'it is incumbent upon the Indians to establish national schools and colleges where religious instruction should be imparted side by side with secular education'. The reason for insisting on religious education by Mrs. Annie Besant was that she wanted to prevent the

37 Ibid.,
38 Ibid., Vol. XI., January 1, 1911, p. 78.
conversions of Indian youth to other faiths and again she knows that revival of Hindu religion will lead to national unity and kindle the nationalist feeling among the students. The expectations of Mrs. Annie Besant went right, when she jumped into politics in 1914 with the massive support base she had created by her religious and social work in India.

During the presidency of Mrs. Annie Besant The Olcott Education Society was established by the Theosophical Society in memory of Henry Steel Olcott, to carry out the educational and welfare work at the Head Quarters. It includes distinguished educationalist and social workers and had its chairman, being the president of the Theosophical Society. A large majority of its members belongs to the Theosophical Society. The others were sympathetic to its aims. The Olcott Memorial School, the HPB Hostel, the Social Welfare Centre, and other activities function under its aegis. The Olcott Memorial School (ie) both for boy and girls from the lowest strata of the society were later merged into one school catering for poor children in the Adyar area.39

Now this is located in the South – Eastern part of Mrs. Annie Besant Gardens. It provides free education for over 700 children, both for boys and girls and also free text books, exercise books and uniforms to many of them.

In 1918 as Hon. Commissioner of the Scout Association
In 'Shanti Kuni', her home in Varanasi, in a meditative pose (1898)
Free mid-day meals and a nutritious breakfast are given to all the children at
the expense of the Trust.\footnote{Ibid.}

It was early in 1907, (i.e.) during the presidency of Mrs. Annie
Besant, The Theosophical Educational Trust consisting of 20 members were
established with Mrs. Annie Besant as it President.\footnote{Arun Bhattachaijee, A History of Modern India, (1937 – 1947), New Delhi, p.310.}
By the end of 1915, The Trust run 80 schools with the help of the Theosophists in various parts
of the country.

It was Mrs. Annie Besant who started number of organization for the
purpose of education.\footnote{The Hand book, Adyar, 1999, p. 139.} They are:

1. Theosophical Order of Service - 1908
2. Order of Brothers of Service - 1913
3. Order of the Star in the East - 1915
4. Sons and Daughters of India Scouts and Guards of Honour
5. India’s Boys Scouts Association - 1917

In 1917, when she established the Indian Boys Scouts Association
this was united to the International Movement. In 1921, on the request of
Sir. Robert Baden Powell, Mrs. Annie Besant was made the Honorary
Commissioner for India and in 1932; she was awarded the order of the
“Silver Wolf” the greatest honour that the Scout Movement could offer. The
honour was presented under the Great Banyan Tree of the Theosophical Society. In recognition of the services of Mrs. Annie Besant, Besant Education Fellowship was created by the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society.

It was in 1917, she started the Indian Women's Association. She was assisted in this work by Dr (Mrs) Muthulakshmi Reddi, the first woman legislator in India and Mrs. Margaret Cousins. In 1924, the Association had 51 branches. In 1927, the first All India Women's Conference was held in Poona and it became a permanent and powerful body. Women's Association also started number of schools in the country.

The Social Welfare Centre, located near the main gate of the Estate, cares for about 200 infants. It runs two crèches free of charge for the children of poor working mothers in the neighbourhood and a pre-primary school which provides education to children aged 3 to 5 years. In addition to a nourishing breakfast in the morning, the children are given a midday meal. Poor women of the area receive training in sewing and handicrafts the products are sold, and the proceeds help to supplement the women's income. A Medical Centre provides free medical aid to poor persons in the neighbourhood. It is proposed to expand this welfare work and for this purpose a Social Welfare Endowment Fund has been set up, to which well

43. Ibid, p.146.
wishers may contribute. Of course all these things were done due to the efforts taken by Mrs. Annie Besant in her last years.

