CHAPTER VII

CONTRIBUTION TO SPECIAL ASPECTS OF INDIAN EDUCATION.

The educational experiments of Annie Besant have been dealt with in the preceding chapter. But apart from her experiments, it is most essential that, we must also consider the contribution of Annie Besant to some special aspects of Indian education. She was a living force not only for her close associates, who worked with her for the cause of Indian National Education, but even, wrote Sri Prakasa, for "those who have known her, think of her still as some one who is inspiring them in a manner as if she were living. They find impossible to leave the moorings to which she bound them or stray from the ideals with which she inspired them."\(^1\) So on the modern educational system we find a marked imprint of Annie Besant's philosophical thought. Here in this slender Chapter we shall try to make a cursory study to consider Annie Besant's ideas and plans concerning different aspects of Indian education and their contribution to educational system of modern India.

1. Pre-school Education:

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To Annie Besant, pre-school education meant that system of education which was solely the responsibility of the home to care for. She attached special importance to the care of the body at the pre-school stage and recommended the necessity of post-natal clinics in India for the poor and the neglected children. Elaborating her point of view about the method of child education Annie Besant wrote: "From birth, regularity of habits should be formed, and the infant should be carefully watched, but not be constantly in the arms or lap. He should be left to crawl about and surrounded at a little distance with bright coloured or shining objects, awakening curiosity and exertion to reach them. He should not be put on his feet nor helped to walk; his own efforts are best and safest".  

Annie Besant believed in the natural growth of the children. She was sure that too much care and protection of the young children was psychologically unsound for the right development of them.

Annie Besant recommended to provide a good number of opportunities of choice to a child of 3 years. With increased opportunities, to be put in the way of the child, he was definitely able to draw out his faculties and aid originality. Annie Besant wrote that the child "should be encouraged to observe and to make his own little experiments. He should

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learn to know the parts of his own body, arms, legs, hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, mouth; should count his fingers and toes, to his own great amusement".¹

She suggested that at the age of 4 years the play of the child must be organized, but the organization should not be forced at all. Above all, to Annie Besant, it was a great crime to frighten a little child. She wrote: "A child cannot do his best if he is frightened.... In all shapes and forms fear should be unknown to the child. He should grow up in an atmosphere which encourages the growth of everything good that is in him".² So with the absence of fear the growth of the child would be in a natural way and thus home must provide love and pleasure to the child.

Annie Besant's close association with Dr. Maria Montessori, who remained in Madras for a couple of years, had put a marked influence on her educational thought. Some old colleagues of Annie Besant believe that her understanding of child nature was surely a result of her detailed discussions with Dr. Montessori.³

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1. Ibid. p.11.
3. When I visited Adyar, Madras and met C.V.Subba Rao and Shankara Menon in August 1966. They told me about the close association of Annie Besant with Maria Montessori. In an interview with Shankara Menon I was told that Dr. Montessori expressed her opinion to Shankara Menon that Annie Besant had truly understood Montessori system of Education and had made a practical use in her scheme of National Education.
For the pre-school stage Annie Besant did not recommend any definite scheme of teaching. She wished to give a free and natural environment to the child where he may play and develop some simple habits of orderliness and cleanliness.

Her ideas about the life and needs of pre-school age of the children were thoroughly understood by the other educationists of her times and afterwards. She contributed many thought-provoking articles on the education of the child in the magazines and newspapers edited by her. Her lectures impressed the parents who began to feel a special responsibility in understanding the nature of the children. Her remark about the development of the children that "the children ought to grow like flowers in the sunshine and not like weeds in the cellar".¹ was a very valuable for those who worked for the children welfare in India.

2. **Elementary School Education:**

Annie Besant divided the elementary education into two parts — Primary education for Class I only and Lower Secondary Education for classes II, III, IV & V. So for convenience sake we shall also follow Annie Besant's division in explaining the elementary school education. She divided early evolution of human being into three natural periods of seven years each ending at the age of 7, 14 and 21.

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¹ Annie Besant: "Speech at the opening of the Shri Sarasvati Pathahala" in 'New India' of Monday, the 21st January, 1918, p.5.
Annie Besant considered the First Period, Birth to 7 years of age, as chiefly the Physical period. She wrote about this period that "the senses predominate, and the passions are stimulated by the contact of the sense-organs with external objects; hence the Education should train the senses by accurate observation of natural objects and of the happening of definite sequences, leading later to the evolution of the reasoning faculties, for the training of which the brain has not developed -- but is preparing -- the necessary physical basis. The greatest possible freedom should be given to the child, consistent with protection from serious injury to himself or others, so that he may show his natural capacities, and they may be drawn out by opportunities provided for them. The passions, hardly yet to be called emotions, must be gently trained. The nutrition of the body is all-important, as serious errors in this vitiate and shorten the whole future life".¹

Primary Education:

According to Annie Besant's scheme of education the primary school education of the child must start when he completed 5 years of age. At this stage the education must centre sound play. Here play should be the method of teaching, largely based on the observation of objects. She wrote

"Dexterity of finger should be developed by the making of objects. The school-room should be scattered over with attractive objects, which stimulate curiosity and desire to imitate, and thus evoke the creative power of dawning intelligence and shaping touch. The child should wander about freely, and choose for himself the objects which attract him. The teacher should watch him, should help him only when eager effort begins to be discouraged by failure. The child will learn largely by imitation. He will learn exactitude by discovering that badly made things won't work. He will learn that success waits on obedience to conditions, and that impatience, anger, petulance, do not change the nature of things but only ensure failure."

Annie Besant recommended that at the Primary stage all reading and writing must be learnt by play. To her, there was a necessity of proper opportunities to be given as soon as the child was able to play something. She wrote: "It has been found by experience that if a child is given cut-out written letters to play with, and is guided to trace them with his finger many times, the desire to imitate awakens, and he asks for paper and pencil and repeats the motions so often made, thus producing the letters; he teaches himself to write. Reading may begin with short nouns accompanied by pictures,

1. Ibid. p. 12.
the word being pronounced by the teacher and thus associated with the picture. If the word and its picture are on a block, and blocks may, after a time, he jumped together and the child picks out any word named. 1

But all the Primary education must take place in a situation totally free from any kind of fear. Annie Besant was very much critical to the impulse of unreasoning fear which prevailed in the schools of her times. She wrote: "The worst feature of our modern education is its Appeal to Fear.... Sometimes it is the rude breath of a blustering empty bully, that scurries them (the children) forward like dust and dried leaves in a gutter; sometimes the petty nerve-destroying and mind-unhinging pinchings, ear-pullings, and knuckle-rappings, or the sneering remarks of an irritable weakling unfit to be a teacher, that goad them forward in a mental agony of physical fear; again it is the more dignified, more humiliating "cuts" of the infuriated or self-righteous "head" 2.

In teaching moral and religious lessons to the young Annie Besant gave a very important place to stories in her scheme of education. She wanted that good stories of religious heroes and moral virtues must be narrated off and on to the children. She was also in favour of class singing of stotras and bhajanas accompanied with instrumental music.

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1. Ibid. p.12.
At the Primary stage of education Annie Besant also encouraged the use of drawing and modelling for the young children. For teaching four rules of simple arithmetic the use of models was considered very appropriate by her.

She wanted that every primary school should have a compound for games, exercises, dancing and class movements with descriptive songs. All these activities were sure to put a remarkable influence on child's development and enable the child to see and feel the co-operation and harmony made through the exercises pleasant to all. Annie Besant was in favour of attaching little gardens with schools where young children might be led to observe birds, insects and flowers.

At this stage child must receive a great care about his diet and habits. Annie Besant wanted that a child must be properly nourished and the parents must see that the child may not develop any bad habit. She emphasized a great importance to the selection of good teachers. She wrote that "teachers must be chosen with scrupulous attention to their manners, accent, and general refinement and gentleness, During these years...... the child is chiefly receptive and his whole life is strongly influenced by his surrounding", and the teacher's influence was thus a very great influence in creating a healthy surrounding for the child.

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The Lower Secondary Education:

In Annie Besant's system of education the elementary classes, II to V are known as Lower Secondary classes, when the children from 7 years to 10 or 11 years attend a separate school. Annie Besant considered that at this stage the child required chiefly emotional education. Here different aspects of education are to be developed:

(i) Religious Education:

Annie Besant considered that religion had a special meaning for children, so she recommended religious education at this stage of education. She emphasized the importance of religious stories, stotras and Bhajans so that the children may develop the idea of God as a living Father, who has shared his life with us and with all things.

