A Brief Abstract of the Thesis

Chapter I entitled "Historical Introduction" is of an introductory nature. It seeks to outline the many-faceted impact which British educational policy of the early nineteenth century had on India. Here the educational policy as exemplified in Macaulay's Minute and Wood's Despatch has been thoroughly discussed. Its imposition on indigenous system of education and consequent destruction of the ideals and values of ancient Indian education have been explained in detail.

In this Chapter the Educational Reform Movements of the early and later years of the 19th century, to which the British impact gave birth, have also been seen in detail. The life and educational works of the early pioneers of the Educational Reform Movements have been taken note of. Here the role of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the Brahmo Samaj Movement, Devendra Nath Tagore and Keshub Chander Sen and their contribution to the education of the Bengali Society has been seen. The other similar educational efforts in different parts of India have also been given a detailed mention in this Chapter. Bombay Reform Movements run by Hindus and Parsis have been discussed. We find in this Chapter a discussion on the Hindu Missionary Society of Gajananrao Vaidya, Parsi Society of Pramji Cowsji Banajee, Prarthana Samaj of Ranade.

Chapter II "Origins and Background of Annie Besant's
Educational Philosophy", is divided into four parts. Instead of splitting up her personality into watertight compartments, which would make this study unscientific and unrealistic, it is considered proper to study the origin and development of her ideas under the following heads and sub-heads:

(A) Annie Besant's Early Life and Works:
   (a) Early life of Annie Besant.
   (b) The Inner development of Annie Besant and her works:
      (i) Annie Besant as a Free-thinker Theist;
      (ii) Annie Besant as an Atheist and a National Secularist;
      (iii) Annie Besant as a Fabian Secularist; and
      (iv) Annie Besant as a Theosophist.

(B) Environmental Factors which shaped her Philosophy:
   (i) Formal Education - Annie Besant's early and later educational pursuits.

The story of the influences of some persons over Annie Besant's life and work does not finish by mentioning only ten names of persons who influenced her course of life by one way or the other. There were also a large number of way-farers who put their impact, that may not be of very
great significance in her life but which did help in moulding her life and shaping her philosophy. Few names of some importance can be mentioned: Miss Arundale, George S. Arundale, John Burns, Herbert Burrows, Rev. Mocure Conway, G.W. Poote, Henry M. Hyndmas, Rev. Steward D. Headlam, George Lansbury, William Morris, Col. H.S. Olcott, A.P. Sinnett, Countess Constance Wachtmeister, S.V. Subramanyam Aiyar, Esther Bright, C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Bhagwan Dass and many others.

(iii) The Influence of Books and Authors:

Annie Besant was greatly influenced by the books and the authors. From her very childhood she was so much fascinated by the rich depth of books that she used to keep a list of books that she read. At the young age of seven years she was quite mature to understand Milton's 'Paradise Lost', and had studied Plato, Dante, Spencer and other great masters of literature and philosophy. This habit of reading remained with her throughout her long life. The rich style of her writings clearly shows how much was she indebted to the influence of the great masters of literature.

(iv) Annie Besant's personal sufferings were the birth pangs where in a realistic attitude about life was shaped, which had greatly contributed to the development of her various philosophical outlooks. The death of her father, when Annie Besant was hardly of five years, unhappy married life which dated when Annie Besant was hardly of nineteen
years, the deprivation of her mother and her rejection by the orthodox academic world - were the great shocks which made her firm as a rock to stand erect against the future problems of her life, which she successfully solved.

(v) The success of her Early Experiments:

Sufferings, no doubt, improve the character of a person to a great extent, unless they do not completely overpower that individual. Whatever Annie Besant's ability, however, strongly her mind, it would have been really of no profit, if her early experiments had proved a complete failure. Though she had to undergo difficulties of a temporary nature, yet she was successful in most of her experiments she made both in England and in India. The important experiments worthy of mention were:

(a) First Lecture in the Spring of 1873,
(b) The Matchgirls Strike,
(c) Her Success in the Knowlton Case, and
(d) Fight for the Election to the London School Board in 1888.

(vi) The Outer appearance of her philosophy:

Annie Besant's thought, as we have already explained in this Chapter, is very rich and varied. She has enriched the several angles of philosophy with great wisdom and has explained her philosophy as a historian of Indian philosophy. Her unique character derives its material from the fact that
she is a historian of Indian culture and thought possessing the art of a philosopher to handle the intricate problems. In this aspect of her versatality she presents a sign of her great vision. Annie Besant tries to explain a special line of thought which enables her to pull the different strings of philosophy, one by one, in constructing a meaningful school of thought. Therefore it would be worthwhile to examine the outer appearances of Annie Besant’s philosophy for having a fuller understanding of her thought.

In this portion of the Chapter the following important role of Annie Besant’s thought have been discussed:

Annie Besant’s Principles of Historian of Indian Philosophy:

(a) Annie Besant’s Principles of Historical Study of Philosophy; and

(b) Annie Besant’s methods in pursuing the historical study of Indian Philosophy.

(c) Causes that led to Annie Besant’s Arrival in India in 1893: The causes which have been explained in detail in this part are:

(a) Interest in Indian Situation,
(b) Theosophical work,
(c) Call for Educational Renaissance of Indian
(d) Attachment by Previous Incarnations.