As to the memory of its founders and Mrs. Annie Besant, a Craft Centre was started in 1988, it gives instruction in skills as carpentry, plumbing, screen printing, gardening, home craft and tailoring, music, dance, games etc. Scouting is also the part of the programme. The school seeks not only to give a good education and vocational training but also to instill a sense of confidence and dignity as well as provide a happy atmosphere for children from deprived homes.

CENTRAL HINDU COLLEGE

The Crowning Act of Mrs. Annie Besant was the establishment of Central Hindu College at Benaras in 1898 with the help of many Theosophists. She established “The Society for the Promotion of National Education”. She felt that the restoration of religion to its true place in education was absolutely necessary for the elevation of the Hindu Community, and for binding Hindus into a nation, that caused her to found the Central Hindu College in 1898, in which Hindu Religion and moral Teachings were an integral part of the system.45 Mrs. Annie Besant said “As

45. *Indian Review*, December, 1911, p. 864.
regards the religious and moral education the Central Hindu College is the most marked institution in which Theosophist has been working”

The need and the necessity to start the Central Hindu College, Benaras by Mrs. Annie Besant was:

1. Firstly that a need had been felt throughout the country for an Academy owing to the revival of Sanskrit learning and literature in India, in which the advantages of Western Culture may be harmoniously combined with all that, is best and noblest. This was due to the absence of the religious training in government colleges.

2. Secondly the need had been further accentuated by the enhancement of fees in the government aided colleges, which had placed higher education beyond the means of a very large and deserving class of students.

3. Thirdly, in Benaras itself, the demand for higher education have gone on increasing and the existed institutions did not have a national character and where such education might have had fallen away and this makes the foundation of the Academy in question an imperative necessity.
4. Fourthly, the donors in founding the college have been solely prompted by a sense of duty to the country. They ask for no government aid but seek to carry out the policy of the government declared from time to time with regard to education in India. The main object is to combine moral and religious training on ancient Aryan lines, with the secular education needed for a university degrees and to impart a knowledge of Sanskrit, the classical language of India, in which are embodied all the ideals of Hindu Nation legal, social and spiritual.

Before starting the Benaras Hindu College, in the year 1895 itself, she established her home “Shanti Kunj” in Benaras, and only there she completed her translation of the “Bhagavad-Gita”.46 Her starting of CHC at Benaras became one of the great educational institutions of the time and that formed the nucleus of the Benaras Hindu University.47 The Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, an affiliate of the Theosophical Society had functioned from since 1891 in Adyar. There was a long expected proposal to shift the headquarters of the Indian Section of Theosophical Society to Benaras, a centrally place from where it was felt that the ideals of Theosophy can be spread throughout the country. It was because of the efforts of Mrs. Annie Besant along with the other Theosophists like

47. Ibid., p.154.
Countess Wachtmeister and Mr. Bertram Keightley that the headquarters of the Indian Section of Theosophical Society was transferred to Benaras in 1895. The presence of the headquarters of the Indian Section Theosophical Society in Benaras had helped the Theosophist to work in coordination for the establishment of Central Hindu College in the same city.

The origin of the Central Hindu College is traced from a meeting held at the Headquarters of the Indian Section of Theosophical Society, Benaras on April 10, 1898. The ways and means were considered in connection with the scheme for the Central Hindu College at Benares. In the meeting the members present were Mrs. Annie Besant, Rai Ryarelal, Babu Upendranath Basu, Rai Iswari Prasad, Pandit Jaganath, Babu Moksha Das Mittra, Babu Govinda Das and others. They resolved to start the college by July 1898. The college was opened on July 7, 1898 with Dr. Arthur Richardson Ph.D., as its first Principal.48

The position of Central Hindu College is somewhat peculiar, and it appears to be the first in this country of the beneficent institution. The need for definite religious and moral training for the youth of India has been recognised by many Governor Generals and local rulers at that time and they have many times appealed to the leaders of various religious communities to take this work in hand. The Musalman Community answered the appeal by