(ii) Intellectual Education:

Annie Besant wished that at this stage child must have a good foundation of knowledge of the Mother Tongue by reading and writing compositions. The teacher must tell stories and encourage his students to reproduce those stories in their own language. She wanted that children must be trained to observe simple objects and describe them.

In her system of education the knowledge of Sanskrit, Pali or Arabic, of only an elementary type, was essential for the children. She wrote "The classical languages of India, Sanskrit, Pali, Arabic should be taught from the standpoint
of modern teaching methods...... No declensions and rules should be taught at first. The child should first learn the names of the objects which surround him, then simple phrases concerning the life which he actually lives among these objects, leading on to simple conversation. Only after a real interest is aroused in the language as a spoken language should rules of grammar be begun.¹ Annie Besant seems to be a modern of the moderns so far as the teaching of language goes. In modern methods the teaching of grammar is not stressed at, as it is believed that grammar should not be taught but caught while reading or speaking a language.

Annie Besant liked to introduce English, to the children of elementary classes, by conversation and by teaching stories in easy English. In her educational scheme Nature study had a special place. For children the knowledge of life-history of plants and animals was considered essential and it was felt necessary that they may be appreciated for their observation and experiments concerning nature study. The teaching of history and geography by pictures of places in India and stories about them, the making of models and maps was enough for the children at this stage. In Arithmetic easy problems, Indian money, weights and measures, simple bills, simple geometry and measuring was quite enough.

In her system of education for elementary stage

¹. Ibid. p.14.
Annie Besant wanted that children should plentifully use pictures and models, chosen carefully to develop the sense of form and colour and the application of beauty.

(iii) Moral Education:

To Annie Besant stories -- illustrating truth, devotion, courage, honour, fortitude etc. -- were very significant in providing moral education. Stories of all kinds have a great importance for children. So the teacher and parents were desired to collect stories of self-sacrifice; of duties to elders, equals and youngers; of kindness to animals and plants. By stories, Annie Besant believed that, the duty of service could be rightly inculcated in children.

(iv) Physical Education:

For the students of elementary classes, Annie Besant considered, Physical education very essential and useful. In her educational system we find she recommended the following physical activities for children: "Care of bodily cleanliness; value of healthy body; self-control; orderliness; reaction of anger, jealousy and other passions on health. Drawing and modelling. Gymnastic exercises. Breathing, elementary manual training".¹

While deciding on the kind of National Education, at elementary levels, for India Annie Besant wanted to introduce

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¹. Ibid. p.14.
that system of education which would provide a common education to all, of a very elementary character, so that, wrote Annie Besant "on this common foundation shall be built a large variety of curricula, each one suited for a particular class of workers". To Annie Besant elementary education did not mean only the power of reading and writing. To her education was a complete reality when a traditional religious and moral teaching was handed down from elders to the youngers, which trained and cultured the mind, though it did not teach the eyes to read, nor the fingers to write. She had a definite consideration for the rural society of India. She felt that there was a gentle wisdom which grew out of the dutiful labours of the household, the tilling of the soil, the necessary observation of the processes of nature, which lifted the village agriculturist far above the level of the dweller in a narrow bye-way of a crowded city.

Considering the situation in India Annie Besant emphasized the need of oral teaching in the elementary stage of education. Moreover a great need was felt, by her, of the village crafts which trained the fingers and exercised the intelligence, handicrafts was waiting for the slow processes of nature. She felt worried that the village crafts were diminishing in number and those who plied them in the villages

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to the enhancement of village well-being and also of national prosperity were slowly being crushed out of existence.

An elementary school of Annie Besant's vision did need, she wrote, "little building, roofed in with leaves or thatch and with poles for walls, and hard-beaten earth for floor. A slate and pencil for every child. Some large printed sheets of letters, words and sentences in a graduated series. Two or three black-boards".¹

Annie Besant materialized her ideas in the form of some elementary schools which were established by her through T.E. Trust. These schools were fully based on Annie Besant's principles and methods of teaching and were scattered all over India. The influence of Annie Besant and her established schools can be easily seen on the modern educational system if we go to any modern school and find the important use of models, pictures, charts and other teaching aids while teaching lessons to the young children. To understand child nature and child psychology before giving any lesson to a child is also what Annie Besant taught and preached.

3. Higher Secondary Education; emphasis on diversification of courses; influence on the recommendations of Mudaliar Commission;

In the higher secondary system of education Annie Besant

¹. Ibid. pp.15-16.
made a division -- the higher secondary education of classes VI, VII and VIII which we may better call middle school classes and higher classes IX and X -- so it would be better to explain her system as her own books speak about it.

**The Higher Secondary Education**

In her system of education the first grounding of education occurs when the common elementary education is completed at about 9 or 10 years. Here child receives more advanced teaching of Mother-tongue -- literary and colloquial. Sanskrit, Pali or Arabic is also learnt. English becomes more accurate and fluently spoken or written by reading of simple modern stories with plenty of dialogue, letter writing, copying extracts of good modern authors.

In the curriculum the subjects like nature study, physical geography, Indian History and Indian Geography find a special place. Higher Mathematics is also included. The child does not get here elementary treatment with a subject but a thorough understanding is stressed at. While studying nature study some subjects like anatomy and physiology of human body, dissection of plants and their growth are studied as well.

**The High School Education**

Annie Besant regarded this stage mainly emotional but have a little need also of mental development. She wrote that at this stage "the education should be directed chiefly
to the training and control of emotions, so that when the period of puberty arrives the boy and girl may understand the broad facts of human physiology and may have gained a mental control of the emotions. The reasoning faculties are germinated and should be developed but not overstrained, the mental education being mainly the accumulation of facts, gained by observation and experiment, and the training of the memory by their co-ordination, the acquiring of languages, formulae, and the like -- studies which depend largely on memory.¹

The type of education gained during two years of high school life will to some extent depend upon the after career the child is expected to adopt. There will be a certain specialisation in the sense that according to Annie Besant there will be different high schools which will prepare students for different careers. On the other hand there will be certain subjects common to all High Schools.

The common subjects given by Annie Besant are the following "Further instruction in the Mother-tongue. English, by composition, reading of suitable classical prose writers, e.g., Ruskin, and poets, and including readiness of expression in reading and writing. General science, including further physics and chemistry applied physical geography,"

further anatomy and physiology of human body, with more
detailed instruction in First Aid. Further Indian history
and historical geography. Further algebra and geometry. A
short course in elementary psychology. Annie Besant thus
includes the following to comprise the common subjects: (i)
Mother-tongue, (ii) English - working knowledge only, (iii)
General science - including physics, chemistry, physiology,
physical geography etc., (iv) Mathematics, (v) General know-
ledge, particularly about India, (vii) Psychology - an elemen-
tary study.

Annie Besant included the following special subjects
in the curricula of different High Schools according to the
careers for which the high school was a preparation:-

(i) An Ordinary High School:
An ordinary high school of Annie Besant's Scheme was to
have three divisions:-

(a) Arts Division: - Sanskrit, Arabic or Pali. A more
specialized course in (a) Mother-tongue, (b) English, (c) Indian
History and historical geography. History of the British
Empire.

(b) Science Division: - Sanskrit, Arabic or Pali. A
more specialized course in (a) Mother-tongue, (b) English
(c) Physics, chemistry etc., (d) Algebra and Geometry, includ-
ing Trigonometry and Mensuration, with the elements of

1. Ibid. p.16.
Surveying. Further Nature Study.


(ii) A Commercial High School:
Commercially useful foreign languages, business forms, book-keeping, commercial arithmetic, office-methods, commercial law, type-writing and short-hand, commercial history and geography.

(iii) Domestic Science High School (For Girls):
Religious Education, knowledge of Sanitary laws, food supplies, cooking, simple medicines — first aid and nursing, household management, music, needlework, sewing, darning and cutting etc.

(iv) A Technical High School:
Same as in Science Division of an ordinary High School omitting Sanskrit, Arabic or Pali, and adding:
(a) Industrial History (b) Elementary Engineering (c) Mechanics, (d) Electricity.

