

Annexure B

FRA PAOLINO DA BARTOLOMEO ON EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN INDIA

(Born at Hos, Austria, 1748, as John Phillip Wesdin; in India 1776 to 1789. From *Voyages to the East Indies* (Published, Rome, 1796, Berlin, 1798, England, 1880), Book II: Birth and Education of Children (pp.253-268))

All the Grecian historians represent the Indians as people of greater size, and much more robust than those of other nations. Though this is not true in general, it is certain that the purity of the air, wholesome nourishment, temperance and education contribute, in an uncommon degree, to the bodily conformation, and to the increase of these people. Their new-born children lie always on the ground, as if they were thrown away or neglected; and they are never wrapped up with bandages, or confined in any other manner, as is done in Europe. Their limbs, therefore, can expand themselves without the least restraint; their nerves and bones become more solid; and when these children attain the period of youth, they acquire not only a beautiful figure, but a sound, well turned, and robust bodily conformation. The frequent use of the cold bath, repeated rubbing the body with coconut oil and the juice of the *Ingia plant*, as well as their exercises, which have a great resemblance to the *Juvenilia*, and which I have often seen in Malabar, all contribute to increase their strength and agility. These advantages also are seldom lost, unless some of these young people abandon themselves to debauchery, or weaken their bodies by too great labour or excessive perspiration. However healthful and lively the young Indians may be in general those who marry before the twentieth year of their age, for the most part, soon become feeble and enervated. In a word, I seldom saw in India a person either lame, crooked, or otherwise deformed. The people of Malabar, who live towards the west, are much handsomer and more robust than the natives of Coromandel, or the Tamulians on the eastern coast of India.

The education of youth in India is much simpler, and not near so expensive as in Europe. The children assemble half naked under the shade of a coconut tree; place themselves in rows

on the ground, and trace out on the sand, with the fore finger of the right hand, the elements of their alphabet, and then smooth it with the left when they wish to trace out other characters. The writing master, called *Agian*, or *Eluttacien*, who stations himself opposite to his pupils, examines what they have done; points out their faults, and shows them how to correct them. At first, he attends them standing; but when the young people have acquired some readiness in writing, he places himself cross-legged on a tiger's or deer's skin, or even on a mat made of the leaves of the coconut-tree, or wild ananas, which is called *Kaida**, plaited together. This method of teaching writing was introduced into India two hundred years before the birth of Christ, according to the testimony of Magasthenes, and still continues to be practised. No people, perhaps, on earth have adhered so much to their ancient usages and customs as the Indians.

A schoolmaster in Malabar receives every two months, from each of his pupils, for the instruction given them, two *Fanon* or *Panam*. Some do not pay in money, but give him a certain quantity of rice, so that this expense becomes very easy to the parents. There are some teachers who instruct children without any fee, and are paid by the overseers of the temple, or by the chief of the caste. When the pupils have made tolerable progress in writing, they are admitted into certain schools, called *Eutupalli*, where they begin to write on palm leaves (*Pana*), which, when several of them are stitched together, and fastened between two boards, form a *Grantha*, that is, an Indian book. If such a book be written upon with an iron style, it is called *Granthavari*, or *Lakya*, that is, writing, to distinguish it from *Alakya*, which is something not written.

When the Guru, or teacher, enters the school, he is always received with the utmost reverence and respect. His pupils must throw themselves down at full length before him; place their right hand on their mouth, and not venture to speak a single word until he gives them express permission. Those who talk and prate contrary to the prohibition of their master are expelled from the school, as boys who cannot restrain their tongue, and who are consequently unfit for the study of philosophy. By these

means the preceptor always receives that respect which is due to him: the pupils are obedient, and seldom offend against rules which are so carefully inculcated. The chief branches taught by the Guru are: 1st, the principles of writing and accounts: 2nd, the Samscred grammar, which contains the declensions and conjugations; in Malabar it is called *Sidharuba*; but, in Bengal *Sarasvada*, or the art of speaking with elegance: 3rd, the second part of this grammar, which contains the syntax, or the book *Vyagarna*: 4th, the *Amarasinha*, or Brahmanic dictionary. This work, which is highly esteemed by the Brahmans, does not consist, as Anquetil du Perron says, of three, but of four parts; and contains everything that relates to the gods, the sciences, colours and sounds, the earth, seas and rivers, men and animals, as well as to the arts and all kinds of employment in India. To render the construction of the Samscred language, and its emphatic mode of expression, more familiar to their pupils, the *Guru* employs various short sentences clothed in Samscred verse, which are called *Shloga*. These verses serve not only as examples of the manner in which the words must be combined with each other, but contain, at the same time, most excellent moral maxims, which are thus imprinted in the minds of the young people as if in play; so that, while learning the language, they are taught rules proper for forming their character, and directing their future conduct in life. That the reader may be better enabled to conceive some idea of the morality of the Brahmans, I shall here subjoin a specimen of these sentences.

I. What is the use of study, if the object of it be not to learn knowledge and fear, which is true wisdom?

II. Why have we ceased living in the forests, and associated ourselves in cities and towns, if the object of our doing so be not to enjoy friendship; to do good mutually to each other, and to receive in our habitations the stranger and wanderer?

III. The wounds occasioned by a slanderous tongue occasion far more pain, and are much more difficult to be healed, than those which proceed from fire and the sword.

IV. Of what use is it to thee to shut the door of thy house? It is necessary in order that thy wife may learn to be upon her guard.

V. He who revenges an injury enjoys a pleasure which endures only a day; but he who forgives receives a satisfaction which will accompany him through life.

VI. Modesty becomes every one, but is a particular ornament to the learned and rich.

VII. The state of a married pair, who never deviate from the path of honour, virtue, and mutual duty, is as difficult as that of those who impose on themselves the several penances.