48 The Prasnottra or Indian Section Gazette, Vol. III, Benares, 1898, p. 95.
the foundation of a College at Aligarh, the Hindu Community under Mrs. Annie Besant answered it by the foundation of Central Hindu College at Benaras. 49

A number of gentlemen of high position, Rajas, Judges of the High Courts, District Judges, Barristers, Zamindars, Magistrates, Men of weight and position in all parts of India, feeling that character must be based on religion and that knowledge without piety was rather a danger to the state than a support, formed themselves into a Board of Trustees * with two or three English people, and set themselves to the realisation of the following Educational Ideals. 50

Board of Trustees

President : Mrs. Annie Besant
Vice President : Unpendra Nath Basu
Hon. Mr. Justice Subramania Aiyer,
Sri. S. Chandra Bose, Munsiff.
Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Adityaram
Bhatta Charjee – Professor of Sanskrit
Gyanendranath Chakravarthi Provincial Educational Service, NWP and Qudh.

The Board of Trustees being the governing body of the Central Hindu College consisted of not less than 10 persons who hold office for life until they resign. The Board elected a President, Vice-President, holding office

50. Ibid., p.84.
for five years. The Principal of the Central Hindu College, Benaras, was the ex-officio Secretary of the Managing Committee.

As the main object of founding this college is to teach Religion and Moral Teaching, in Religion to teach all that is best in Hinduism, on ancient but liberal lines, including under the term, "Hinduism" the religion originating from it Jainism, Sikhism etc. to lay down broad religious lines for education on which all can agree, leaving aside all sectarian divisions, and controversies; to build up character, making the student brave, truthful, patriotic, honourable, loyal, pious and gentleman.

The great generosity of the Maharaja of Benaras, the first patron of the college, who gave lands and buildings to the value of Rs.50,000 ; the princely liberality of the Maharaja of Jammu Kashmir, who has given imperpetuity a monthly subscription of Rs.600 ; and that of Raja of (Faridhote) Rs.100 ; and it addition to the financial help which flowed from all sides, enabled the board to carry on its educational work and to build the Present College and Board – House. The donations to the college were also in the form of books, magazines, journals, dictionaries etc., from Theosophists through out India.

The importance of Central Hindu College rests in the gradual rebuilding of India. Mrs. Annie Besant stressed that religious education
should be imparted to the students. Every scholar was taught shlokas to repeat on raising and on bathing. Each was taught Sandhya, according to his family rules. The subjects taught were Sanskrit, Arabic, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Geology.

A part from all these subjects, there was also the junior professorships of the Vedas and the College had chairs in Advaita (Philosophy) Shastras (Religion) Vyakaran (Grammas) Nyaya (Togic) and Vedic (Medicine).  

In 1901, Mrs. Annie Besant started the Central Hindu College Magazine, which soon attained a circulation of 15,000. The Indian Review published Besant’s articles on Education. Mrs. Besant was ever emphatic that courtesy, reverence, friendliness, dignity, compassion, sacrifice and understanding were the vital components of an education. The higher ideals of the college attracted great scholars from far and near to serve in the faculty for a rare pittance. Eventually the Central Hindu College became a centre for promoting Indian Nationalism. The inception of Kala Kshetra, the seat for traditional Indian dance by Mrs. Annie Besant, revived the study and love of this art, amidst the people who were becoming sceptical of the greatness of their ancient traditions. She further said that a scheme of education that was not based on religion, and which did not train the

51. B.R. Nanda, op.cit., p.15.
52. Indian Review, December 1911, p.965.
53. Butchi Armugam, Some Illustrious Women of India, Madras, 1975, p.15
54. Ibid.,
character was not true education at all.\textsuperscript{55} However in the Hindu College, due to successive reviews of the curriculum the emphasis gradually shifted from the metaphysical to the practical.\textsuperscript{56}

The strength of the college got enormously increased during the period of Mrs. Annie Besant.\textsuperscript{57} Her untiring efforts resulted in the formation of a Hindu University at a later time.\textsuperscript{58} Accordingly Central Hindu College was then handed over the Hindu University, as a University College, thus expanding into fuller and larger life in the Year 1918.\textsuperscript{59}