(v) An Agricultural High School:
All subjects to be taught with special reference to their bearing upon rural daily life. Mathematics, including book-keeping, land-surveying and mensuration. Experimental Science (Physics and Chemistry) with special reference to

(vi) Art High Schools:

These schools might be useful for teaching music, drawing, painting etc.

While constructing the above mentioned courses Annie Besant did not mean to limit these schools only to the mentioned subjects, her indication was to give an outline of the kind of education needed in her time by the Indians. She wrote "The various subjects should not only be taught from the point of view of their value to the individual, but equally with reference to their constructive value as regards the growth of the Nation". 1

By recommending two kinds of courses -- common subjects and the special subjects -- Annie Besant wanted to have a diversification of courses so that education of the children may agree with their interests, needs and psychological nature and prepare them vocationally so that their education may become a process of fitting "round pegs in round holes".

In her scheme the first bifurcation of education takes place when the common elementary education is completed. Those children who feel interested or whose mental make up

does not allow to take up literary, scientific, commercial
life must not join a secondary school, for them Annie Besant
recommended the training for handicrafts and lowest official
work. She was not in favour of admitting all the children in
Training for handicrafts and
lowest official work (policemen etc.)
Common Primary Education
Secondary education (leading
to professions, arts, trades
and the organization of industries).

the secondary schools after completing primary education. She
wrote "Secondary education -- in which I include higher non-
collegiate education -- should be the commencement of the
training necessary as the basis of literary, scientific,
artistic and commercial life. It is not for the boys and
girls whose future lies in the handicrafts, in agriculture,
in domestic and small shop-assistant service, in factories,
in the lowest ranks of the petty officials -- policemen,
soldiers, office-peons, chowkidars, and the like. It should
carry boys and girls up to the ordinary university matriculation,
and should not divide into different branches before
that age. All should have the literary, scientific, artistic
and commercial education necessary for the general useful
life of the lower middle class, which includes small shop-
keepers, assistants in large shops, clerks in ordinary business offices and the like. Specialization in literature, science, art and commerce should be post-matriculation, so that the members of the lower middle class should have minds open to the higher intellectual and artistic influences and apt to respond to them.¹

Annie Besant also recommends a special preparatory class for college careers. We may call it the 11th year class of a Higher Secondary School or an elective class or a Pre-university class. Annie Besant writes about this class that "Attached to each High School there will be a preparatory class for students proceeding to the university. The University will comprise all types of colleges -- business, agricultural, arts, science, teachers' training, etc. -- and in the various preparatory classes the students will be grounded in such special knowledge as may be required to be known before they begin the three year's college course. These special classes lead to the Entrance Examination to be conducted jointly by the University authorities and selected members of the various school staff."²

The system of higher Secondary Education which was planned by Annie Besant has put a remarkable influence on the

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modern system of Higher Secondary education. The diversified courses of the Higher Secondary stage which were drafted by Annie Besant in her book "Principles of Education" published in 1918, tally very much with the recommendations of Mudaliar Secondary Education Commission of 1952-53. Where the Report of the Commission tells that "The courses in the High Schools and the Higher Schools..... will consist of certain core-subjects commonly to all and certain optional subjects. The difference in the period of education makes it necessary to have two levels of integration of the subject matter with the core subjects as well as the optional subjects..... The need for developing an integrated course is so great that .... we have preferred to group subjects under certain broad headings in order to allow for some amount of integration".1

The broad outlines of the curriculum are drawn by the Secondary Education Commission show the following:

A (i) Mother-tongue or Regional language or a composite course of the Mother-tongue and a classical language.

(ii) One other language to be chosen from among the following:-

(a) Hindi (for those whose mother-tongue is not Hindi).
(b) Elementary English (for those who have not studied in the Middle stage).

(c) Advanced English (for those who had studied English in the earlier stage).

(d) A modern Indian language (other than Hindi).

(e) A modern foreign language (other than English).

(f) A classical language.

B (i) Social Studies -- general course (for the first two years only).

(ii) General Science including Mathematics -- general course (for the first two years only).

C. One Craft to be chosen from the following list (which may be added to, according to needs):

(a) Spinning and Weaving, (b) Wood-work, (c) Metal work,
(d) Gardening (e) Tailoring (f) Typography (g) Workshop Practice, (h) Sewing, Needle work and Embroidery, (i) Modelling.

D. One of the following Groups:


The curriculum recommended by the Higher Secondary Education Commission if placed side by side with the scheme of education of Annie Besant will make quite clear to us that the Secondary Education Commission had been influenced deeply by Annie Besant and had only brought-forth a revised carbon copy of Annie Besant's draft of curricula. Prof. Trilokskar is right when he wrote that she had a foresight to see ahead...
of her times in all the fields of Indian life. In her scheme of secondary education the diversification of courses which were worked by her in 1918 to 1925 in her National School, had attracted Dr. L. Mudaliar, the Chairman, Board of Secondary Education Commission and the other members to recommend the scheme of diversified courses for the new pattern of Secondary Education.

4. Rural Education: emphasis on the rural environment; influence on the recommendations of Radhakrishnan University Commission:

Of all the problems that India faced in the time of Annie Besant, there was probably none so pressing, none so urgent, as the problem of rural education. Annie Besant fully realized that cities did not represent India, real India was in the villages, and cities had been exploiting the villages and lived on them. Hence Annie Besant felt it most urgent to work for the rural reconstruction and rural education.

Emphasizing the importance of village education, she wrote: "Indian education did not die when the white Huns destroyed the great University of Takshashila in A.D. 455. Indian education did not die when the Muslims with their horror of images destroyed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries both Hindu and Buddhist Universities that contained

Indian education did not die in these two great destructions, because universities might come and go, but the village system, the roots and trunk still lived. Indian education was not meant to die when Britain came to India, for the design which has been partially fulfilled was that the youngest son should disseminate far and wide the glory of the Mother of the National of the World. Indian education perished only when the Village system with its industries, its common ownership in land, and co-operative endeavours, its education in the mother-tongues was destroyed.¹

Annie Besant was confident that Indian education could only live when it was again rooted in the very soil of the Indian village. She wrote articles, delivered lectures, prepared tracts to impress upon the Britishers to allow village system to work on its lines. She wrote in an article that "Restore the Village Panchayat or small Republic — that truest of all democracies, give back to the village its land, and its power to deal with its own internal problems, and again will there grow up generations of young Indians trained in an education of the hand, the heart, and the head, through which will be expressed the heritage of the Motherland: Creative spirituality".²

¹. Annie Besant (Ed.) "New India" of 18 August 1928, p.6.
For the village schools, Annie Besant, wished to emphasize the rural environment so that a natural system may take place. She did not want that the schools of villages may become a true carbon copies of the city schools. In her scheme of rural education, which she explained in her book 'Principles of Education', she wrote that "Schools in small villages need to be arranged in a fashion somewhat different from those which are intended to send their pupils on into Secondary and High Schools. The Village School is usually all the School the boys and girls enjoy, save in the exceptional cases of brilliant pupils".¹

To Annie Besant, the education of the village boys and girls was a great necessity because only by education every problem of the village could be solved. For the understanding of one's interests and for the solution of the commercial backwardness and for lifting the villagers from the unhappy social conditions, education was the only important need for the uneducated villagers. So while explaining her line of thought about rural education Annie Besant said "We must have a village school, a school in every village, and attached to that a technical school of the simplest and most elementary kind. My reason for suggesting that to every village school there should also be attached, to put it practically, a weaving shed,

a carpenter's shop, a black-smith's forge..... in dealing with the work of village education, you should put before the boys, you educate, ways of increasing the wealth of their country while they earn their own livelihood, and to that end we should have the simplest possible technical education side by side with the school wherein reading, writing and arithmetic are taught. Then after that, I submit, should come your secondary schools, teaching up to matriculation...... there you should also have a higher technical school, dealing more with the artisan, with the trade which needs skill, with all metal working, with all the finer kinds of productive industry, and attached to that, inevitably, something of scientific teaching; for the work of the artisan insensibly glides into the work of the Scientist, and you must have in your secondary technical school some teaching in science as applied to the various forms of manufacture".¹

The village school, which Annie Besant proposed, started its day's work with the singing of a bhajan by the children and a short prayer. After prayer the usual work began which was the same as has been explained while describing elementary stage, in the beginning of this chapter. The speciality of the village school was that of the emphasis on the rural environment Annie Besant wrote: "A lesson on flowers, leaves,

grains, seeds, animals, brought by the children, to be chatted over. Geography by a map of the village in damp sand, fields, houses, well, tank, temple, and the paths and roads leading away to other places. Gardens, how to prepare the soil, to sow, to weed, to water, to train plants. On wet days the making of baskets, learning to sew, to knot, to drive in a nail, a screw, to mend utensils, etc.