(d) Educational Reform Movement underway at the time of Annie Besant’s arrival, e.g., Revivalists like
Dayananda and Vivekananda and Modernists like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.

In this portion the Indian educational renaissance in India, which had taken shape at the time of Annie Besant's arrival, has been briefly discussed.

Annie Besant was of 46 when she came to India, Dayananda was already assassinated ten years back and his influence was carried by his disciples, Vivekananda was of 30 and Syed Ahmed was of 76. All these reformers, though of different ages and ideologies but had one thing in common that they had done a very remarkable spade work for the cause of Indian education and had designed some solid educational policies according to their philosophical outlook.

Chapter III is entitled "Philosophical Basis of Annie Besant's Educational Philosophy". In this Chapter I have dealt with the philosophical bases of Annie Besant which had compelled her to participate in the educational activities. Annie Besant was primarily a philosopher and had tried to develop her philosophical outlook on the basis of her thorough study of religion in England and India, she had made long discussions with philosophers to understand and clear her doubts about religions, about the attributes and existence of God, about Soul and the other allied subjects, and after joining Theosophy she had made discussions with other Theosophists, those discussions had later on helped her to develop the terminology and theories of
Theosophy.

After coming to India Annie Besant adopted Hinduism and thus the traditional sealed secrets of Hinduism were known to her and had overpowered her. She studied comparative religions and developed a philosophical mind. Therefore Annie Besant's religious attitudes are not of unquestioning acceptance but she tested every idea which crept up in her mind on the touchstone of her genuine reasoning.

In this Chapter Annie Besant's philosophical bases had been divided into two parts for detailed discussions:

(a) Metaphysical concepts of the Self, Truth, Yoga, God, The Problem of Evil, Dharma, Place of Desire (Kamaloka), Nishkama Bhakti (Disinterested Devotion).

(b) Ethical concepts of Tolerance, Self-sacrifice, Co-operation, etc.

Chapter IV deals with "The Psychological Bases of her Educational Thought". In this Chapter Annie Besant's faith in Indian Psychology has been discussed in detail by giving her interpretation of some psychological terms such as character, consciousness Emotion, Desire, Will and Thought-Power, etc.

Chapter V: Her Concept of "The Indian System of Education during the Vaidic Period" traces out the educational history of Vaidic period which Annie Besant liked to revive for the educational renaissance of India. In this Chapter Annie Besant
approach to some educational aspects particularly to the objectives and functions of the Vaidic Education, Curriculum, Methods of Teaching, Discipline, Education of Women, Importance of Child, Teacher-Training, Vocational Education and the Development of the Total Personality of the Individual have been discussed in detail.

Chapter VI is entitled "Her Experiments in the Reform of Indian Education". This Chapter has been divided into three parts:

(a) Revival of the Spirit of Vaidic Education and Culture through the restoration of the ancient four-faceted programme of (i) the acquisition of the holy literature of India, (ii) Intellectual Training, (iii) Moral Training, and (iv) Physical Training.

(b) Incorporation of the assimilable principles of Western education into a sound scheme of National Education for India.

(c) Educational Experiments (i) Her contribution to the passing of the Compulsory Elementary Education Act and Religious Education Act by the Madras Parliament in 1915 and 1917. (ii) Establishment of Schools and Colleges designed to combine the best elements of Western and Ancient Indian Culture, e.g., the Central Hindu College, Benares (1898), the Pratap Hindu College, Srinagar (1906), the Central Hindu Girls School, Benares (1904), the Women College Benares (1916),
the Madanapalle College in Madras (1915), the National University in Madras (1918) besides schools and colleges in various parts of India, (iii) started the society for the promotion of National Education in 1917. (iv) Framed the plan of "a Central University of India" in 1910.

All these experiments have been discussed in this Chapter as this Chapter is the heart and soul of the whole work. In this Chapter important sources in the form of old newspapers edited by Annie Besant, have been greatly used, so that her experiments may be clearly discussed.

Chapter VII deals with her contribution to special aspects of Indian Education. Here the original contribution to different stages of education have been thoroughly discussed. This Chapter mainly explains her contribution to (i) Pre-Primary education, (ii) Primary and Elementary Education, (iii) Education of Women, its importance and essentials as embodied in her plan of Women's Education, (iv) Rural education: emphasis on the rural environment; influence on Radhakrishnan University Commission's recommendations, (v) Higher Secondary Education: emphasis on diversification of courses: influence on the Mudaliar Commission, (vi) Education of Fine Arts: importance of reviving the traditions of ancient Indian Art: importance on Kalakishetra founded in Madras by Rukumini Devi (vii) Technical Education, (viii) Teacher Education and (ix) Social Education.
Chapter VIII entitled: "Final Assessment of Mrs. Annie Besant's work as an educational thinker".

In this Chapter I have attempted an assessment of Annie Besant as an educational thinker. A brief discussion about her chief contributions with a comparison with the master educationists like Plato, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Dewey, etc., has been made, and a criticism by her biographers have been given also, so as to provide an estimate of her philosophy and education.