The strength of the students in the CHC till 1913.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1898 - 1899</td>
<td>5,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900 - 1903</td>
<td>8,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>9,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905 - 1910</td>
<td>10,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911 - 1912</td>
<td>11,546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912 - 1913</td>
<td>12,924</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{55} Indian Review, July 1910, p.540.
\textsuperscript{56} K. Ballhatchat, \textit{Social Policy and Social Change in Western India}, London, 1957, p.84.
\textsuperscript{57} Besant's Centenary Issue (1847 - 1947), p.82.
\textsuperscript{58} Indian Review, December 1911, p.911.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p.913.
ESTABLISHMENT OF HINDU UNIVERSITY

Mrs. Annie Besant and the ‘Dharmatha’ Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya (1861 – 1946) met in the year 1911. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was a Hindu Nationalist Politician. He was the editor of the weekly paper ‘Hindustan’. Some years later, he collaborated with the Nationalist daily paper, ‘The leader’. In 1910 he was elected to the Imperial Legislative Council and remained a member until 1921. He was the originator and for long the President of the Militant Hindu Mahasabha, and for many year the Vice Chancellor of the Benaras Hindu University, and three times President of the Indian National Congress.

The meeting of Mrs. Annie Besant and Madan Mohan Malaviya resulted in the establishment of the Benaras Hindu University. Both these personalities met Lord Hardinge and Lala Lajpat Rai since Lala Lajpat Rai had the great experiences by installing number of educational institutions. At this time Mrs. Annie Besant gave there important speeches in Calcutta and she got the moral and economical support of the masses. On February 4, 1918, Lord Hardinge laid the foundation stone for the Benaras Hindu University. It was set up in a place “Nakwa” in Benaras. None could deny the contribution of this University in the fields of Medicine, Science, Art, Architecture, Ayurveda and Engineering. Pandit Madhan Mohan

60. Central Hindu College Magazine, 212
Malaviya’s earnest efforts and his deepest attachments to Hinduism, had resulted in the establishment of this University. The outstanding contribution of Malaviya with the support of Mrs. Annie Besant to Neo-Hinduism was his creation of the Hindu University at Benaras out of the Nucleus of the Central Hindu College. Mrs. Annie Besant stated that the Hindu University was based on Indian character and hence it be dealt with the Indian government. 

Mrs. Annie Besant said at the time of starting the Hindu University that India needs chemists, physicists, mechanicians, merchants much more than she needed graduates in arts. She wanted the Hindu University to be controlled and shaped by Indian men. Mrs. Annie Besant wanted the Hindu University to bestow importance on sciences, such as agriculture, indigenous crafts etc. Mrs. Annie Besant wanted the National education to live in an atmosphere of proud and glorious patriotism, and this atmosphere must be kept fresh, by the study of Indian Literature, Indian History, Indian Triumphs in science, in arts, in politics, in war, in colonisation, in manufacture, in trade and in commerce.

Mrs. Annie Besant worked hard for the promotion of National Education during her period in this University. She states that “to ensure the

62. Indian Review, January 1915, p.34.
success of this, it has to be popularised and its aims and objects should be brought to the home of every lover of India. National education is next to self-government and along with it, the deepest and most immediate need of the country and it is a matter of rejoicing for one of whom an earlier effort in that direction gave the first opportunity for a time submerged, moving so soon towards self-fulfillment”.