"At 8 or 9 years of age, half the school time should be spent in the working sheds attached to the school, where the village trades should be taught. The gardens lead up to agriculture, to be taught in land set apart; in the school, the growth of the plant, why it drains the soil, and how to make the loss good; in the field, examples of plants in manured and exhausted soil. How to dig deeply, to graft, to prune. The care of animals, and kindness to them, will be part of the training. The Carpenter's shed takes some of the boys, and they learn to make tools and simple articles used in the village. Others to the weaving shed, learning the use of simple improvement that increase output.

"Both boys and girls from about 10 should learn how to bind up a cut where and how to put on a ligature to check dangerous bleeding, how to bandage a sprained wrist and ankle, how to make and apply a poultice, what to do in cases of the bite of a dog, horse or snake, the sting of a scorpion, hornet or wasp, a bad scratch, a burn. The need of scrupulous
cleanliness in all dressing of wounds.

"Sanitation, domestic hygiene, cookery, washing, house-cleaning, should be learned and practised by the girls, while the boys are in the work-sheds". 

The elementary rural education, as planned by Annie Besant, was universal and from it all manual occupations were branched out, which included: agriculture, handicrafts and domestic service and the village boys were desired to master them theoretically and practically -- theoretically, in village technical schools; practically, in apprenticeship to the skilled workmen in each craft.

Let us consider how Annie Besant planned the working of the rural education system:

1. **Agriculture**: In India agriculture was the craft of crafts. Annie Besant did not approve of the appointment of a highly paid teacher for agriculture. She wrote "The village technical school needs no highly paid teachers. Its head should be the eldest son of the Zemindar, who should direct, and should supply the modern scientific knowledge..... He should be a voluntary worker...... The instruction given should be suitable part of the information..... the natural history of the place, the useful and mischievous birds, the insects, the diseases of plants, the signs of the inroad of parasites, the

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ways of distinguished good and bad seeds, the eradication of weeds, etc. All these should be learned by the village boy as apprentice to an older workman, who should train him practically in the various departments of agricultural work — the use of tools, the feeding, the tendance of cattle, the milking of cows, the treatment of minor ailments of animals, and the like.1

Annie Besant was not contented only with the elementary rural education. She had a definite plans for secondary and college education for rural crafts. She recommended to the opening of the Agricultural Colleges in every district or province which would be supported by the big Zemindars and small Zemindars jointly. She wrote "Every large Zemindary should have a model farm..... In this farm, discoveries made in the college should be tested on a larger scale; experiments in the breeding of plants and animals should be made, so that improved seeds may be distributed among the villagers, and stud stock lent out to improve their breeds of cattle. So again, experiments in the crops suited to various soils, in the kinds of manure best for each, in the cultivation of fruits, and the improvements of inferior stock by budding and grafting — all these should be made in the model farm, and the results distributed. Promising boys from the villages might also be sent there for special training, and thus the

1. Annie Besant: "Education for India" an article in C.H.C. Magazine of April, 1913, pp. 96-97.
the village level of knowledge would be gradually raised".\(^1\)

Thus Annie Besant's plan of rural education provided agricultural training from elementary village school to the highest training in a college.

2. **Weaving**: In rural reconstruction weaving, as one of the most famous crafts of village, has an important place. In Annie Besant's scheme of rural education weaving had not been ignored. Her stay in Benares, Madras and Kashmir had enabled her to study the working of weaving handicraft to which a large number of interested village students had gone, squatting on the floor, with a clumsy wooden framework in front of them and practising weaving the wonderous fabrics of gold and silver.

Annie Besant had visualised the slow process of decline going on in the weaving trade due to imported products from foreign mills which resulted in the ruin of Indian weaving trade. Annie Besant gave a special place of weaving in her scheme of rural education by reviving the village handicrafts and placing them in her curricula.

3. **Spinning and Dyeing**: In her plan of rural education, Annie Besant gave an important place to spinning and dyeing. She recommended the inclusion of this subject in the village schools where the vegetable dyes may be used by the children.

\(^1\) Ibid. p.97.
She did not like to see Indians using aniline dyes, imported from England, with their crude and glaring colours which undermined the exquisitely soft hues obtained from roots and stems. She breathed a sigh of pleasure when Maharaja Partap Singh had forbidden the entry, into his state Jammu & Kashmir of aniline dyes.

Annie Besant introduced the subject of spinning and dyeing in her scheme, for fully reviving them before these had passed into death, due to the neck-break competition with the British factories.

Thus Annie Besant was able to plan a scheme of rural education for solving the educational need of the majority of population living in the villages of India.

Her plan of rural education had influenced to a very great extent, the Radhakrishnan University Commission's recommendations. We can find a glimpse of Annie Besant's influence when we read the University's Commission's report as: "Small scale farming by efficient labour needed at present, and production may be greatly increased. Much of the village population will be available for work other than agriculture ...... A large part of the industry of the country should be located in villages."

The Radhakrishnan Commission recommended a very comprehensive scheme for rural education which included -- a system

of basic craft education for the Primary stage, the Rural Secondary Schools for Secondary stage, Rural colleges for College stage and Rural Universities for University stage of education. That what Annie Besant had planned and implemented in the first decade of the 20th century, had been visualised half a century after, but no doubt in a better systematic form. Annie Besant did not explain the details of her scheme of rural education in a way that we find in the report of University Commission. We might say that Annie Besant's approach to solve the problem of rural reconstruction was dealt with single-handedly when the University Commission had developed its scheme with the joint collaboration of the Indian and foreign experts of education and financed and supported by the Government of India. But even then Annie Besant's scheme still has its utility, though great progress has been made in the system of modern education. She recommended that Panchayat should manage the rural schools, thus giving the management and supervision of the rural schools in the hands of the local elders of the village itself but on the other hand the University Commission recommended that rural education should be managed by the education department which has no direct links with the village population at all.

Thus, though Annie Besant's scheme of rural education was not explained by her in details but it seems today that
her understanding of the problems and needs of the village society was very great, which enabled her to plan an acceptable scheme of rural education which has a great utility not only for the village school masters but even for the experts working on the problems and solutions of rural education.

5. Education of Women, its importance and essentials:

We have already explained Annie Besant's scheme of women education in the preceding chapter. It is sufficient to note here that Annie Besant felt that no country could rise high among the Nations of the world, unless its men and its women work together for its uplift.

When Annie Besant came to India, in 1893, there were no proper arrangements for giving women education. She wrote articles in favour of women education. In one of the articles she wrote: "Women must be educated; that is her fundamental need; the treasures of philosophy, literature, science, art, must be thrown open to her as to man. There should be no storehouses of knowledge, locked by the key of sex. The Woman Sage is wanted as well as the Woman Saint, and Women's wisdom as well as men's is needed to dig deeply and build strongly the foundations of the New India". Writing early in 1901 in a letter to one of her close friends, Mrs. Esther Bright, Annie Besant had remarked "As soon as the Hindu

College is secure, I am going to open one for girls and try to raise the women. See what an ambitious creature I am".¹

On February 21, 1903 Miss Francesca Arundale along with her adopted son, George S. Arundale arrived in Benares for a permanent stay in India. Annie Besant found a great educationist in Miss Arundale who had a great fire in her for work for women education. After consultation with Miss Arundale she did feel safe in going on with her plan of women education. At the meeting of C.H.C., Council in April 1904, when Annie Besant was re-elected President of the Board of the Trustees of the C.H.C., she was also elected chairman of a provincial committee to organize and develop a Central Hindu Girls' School along the lines of a 1904 pamphlet of hers "The Education of Indian Girls", based on the necessary modification in the current operation of the boys' school. By July 1904 the C.H.C. Magazine was able to report that the walls of the new girls school were beginning to rise, but that more widespread national support was necessary. It was later revealed that Miss Arundale, who was the first honorary principal, was also its main financial support.

Though the Central Hindu Girls' School never rivalled the C.H. College in fame, fortune or future, but it was one of the first in the movement to emancipate Indian women educationally and as Sri Prakasha wrote about Annie Besant's work

¹. Sri Prakasha: "Annie Besant: As Woman and as Leader", p.28.
for women education "She established Girls' schools which.... brough women out of the shell into which they had gone, and which helped also in the removal of purdah..... which was so harmful for the growth, both of womanhood and nationhood".¹ So it would be right to say that Annie Besant was a fighting pioneer in the field of women education.

To her, women education was a very important issue because it directly concerned with the good of the nation because on it depended the welfare of the family and largely the welfare of the whole nation. She did not intend to introduce the western education system in the girls schools, which would have been, to use her own words "mischievous rather than beneficial to Indian womanhood", she wrote: To introduce a system suited to one country into another where the social conditions are entirely different is to act blindly and foolishly, without any consideration of the objects education is intended to subserve. Education should fit the person educated for the function he or she is to discharge in later life; if it fail to do this, it may be book-learning but it is not education".²

Annie Besant wanted to introduce those essentials of education for the women of India which would help them to

¹. Sri Prakasa: "Annie Besant: As Woman and as Leader", p.28.
². Annie Besant: "The Education of Hindu Youth" (an article contributed to the Theosophist of March 1897) compiled in 'The Birth of New India', p.112.
enrich family life. In her times there was no prospect of a revolution in the social life, driving the women into the world to earn bread and become competitors with men in every walk of life. The province of women in India was still the home. Their life was only devoted to the family and for such a life Annie Besant wanted to introduce that essentials of education which would suit the social life of India. For such education she believed that the school-life of the girl in India must necessarily be brief and it was therefore the more important that she should spend that brief time to the best possible advantage.

Annie Besant planned a suitable course for Indian girls to suit their future needs in home and society. She wrote:

"The Indian girl should learn to read and write her vernacular, and the books used should for the most part be translated from the most attractive Sanskrit books, the great epics and dramas of her country. The course of reading mapped out should give her an elementary acquaintance with Indian literature, history and geography, serving as the basis for future study. It might also, in the higher classes, include the broad outlines of universal history and geography and of the greatest literary masterpieces of foreign nations. She should be given a sound knowledge of arithmetic so continually needed by the manager of the household. She should be taught thoroughly the "science of common life", the value of food-stuffs, the necessary consti-
tuents of a healthy diet, the laws of health of the body, and for the house she should be thoroughly instructed in medicinal botany, the preparation and use of herbs, the treatment of all simple forms of disease, of simple surgical cases, and of accidents of various kinds. In the higher classes Sanskrit should be taught, so that the vast stores of the noble literature of India should be opened to her daughters. A knowledge of music, including playing on the vina and singing, is most desirable, as well as a thorough acquaintance with such needlework as is wanted in the home; the teaching of artistic needlework is also useful, forming a pleasant recreation.  

She further wrote "Above all else must the Indian girls be trained in the devotion and piety to which her nature so readily responds. Not only should she read, but she should learn by heart, stories and poems from the best Indian literature, stotras and sacred verses. No girl should leave school without becoming familiar with the Bhagavad Gita, and knowing much, if not all of it, by heart. All the great heroines of Indian story should be made familiar to her, with their inspiring example and elevating influence. The Indian ideal of womanhood should be made living to her in those heroic figures, and she should be taught to regard them as her

examples in her own life.... Girls thus educated will made the Indian home what it ought to be -- the centre of spirituality, the strength of the national religious life". ¹

Annie Besant implemented her scheme of women education in all the girls' institutions opened by her throughout India. She started women hostels and boarding houses for girls who could not find all the teaching they required within reach of their parents' homes. Annie Besant made plans for the higher education of the Indian girls which materialized when she established the Vasantashrama in 1914 and Vasanta College in 1916 where higher education was provided to the Hindu girls, thus meeting the crying need of India of the early years of the 20th century.

6. Education in Fine Arts: importance of reviving the traditions of ancient Indian Art; influence on Kalakshetra founded in Madras by Sujata Devi:

In the plan of education drafted by Annie Besant, the education in fine arts held an important and remarkable place in it. The scheme of National Education of Annie Besant recommended the opening of an Art High School, along with other High Schools preparing for different professions, where subjects covering different forms of art were proposed to be taught. She intended to introduce in her art school different

¹. Ibid, p.115.
forms of art, such as music, drawing, painting, sculpturing, literature and architecture.

But in the schools which she planned and established throughout India, for the education of the girls and women, the education in fine arts was allotted a very high and important place in them. She introduced those subjects which she believed very useful for the girls. Explaining the subjects, she wrote: "Instruction in some art should form part of the education for a girl, so that leisure in later life may be pleasantly and adequately filled..... The singing of stotras to an accompaniment on the vina, or other instruments, is a refining and 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..... artistic embroidery and needlework of all kinds".¹

Art had been given a very high place in the life of a child by Annie Besant. She firmly believed that in the shaping of the nation's growth and making it to reach a full-orbed greatness the importance and influence of education in arts could never be denied. To her, the art of a nation was the expression of that nation's conception of the Beautiful, of its love of harmony, proportion and order. Appreciating

the great value of art Annie Besant wrote that art always "refines and polishes a nation, gives it dignity and grace and self-restraint. Inevitably vulgar becomes the nation which has no true art...... There passion changes to brutality, and love puts on the hideous mark of lust".¹ For the education of children Annie Besant considered the study of art, in its different forms, as a very important subject of study. To her art in India showed out the soul of India and it showed itself in different forms.

She had a great appreciation for Indian art, and especially for painting, for which she gave a theory of art. She wrote "The theory that I profound ..... is that the art of the copyist, even most perfect copyist of Nature, is not the highest art in painting, that there is an art beyond it which is the creative Art, which shows to us, who cannot see it for ourselves, what the artist sees when he looks through the outer form at the idea which is embodied in the form...... In every form a divine thought is expressed. Flower, animal and mineral, are the expressions of the thought-word which exists in the divine mind. From the divine mind ideas are built in physical matter by these minute artificers. In as much as these tiny artificers are less developed than the human being, the thought which they are able to express through the outer form, however,

¹. Annie Besant: The Necessity For Religious Education, a lecture compiled in the 'Birth of New India', p.150.
beautiful is, only a portion of the divine thought which they embody, and a true artist is the man who, by virtue of his genius, sees more of the divine thought in the object than an ordinary man can see...... and so paints not merely the outer form but the inner thought greater than the form, and the enables us to see it". That was the theory of art, which though was propounded for painting only but, which covered all the other forms of art approved by Annie Besant for the Indian students.

Annie Besant was not an artist herself but she was a true student of art having a special training in her girlhood in different forms of art, such as painting, music and dancing, which made her a great worshipper of Beauty and of the Beautiful. To her, art appeared to be the mid-way, the spear head of Education inspired by religion. She, while considering the subject of art, took a universal metaphysical viewpoint of art namely, that all manifestations of life could not exist without the Divine Artist behind them. In her 'Kamala lecture' on Art she said "It is the Philosophy of Hindu India that her Ideals of Beauty are firmly rooted, and in Art, as in all manifestations of the Divine Life, it is the Cosmic Ideation, the creative activity of the Divine Thought which -- bodying itself forth in subtlest matter in

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which Sattva, Harmony, predominates over Tamas and Rajas -- imposes Beauty, which is due to the inter-harmonious relation between all parts of every form, that is the essential characteristic of every Type-Idea or Arche-type, whence all special forms belonging to that Arche-type are generated.¹

Annie Besant believed that the activity of the Divine Artist had been compartmentalised into the Truth, the Goddess and the Beauty or as Satyaamm, Shivam and Sundaram, though in itself He was considered as a totality -- a complete whole. Every activity in unison with the one Universal Life was necessarily partake of all these combined elements, and in that sense the three epithets or terms were synonymous and interchangeable. The aim and goal of life was to press in this direction. Towards that consummation all things were considered to be moving.

To help every individual to be an integrated personality was considered by Annie Besant as the goal and ideal both of religion and Education, hence this factor of art had played a very important part in the life of an individual. Hence its supreme value and worth had been attached to scheme of her education. Annie Besant considered that art had a special place in the religion of an individual. In her lecture on 'Religion and music', as one of the form of

1. Annie Besant: Indian Ideals in Education, Philosophy and Religion, and art (Kamala Lectures) p.94.
art, she said that "Music is verily an expression of the Divine Beauty, and is a worthy object for the study of a life time..... Music -- addressed especially to the emotions as it is --- is found to be most useful, at least as a preliminary exercise, and seems to enable the mind to rise from the physical plane, and to soar upwards into the higher regions of consciousness, more easily than would be possible without its aid". The same was true about other forms of art to Annie Besant. She understood that for the whole run of humanity, in the present times and in the future as well, the expression through different forms of art was far the easiest, along the line of least resistance, a technique and method to round off or mould an all-round personality.