Home Rule and National Education are two inseparable ideals and none who follows the one, can fail the other; unless he is entirely wanting either in sincerity or in vision. She insisted that we want not only free India but a great India, India taking worthily her place among the nations and giving to the life of humanity what alone can give. Mrs. Annie Beant also insisted that “National Education and Home Rule together will bring power of self-determination, strength for the life to raise itself again from darkness and narrow scope into light and mobility. All the pupil have the right to expect that the nation will rise to the level of its opportunity and stand behind the National Education as it has stood behind the Movement for Home Rule-Individual interest and National interest are one and the same and call in the same direction. Whether as citizen, as worker, as parent and guardian, the duty of every Indian in this matter should be very clear; it lies
in the great and new road the pioneer have been hewing and not in the old stumbling Cart – ruts”.64

Mrs. Annie Beant thundered boldly that until the educational system is nationalised nothing could be achieved for the benefit of the country including the Home Rule.65 In the scheme for National Education, religious education had been made an integral part. National Education will not only help Indian people in their political struggle, but it made them capable of worthily discharging their national responsibilities. National Education aims at the fullest development of the personality of a people, thus helping them to make their special contribution to universal human culture.66 She said that “the foundation of National life must be laid upon a sound system of National Education. National Education not only infuse a spirit of Nationality, but also spread light and remove ignorance. Education is a keynote to India’s salvation; a supreme effort should therefore be made all round to make national education a success. All our students of Central Hindu College, should be brought up in a spiritual atmosphere of love of God and men; they should be taught to worship the motherland. Education should be imparted to all boys and girls so as to make them self-reliant, independent, and conscious of their civil rights, manly and able to maintain

64. Message* opinions of some leading Indians, National Education A symposium, p.18.
themselves and acquire wealth, power and knowledge. Every patriotic Indian should help the National Movement through the spread of National Education. National Education must be controlled by Indians, shaped by Indians and carried on by Indians. It must hold up Indians ideals of devotion, wisdom and morality and must be permeated by the Indian religious spirit rather than that fed on the letters of the creeds.”

National Education must live in an atmosphere of proud and glowing patriotism and this atmosphere must be kept sweet, fresh and bracing by the study of Indian Literature, Indian History, Indian Triumphs in science, in arts, in politics, in war, in colonisation, in manufactures, in trade, in commerce. Every student of the Hindu University must be taught Arthashastra, Dharmashastra, science and politics as well as religion. National Education must meet the temperament at every point, and develop the national character. India is not to become a lesser-more even a greater England but to evolve into a mightier India.

Mrs. Annie Besant stressed that in the Hindu University, Indian system of education should continue three elements.

1. Education such as should fit in with the national ideals to

Religion.

67. Commonweal, 1918.
68. Message and opinions of some leading Indians, Nation Education A Symposium, p.18.
69. Ibid., p.57.
2. Education as would enable the student to attend the paramount requirements of the Country.

3. Education as would equip the students to rub shoulders with foreigners with a feeling of equality and Comradeship.

Mrs. Annie Besant therefore unhesitatingly appealed to all Countrymen and Countrywomen to support the National Education Movement not in a spirit of antagonism to the official educational activities, but as an indispensable supplement to the same in view of the rapidly changed and changing conditions of India and of the World outside India. According to her the National Education was only a branch or means to the attainment of Self-Government and those who demanded Home Rule for India cannot but zealously supported a movement for the establishment of National Education in this Country.70

She clearly pointed the four main characteristics of the National Education.

1. It must be primarily based on Indian traditions of the past; the background of the students must be familiarly Indian. Education must make a man understand his environment and sympathise with it; to an Indian, living in India, each Indian man or woman must be as a fascinating book to read. All round us India of the

70. Ibid., p.58.
past is speaking from every temple and tomb, from the dust of the roads, from the tress of the wayside; this mighty tradition must he given to each child as a priceless heritage to protect and to add to.

2. The data of educational method must be Indian; the books must rouse an interest in Indian things – plants, animals, common ways and customs. If we are to teach, arithmetic the sums must deal with Indian things. If Botany or Zoology or Geology is taught, the beginning must be made with Indian Botany and not with Botany of a foreign land, and so with Zoology or Geology or any other branch of Science.

3. Education in India must be given in Indian surroundings; the school buildings must be Indian in style, not as non-Portuguese or Italian or English. Every article of furniture, desks, seats, blackboards, should have some characteristic of Indian touch which reflects the Indian feeling for life. For it is the business of education to teach what life is and if the scholar can be taught first to understand the Indian life around him, he will do the rest for himself.

4. National Education in India must have as the goal, the making of the India citizen. This sociological trend in education must be emphasised, specially in our generation, because India needs her
young men and women to make every Indian more healthy and prosperous by developing India's Industries and arts and by making more efficient all municipal and provincial administration.

To her the National Education must be based on reality. Since in this stand point fostered the past educational system which had made India persist as a religious people, retaining their civilisation and culture inspite of invasions and conquests. India lives on because of her unique culture and it is the business of those who educate Indian Youth to make them assimilate all that is best in that culture. One scheme alone is possible and that is National Education.

To develop National Education the students should be drawn through the language thought, tradition, custom, temperament of his and her own race, is to reduce friction and set free a mind that will easily pass in sympathy into larger areas of interest and activity. As an educationist, Mrs. Annie Besant built her edifice on simple living and High Thinking.

From all her teachings, it is very clear, the Hindu University had stamp its men and Hindu gentlemen of widest culture and deepest learning as Oxford and Cambridge had stamped their men as Christian gentlemen of
similar width of knowledge. The Hindu University had gone along the path of training the citizen in patriotic and disciplined roles, who regarded the public good as more important than private interest, and it certainly got the lettering of all the good men who naturally followed it.

In her Presidential address which she delivered at the Benaras Hindu University on October 9, 1915, she said that students should pay particular attention to physical development. She further said that when the Hindu University pupil goes out, they would be ready for the more responsible work, fit to play their part as men, not raw recruits but trained soldiers in libert’s army.

The Hindu University had made many studies in the sphere of education. In the eleventh convocation of the Benaras Hindu University Mrs. Annie Besant delivered the convocation address. The University honoured Mrs. Annie Besant by conferring upon “Doctor of Letters” to her.

As an Educationist Mrs. Annie Besant’s contribution and her efforts in starting the Central Hindu College and further the establishment of Hindu

72. *Indian Review*, November 1912, p.621.
University is one of the greatest achievement in the educational history of India. Mrs. Annie Besant’s work in the educational field as an educationist was meant to rouse in Indians the consciousness of a true tone of the country and toleration of all faith, so that their unity might remain unbroken and they might neither allow their age old industrial and agricultural life to perish nor permit their ancient culture to disappear. It was Mrs. Annie Besant who said that the citizen of tomorrow is what his education of to-day makes him and the subject of education must exercise our attention at every moment of our existence. Mere book of knowledge is no education and there may be very learned people who may really be ignore amuses. Our Education should fit us, as Mrs. Annie Besant attempted to do, to be strong of body, alert of mind, stout of heart, should give us that culture that may enable us to carry on with our fellow men in amity and harmony should instill in us that character alone can make men capable of performing their duties in life, well and truly.  

The task of Education is precisely the awakening of intelligence that will enable the individual to respond to the challenge of Modern Times. The task of education has become one of extraordinary importance. The earnest and sincere efforts taken by Mrs. Annie Besant for the spread of education is to be applauded. Her starting the college (ie) The Central Hindu College stood as a star of blazing light in the surrounding darkness of times and that

75. A. Kaiman, *Besant and India's Destiny*, p.45.
its students have certainly gained a good account of themselves in various fields of national activity that fell to their lot in life. For cultural renaissance and freeing education from the denationalising grip of the government, she started National Educational Institutions. Many people do not know that the National High School in Bangalore, though later on it changed hands, was initially started by Mrs. Annie Besant and established a fine record and distinguished educationist like N.S. Rama Rao and Sri. Kalyanasundaram.

The articles compiled in a booklet titled Annie Besant on Right citizenship deserve special consideration in all educational institutions, because although written many years ago, the ideas conveyed there in have great relevance for the youngsters of to-day, not only in India but in all countries concerned with real development. History is the study for the patriot, for the statesman, for the leader of public opinion, and the builder of a nation. Mrs. Annie Besant will be always remembered for her services.76

76. Idarmis Rodriguez, Annie Besant on Right Citizenship, nd., p.38.