To start with the sense the being aware of the presence of the beautiful instinctively and naturally was one of the greatest of blessings which Annie Besant considered as a good thing of life. But it had to be and needed to be cultivated. As an educationist she made very powerful attempts, through her writings and lectures, to awaken the sensibility to Art in all the young people and sundry, to introduce them with the most crying need of her times. Annie Besant based her theory of art on the development of various senses of a man. She explained this thesis that the organs of the

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1. Annie Besant: "Religion and Music" a lecture delivered to the Shri Parthasarathi Svami Sabha Triplican, Madras on March 7th,1908, pp.1,2.
human personality which enable a man to start on this search are the senses, the doors and windows through which we contact our environment. The five senses; hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell; require to be refined, polished and made clear. They are called, in Hindu shastras, as Gyanendriyas, the senses for the knowledge and with their functioning the life is heightened and beautified by a chastened use of every one of these senses. She wanted to train and develop the senses of the children so that the artistic nature would be cultivated. She did not envisage the education of an artist alone, apart and exclusive, through the cultivation of senses. To her the chief purpose of art education was to evoke a cultured attitude towards life — a factor pre-eminently neglected in education before she wrote her scheme of education — the whole field of knowledge needed to be scanned to enable the spot-light of Art to reveal the inner beauty of the subject in hand.

Annie Besant wanted to achieve a world-citizenship through the use of art. She believed that a constant emphasis on the supreme necessity of Arts in one’s make up, whether one is a student or an ordinary man, would go a long way in the bringing up of a personality of refinement and culture, of simplicity and dignity.

In the Kamala lectures, delivered by Annie Besant in
the Calcutta University, she had enunciated certain rules for the guidance of all nations in the domain of Art, and had outlined the national policy that might be followed in the department of this particular activity. In her opinion the keynote of the next step in human civilization would be art. She opined that there could never be true democracy without art and in order that a nation might fulfil its mission it had to recognize that art was not only for the rich but also for the poor. This would create a community of the lovers of Art, and through them would establish in the world, an Empire of Art. Thus, there would be built the temples where the Goddess of Beauty would be worshipped as an emblem of the Shakti of Ishwara. To find beauty of her words let us quote her, when she said: "Art is the international language, in which mind can speak to mind, heart to heart, where lips are dumb. Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Music, these need no translations, they speak the universal Mother-tongue, centuries do not age them. Custom does not stale them. Boundaries do not exist for them. Their message is for every country, for every tongue. Art will permeate the whole atmosphere of the New-civilization which is on the threshold."¹

Annie Besant considered the revival of the traditions of ancient Indian art as the most important need of the time. She wrote many articles in favour of it and her many lectures were for the encouragement of the artists who had done so.

of Painting and about that School she wrote: "The revival and advance of true Indian Art Ideals, in the renaissance identified with the gifted family of true Artists, the Tagores..... nurses in its bosom the rightful Heir of the heritage of India's Art Ideals in the Past, the infant who, in the future, in the maturity of India's Art Ideals, shall give to the world the priceless gift of an Art which shall redeem it alike from materialism and superstition, and shall make the life of the Nation and the life of the individual full of Beauty".¹

Annie Besant wanted to revive the ancient Indian art traditions, for which she founded in 1921 a club at the Gokhale Hall in Madras, she opened an Art Section and regularly attended the meetings. She was always the gracious hostess of many world famous Indian artists like Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Harindranath Chottapadhyaya and many others. She encouraged exhibitions of Indian painting everywhere and gave support to all who worked for this cause. She wrote reviews on different forms of art and books on art and thus popularized the Indian art and ancient Indian art traditions in India and the world. In this way Annie Besant was a mother of many Art movements in India, and specially the birth of Kalakshetra itself owes its origin to her.

Annie Besant encouraged Rukmini Devi to establish a Centre of Art in order that Indian art may once again be revived and its ancient culture may be developed. In 1936 Rukmini Devi started the Kalakshetra which literally means (Kala—Arts, Kshetra -- Field or Holy place) a Holy place of Arts. This institution seeks to build up the character of the young through the Arts and to create a true Centre of International Understanding through the one Universal language -- Art.

Kalakshetra has the following ideals, which are taken from different lectures of Annie Besant, such as given in each issue of the journal "Kalakshetra:--

1. "Art is an attempt to bring down within the vision of ordinary mortals some of the Divine Beauty of which the artist catches glimpses, strives to translate these into colours, sounds, forms, words, by creating pictures, melodies, sculptures, poems and other literature.

2. "Beauty diversified into the arts is the true refiner and uplifter of humanity. It is the instrument of culture, the broadener of the heart, the purifying fire which burns all prejudices, all pettiness, all coarseness, Without it, true democracy is impossible, equality of social intercourse an empty dream.

3. "Art is the international language in which mind can speak to mind, heart to heart, where lips are dumb."
The arts need no translations, they speak the universal mother-tongue. Centuries do not age them. Their message is for every country, for every tongue. Art will permeate the whole atmosphere of the New Civilization which is on the threshold.  

Since its foundation in 1936 by Kukmini Devi, the influence of Kalakshetra and the scope of its work have greatly increased. The activity of Kalakshetra has been four-fold:-

"1. To educate boys and girls with talent in the great traditions of Indian Art, so that they become professional artists of quality.
2. To permeate general education with the influence of art and culture.
3. To educate public taste in matters of art through performances, demonstrations, lectures and exhibitions, and,
4. To encourage and preserve the beautiful crafts of India.".  

To fulfill the first two of these activities the institutions has gathered round it the greatest artists of India, so that the young people who are being trained may grow up under the most eminent teachers.

Rukmini Devi's aim has been to create the atmosphere of a true Gurukula in Kalakshetra and life in that institution centres round this ideal. Today Kalakshetra has become one of the great art institutions of India and is the outward symbol of a new growth of the cultural life of the nation. Its achievements in the field of art and culture are significant and varied during the period of 34 years since its establishment. The various activities, which has been carried out in the Kalakshetra are in pursuance of the following basic ideals:

"(a) to emphasize the essential unity of all true art; and
(b) to work for the recognition of the arts as vital to individual, national, religious and international growth".  

In the college of Fine Arts which Kalaksheutra has been running the arts of music, dance, painting and crafts are taught to the young children of both sexes. In the art education imparted in this college Rukmini Devi takes full care to maintain the classical purity and the beauty of spirit embodied in the art traditions of India.

Students come to Kalakshetra from all parts of India and even from other countries, lead simple Indian lives and learn the full meaning of art as an aspect of inspiration and expression. This has been made possible because out-

standing masters of art have lived and still continue to live in Kalakshetra, giving to the teaching of the young their whole hearts and gifts. Only the medium of sympathetic contact of master and pupil can do this.

7. Technical Education:

Annie Besant was very much alive to the needs of Technical Education for the Indian students. In her scheme of National education she had recommended a Technical High School, along with other schools teaching different subjects according to the careers aimed at. In the Technical School she recommended the study of Technical subjects such as Industrial history, Electricity, Mechanics etc. In her C.H.C. she had also introduced some Technical subjects, which we have already seen while discussing her scheme of education in the C.H.C. Through her lectures and writings she had taken up and pressed in the utility of Technical Education for the Indians.

But she was greatly worried about the employment of the technically trained Indians. She said in her lecture, entitled National Education, delivered in Bombay on April 17th 1914, "It is no good to educate your boys technically unless you employ them after the education has been gained. Now there lies one of our great difficulties. Many of your boys have gone abroad. They have studied Electrical Engineering, they have studied Civil Engineering they have taken
up stories in glass-making, and many other industries......
They have faced all the difficulties — you know what they are — of return after foreign travel. They have come back ready to take up work in their Motherland, and they cannot find employment."  

In the last decades of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century, in order to please their British bosses of the English government, good technical posts with very fat pays were given only to the Englishmen by the Indian owners of the factories and if Indians, with the same qualification, were ever appointed on the same post, they were given a very low pay. Annie Besant was very critical to such like illogical injustice, of ignoring Indians and employing the Englishmen. She said "I can understand..... paying an Englishman more when he has been technically well educated and the Indian young man has not, but when the Indian Young man has gained the same education, when he has passed through the same drill and teaching, and when he returns to his country fully equipped with the technical training he has passed through, why do you choose the Englishmen? Why is it said that the Indians must not apply for the larger and more responsible posts where men have to be organised and where a large business has to be controlled".  

Annie Besant wrote many articles and delivered lectures to make the Indian princes, Indian nobles and wealthy men to realize their duty towards the technically trained English-educated Indians who had gone abroad to study and had come back practically to starve. She wanted Indian wealthy men to start industries and factories where technically trained persons would find their employment thus helping the progress and prosperity of the country.

8. **Teacher Education:**

Annie Besant was in favour of Teacher's training before they are appointed in any institution. She herself had qualified as a science teacher in 1879 in eight different subjects — Inorganic Chemistry, Animal Physiology, General Biology, Botany, Acoustics, Light and Heat, Theoretical Mechanics, Magnetism and Electricity, and Mathematics. She wrote in her autobiography about her training as a teacher: "Personally...... this study and teaching together with attendance at classes held for teachers at South Kensington... puzzled me not a little at the time as I had passed a far more difficult practical chemical examination for teachers at South Kensington -- all this gave me a knowledge of science that has...... stood me in good stood in my....work".¹ for the cause of education in later years.

She had established a teacher's college in C.H.C. for training Sanskrit teachers in 1900 and in 1916, when she drafted her scheme of National Education, she recommended a teacher's course to be run as one of the special courses in her scheme of diversification of courses. Under the Teacher's division she approved the teaching of subjects such as "Pedagogy, further Psychology, School Management. A course in the principles of Physical Training, Domestic Science, where possible, practice in Teaching. Further Nature Study".¹

But for the National Training College, established in Sudder Gardens, Teynampet, Madras, for the Teachers, she had planned to provide two courses -- (i) a one year's course qualifying the successful student for a special diploma and to take charge of an elementary school, and (ii) the college class course in teaching leading to the admission examination to the National University and hence to a degree in teaching after three years in the Training College.

The One Year's Course: This course planned by Annie Besant was as follows:-

1. Indian Citizenship

2. Physical Culture including the theory and practice of physical culture for the elementary school classes (class I to VI)

3. The History, Theory and Practice of Education -- an elementary Survey.

4. Instruction in the methods of teaching and subjects of instruction in an elementary school.  

Arrangements had also been made to give the students instruction in their religious faith.

Only those candidates were admitted in this course who had passed the Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination, and except in cases specially sanctioned by the Principal. Only 30 students had been admitted in 1918 in this course but the number of seats increased when the new arrangements were made in the subsequent years.

The Three Years Course: This course led to the degree of B.T. The aim with which this course in Teaching had been drawn up had been to impress those who had determined to serve the country through the profession of teaching both with the importance and dignity of the service and with its almost overwhelming responsibility. The examination of B.T. was both a written and an oral examination and was both theoretical and practical. The candidates were examined in:

(1) Indian Citizenship, (2) Physical Culture, (3) The History, Theory and Practice of Education, and (4) A special subject, which formed a subject of instruction in the School department.

1. Annie Besant: The National Training College, Madras, New India of July 26, 1918, p. 11.
The candidates were examined both in the knowledge of the subject and in the method of teaching it. The standard of education had been prescribed from time to time by the Board of Studies in Education.

It would be very interesting to make a mention of the syllabus which had been taught in that Teachers' Training College so as to judge the standard of that College, when compared to the Modern Training College of any Indian Universities.

The syllabus for the paper of Indian Citizenship and Physical Culture had been prescribed time to time by the Faculty of Arts. The other papers were as follows:-

**History of Education:** A Survey of Ancient System of Education with special reference to India. Educational progress in the Middle Ages in Europe with special reference to important Educational reformers. Modern developments and tendencies in Education.

**Some Books Prescribed on the History of Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bhagavan Dass</td>
<td>The Law of Manu in the Light of Theosophy (the Chapter on Education)</td>
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<td>Woodward</td>
<td>Studies in Education during the Renaissance</td>
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<td>Adamson</td>
<td>Pioneers of Education in the 17th Century</td>
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<td>Watson</td>
<td>Theory and Practice of Education in the 18th Century.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quick</td>
<td>Educational Reformers</td>
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<td>N.N. Masumdar</td>
<td>A History of Education in Ancient India</td>
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The Syllabus was as follows:-

Psychology, with special reference to the child and to the various stages of mental development. Inter-dependence of the physical, emotional and mental conditions. The psychology and physiology of the nervous system — the nature and condition of interest, attention and fatigue. The training of memory, imagination and judgement. Freedom, Discipline and self-Discipline. The development of originality. The discipline of the muscles, their control and co-ordination in relation to the eye, ear, voice, hand etc. The differing temperaments of children — their characteristics, powers and weaknesses. The relation of the teacher to the varying temperaments of his pupils. The relation of temperament to choice of profession. National temperament. The emotions of

A Special Subject: One of the following:

(a) Primary Department Methods, (b) Manual Training, (c) Mathematics, (d) Domestic Science & Home Craft, (e) History and Geography, (f) Science, including Nature study and Gardening, (g) Music, (h) Physical Culture,
including scouting (i) English, (j) An Indian language (including Sanskrit, Arabic, etc.) (k) Religion, (l) Commerce, (m) Drawing and Painting etc.

The candidates for the degree of B.T. were required to study for one year in a recognized institution, the history, theory and practice of Education, the latter to include six week's teaching in a recognized school, the whole of the second year was spent in teaching in some recognized institution. The candidate had to produce a certificate that he had attended 75 per cent of the lectures in the history, theory and practice of Education, and that he had been a regular teacher in a recognized school for the second year. The opinion of the Headmaster as to his proficiency in teaching was required to be attached. The candidate was examined in the history, theory and practice of Education at the end of the first year, and the degree had been conferred upon him at the end of the second year without further examination provided the Board of Examiners had been satisfied as to his proficiency in teaching, after periodical inspection of the candidates work, and on receiving a satisfactory report from the Headmaster concerned.

A candidate for the degree of B.T. who failed in one or more subjects of the examination was required to appear at the ensuing examination only in those subjects.
The syllabus and the requirements fulfilled by a candidate for the degree of B.T. as has been stated above clearly show that how methodical and modern was Annie Besant in her scheme of Teacher's education. In some cases this scheme seems more practical as compared with the modern system of preparing teachers in many teachers' training colleges of India. In her scheme the inclusion, among the subjects of examination, of "Indian citizenship" gave the students a sense of the honour and of the practical duties of his citizenship of India. The inclusion of a course in "Physical Culture" — theoretical and practical, was supplementary to that in "Indian Citizenship", and of vital importance in as much as every student was expected not merely to understand the structure and functions of his body but to keep it in such health as would be possible. Religion was also taught to the candidates, but it did not form a subject of examination — the aim was to vivify the students mind and emotions with the spirit of Religion rather than with its dogmas, forms or ceremonies. Special stress was laid on the fact that religious differences were by no means necessarily obstacles to National Unity, since each religion was to draw its own special representation of the truth from a single source common to all faiths alike — one God.

Under the heading "The History, Theory and Practice of Education" Annie Besant meant that the pupil teachers would
be trained to develop in their pupils a spirit of co-operative individualism, so that while each individual capacity would be stimulated to the utmost, every power should be recognized as dedicated to the common ends of the Nation, and as a force for the exploitation to fellow-citizens. Citizenship began from the very birth: the rights of citizenship from the very day of birth itself. Its duties began in the home, while in school and college the lesson of co-operative citizenship was to begin to be understood both in its theory and its practice special stress was laid on the Indian point of view with regard to the teacher, and a glimpse of the teacher in the ancient Hindu polity was only to give an inspiring conception of the position of the teacher and how the teacher should occupy the same position in the modern state.

The understanding of psychology and educational psychology was to show to the pupil teachers that every child has a definite inborn, God-given desire to grow, and that the primary duty of the teacher was to strive to understand how best to put that desire into activity and to encourage the child to transmute, neutralise or overcome the various obstacles as they presented themselves on his path.

Annie Besant also encouraged the training of women teachers along the lines similar to those for the training of men, at any rate in principle though their functions differed. Later on when Dr. Maria Montessori arrived in
India and remained for many years in Madras, very close to Annie Besant, a training school was started exclusively for women. Annie Besant popularized the Montessori system of Education by introducing it in her schools. She got trained many Indians under Dr. Montessori's personal instructions. She financially helped Miss Barrie, a trainee under Dr. Montessori, to establish schools and train teachers for Indian schools.

In 1920 Annie Besant established The Fellowship of Teachers with the object of "To serve the Motherland through Education". The following were the Principles of the Fellowship, which she had explained in the weekly supplement to her newspaper "New India of 16th October, 1920.

**Principles of the Fellowship of Teachers:**

"The Fellowship of Teachers believe that National Education, to be effective must be based on the following principles:-

1. It must be religious in spirit, emphasising:-

(a) The supreme and fundamental unities underlying all faiths, while affording every young citizen the necessary facilities for instruction in his own individual creed.

(b) The common origin and common goal of all kingdoms of Nature towards that ideal of perfection already achieved by the ...... teachers who are owed a common reverence from the members of all faiths."
2. It must be patriotic in tone, training the Nation's young citizens:

(a) To draw inspiration from their traditional and historic part, to regard that part -- whatever the dominant creed or civilisation -- as a common heritage, the great Men of all periods and faiths being the common heroes of the race.

(b) To have confidence in the greatness of the future.

(c) To fulfill such duties of citizenship as may be appropriate to their years.

"3. It must be based on those principles of ordered Freedom and mutual service through which alone true growth takes place.

"Application of the Principles"

In application of the above principles the Fellowship of Teachers stand for the following specific means:

"1. The Central National Education by the Nation, with National Ministers of Education and educational officers, of all grades, responsible to the people through their popularly elected representative bodies.

"2. The gradual introduction of free, and then compulsory, education to the end of the high school course, University Education ultimately becoming free to all able and eager to benefit from it.

"3. The awakening of the public conscience with regard
to the place of education in National life, special insis-
tence being laid, in the interests of National Vitality,
on the public duty of ensuring to every child the opportunity,
to receive sufficient and suitable food, first for the phy-
sical body, second for emotions, and third for the mind.

"4. The special encouragement of the education of girls,
in as much as the heart of National life lies in the women
of the Nation.

"5. The co-ordinating and directing control being at a
centre, in the hands of the National Minister and his
advisers and staff, there should however, generally the
local responsibility for local educational activities;
local representative bodies, for example, in India, Village
Panchayats, Taluqa, District Boards, being given, as far as
possible, both powers of initiative and responsibility in
local educational affairs.

"6. The inclusion, as far as possible, in school curricula
of Sanskrit for Hindu Youths, Pali for Buddhist youths,
Arabic for Musalmen youths, so that every youth may be able
to read in the original, and to some extent to understand,
the scriptures of his faith.

"7. The special encouragement in all educational institu-
tions of the cult of beauty and rhythm, especially through
music and fine arts.

"8. The encouragement of education in the mother-tongue,
and the endeavour to find a satisfactory solution of the
problem of a National language.

"9. The construction of the curriculum in such a way that every youth, girl or boy, acquires self-dependence as regards personal affairs of daily life and, at least as regards boys, leaves school able to earn a living, preferably in a pursuit vital to National Growth.

"10. The insistence on physical, emotional and mental culture, so that the various faculties and modes of consciousness, interact harmoniously, and are duly subordinate to the will, imparting to every youth grace and strength of body, refinement of emotion and a sound intellectual taste.

"11. The total abolition of fear and punishment as supposed incentives to study and discipline, and especially the prohibition of the barbarism of corporal punishment -- demoralising alike to teacher and the student".

The Principles of the Fellowship of Teachers and their application clearly provide, the summary of the scheme of National Education as was visualized by Annie Besant. All the items of the Fellowship pertain to the fields in which she laboured hard throughout her life to establish schools and colleges for the cause of National education.
9. **Night Schools:**

Annie Besant was greatly in favour of opening Night Schools in India for those who were employed in the day in some form of livelihood. She wanted that all children up to the age of eighteen must be kept under some educational control. Those who could not go to the ordinary day school, being born or brought up in poor and backward homes, were offered chances to receive education in Night schools.

Suggesting a workable scheme for the Night Schools, Annie Besant wrote: In the case of the younger children that come to these schools, dealing..... with children earning a livelihood, you have to consider whether you cannot make your education helpful to them in the vocation which they have taken up. The great fault to a large extent of the education of the children, especially of the poor, has been that instead of making it vocational, it has been entirely apart from the ordinary life, and the result is that the brain is not trained in a fashion which will enable it to apply the training intelligently to life. The effect of the education upon the poor is to drive them to the most underpaid and overworked class of the community of the semi-educated clerk. It is not that class you want to increase. You want to give to the boys and girls a means of earning their bread which will increase the wealth of the country as well as the wealth of the individual and enable them to
earn a livelihood which will put them beyond a continual struggle for bread." 1

Annie Besant drafted a plan of Night School in which she had forcefully pressed the utility of the training of the hands, the senses and the intelligence of the children. In her scheme of Night Schools she proposed to give short and varied lessons. She wrote: "The attention of a child, especially of a child that has been working during the day is difficult to hold. When you are dealing with young children, you will find that the very moment the attention begins to wander it is well to change the subject of the teaching. With regard to the older pupils who come to these night schools and who belong to the labouring classes, you will find that they are very little interested in information that bears upon their ordinary work and life, but in village schools...... they are eager to learn by taking part in repetition of what is read, rather than learning in modern fashion. Enormous good would be done by having talks with such pupils on subjects such as sanitation, hygiene, conditions of the body, and things which interest them in everyday life". 2

Annie Besant felt interested in the formation of co-operative societies of the pupils in the night schools. She understood that with co-operative efforts their most essential needs could be fulfilled. She wrote: There is

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1. Annie Besant: "Night Schools", in the 'New India' of 30th April, 1918, p. 9.
no quicker way to help people crushed by debts borrowed at exorbitant interest than to start such societies and help them to pay off their debts at easy rates of interest".¹

With keen interest and encouragement of Annie Besant a large number of Night Schools were started in many parts of India. The Theosophical Educational Trust initiated a movement of establishing Night Schools. In 1917 many Night schools were established at Madanpalle, Chittoor District. These schools attracted a very large number of boys and girls. Powerful Kitchen lamps were provided in these schools.

In these schools at Madanpalle the voluntary work of teaching was taken up by the students of the Madanpalle school and college under the able direction of M.R.Fy.D. Rajagopalachariar. By running the night schools the boys learnt the happiness of working for others, thus they acquired true human knowledge and experience which rendered them unselfish and useful citizens in their manhood.

All the above explained aspects of Indian education which were dealt with by Annie Besant, one by one, had been greatly enriched and elaborated by her and thus she provided detailed solution for all of them.

Writing about Annie Besant's valuable contribution to the Indian education her biographer, Theodore Besterman,

wrote; "Fewer would have had the courage and patience to continue against all opposition on the path to the desired goal. But who else than Annie Besant could have added to these things the knowledge and patience, which not satisfied with establishment of the College, wrote some of its most important text-books, organized its boys into debating-clubs, into sports organizations, bade them join physical development to intellectual training, lectured to them and in short, treated them in such a way that in India today there are thousands of men who addressed Annie Besant as "Mother". 1

Thus with her tireless efforts Annie Besant filled many details into rough picture, of the model education, which she had outlined in 1885, when she had written in her article 'The Redistribution of Political Power' that "I look forward to a time when every child shall receive in the national schools the elements of a literary, scientific, artistic and technical education; when neither boy nor girls shall leave the school ignorant of the glories of our literature, of the wonders of science, of the delight in beauty, of some definite means of bread-winning. Be it tailoring or dressmaking, or cookery, or carpentering, or any one of the many trades needed in a civilised society, every pair of hands should be able to do at least some one

thing well, by which a living may be honestly earned. The maturity that follows a youth spent in such training will be useful to the State, and enjoyable to the individual; and such a maturity it should be the object of educational laws to make possible for every citizen". 1

Annie Besant had made this as an outline for her future plan of educational activities in India and she never departed from it, though she had to face hostile criticism by her enemies and sometimes by her nearest friends even.