In the gardens, or sacred enclosures, in which children are taught, the *Lingam*, or Priapus, represented under the form of a cylinder, is generally found. It is, however, not worshipped by all the Indians, but only by the *Shivanites*. These are a particular sect, who pay divine honour to Fire, under the form of the god Shiva, as the principle or creative power by which everything was produced. Besides the above idol, there are two other statues, which, for the most part, are placed before the entrance of the school. One of them represents *Ganesh*, the protector of the sciences, and of learned men; and the other the goddess *Sarasvadi*, the goddess of eloquence and history. Every student, as he enters the school, always directs his eyes to these two idols; raises his hands to his head, and shows his respect for them by repeating certain forms of prayer. That with which he salutes *Ganesh* is commonly in the following words: *Sal Guruve nama*: Adoration to thee, thou true master. Or, *Ganabadaye name*: Adoration to thee, O Ganabadi. This is real idolatry; but these practices at any rate prove that the Indians accustom their children early to honour the gods, and to consider them as their protectors and benefactors. "Those who are desirous of knowing the power of religion, and the influence of religious opinions," said the Marquis of Kergariou, who commanded the Calypso frigate, "need only go to India". This observation is indeed just; for among 2000 Indians you will scarcely find one who is not convinced of the necessity of supplicating the gods. Education, and the nature of the climate, are the strongest incitements to the natives to worship the deity, and to submit themselves to his will.

The other sciences and branches of learning taught to the Indian youth are: Poetry, *Gavya*; Fencing, *Payatta*; Botany and medicine, *Vaydyassastra*, or *Bheszagiashastra*: Navigation, *Naushastra*: The use of the spear on foot (*Hastiludium*), *Cundera*: The art of playing at ball, *Pandacali*: Chess, *Ciudarangam*: Tennis, *Coladi*: Logic, *Tarkashastra*: Astrology, *Giodisha*: Law, *Svadhyaaya*: Silence, *Mauna*. (Youth destined to be Brahmans, must spend ten years within the precincts of the temple at Trichur, and avoid all intercourse with the female sex. They are obliged also to observe the strictest silence, which continues for five years. This is the first degree of philosophy. A. It thence appears, that Phythagoras must have borrowed his philosophy in part from the Indian Philosophers, or others whose doctrine was similar, for his scholars were subjected to silence for the same number of years. See *Diogenes Laertius*, lib.viii.10, and *Aul. Gollius*, Noct, Att, 1-ib. i.9F.) The reader will have already

remarked, that surgery, anatomy, and geography are excluded from this catalogue. The Indians are of opinion, that their country is the most beautiful and happiest in the whole world: and for that reason they have very little desire to be acquainted with foreign kingdoms. Their total abstinence from all flesh, and the express prohibition of their religion which forbids them to kill animals, prevent them from dissecting them and examining their internal construction.

Of the Indian poetry I have already spoken in my Samscred grammar; and I shall give some further account of it hereafter. Their navigation is confined merely to their navigable rivers; for in general, the Pagan Indians have the greatest aversion to the sea. The management of the lance, fencing, playing at ball and tennis, have been introduced into their education on good grounds, to render their youth active and robust, and that they may not want dexterity to distinguish themselves in battles and engagements where cannons are not used. There are particular masters for all these exercises, arts and sciences; and each of them, as already mentioned, is treated with particular respect by the pupils. Twice a year each master receives a piece of silk, which he employs for clothing; and this present is called *Samanam*.

All the Indian girls, those alone excepted who belong to the castes of the Shudras and Nayris, are confined at home till their twelfth year; and when they go out, they are always accompanied by their mother or aunt. They inhabit a particular division of the house, called *Andarggraha*, which none of the male sex dare approach. The boys, in the ninth year of their age, are initiated with great ceremony into the calling or occupation of the caste to which their father belongs, and which they can never abandon. This law, mention of which occurs in Diodorous Siculus, Strabo, Arrian, and other Greek writers, is indeed exceedingly hard; but, at the same time, it is of great benefit to civil order, the arts and sciences, and even to religion. According to a like regulation, no one is allowed to marry from one caste into another. Hence it happens that the Indians do not follow that general and superficial method of education by which children are treated as if they were all intended for the same condition

and for discharging the same duties; but those of each caste are from their infancy formed for what they are to be during their whole lives. A future Brahman, for example, is obliged, from his earliest years, to employ himself in reading and writing, and to be present at the presentation of offerings, to calculate eclipses of the sun and moon; to study the laws and religious practices; to cast nativities; in short to learn every thing, which, according to the injunction of the *Veda*, or sacred books of the Indians, it is necessary he should know. The *Vayshya* on the other hand, instruct youth in agriculture; the *Kshetria*, in the science of government and the military arts, the *Shudra*, in mechanics, the *Mucaver*, in fishing; the *Ciana*, in gardening and the *Banyen*, in commerce.

By this establishment the knowledge of a great many things necessary for the public good is not only widely diffused, but transmitted to posterity; who are thereby enabled still farther to improve them, and bring them nearer to perfection. In the time of Alexander the Great, the Indians had acquired such skill in the mechanical arts, that Nearchus, the commander of his fleet, was much amazed at the dexterity with which they imitated the accoutrements of the Grecian soldiers. I once found myself in a similar situation. Having entrusted to an Indian artist a lamp made in Portugal, the workmanship of which was exceedingly pretty, some days after he brought me another so like my own that I could scarcely distinguish any difference. It, however, cannot be denied, that the arts and sciences in India have greatly declined since foreign conquerors expelled the native kings; by which several provinces have been laid entirely waste, and the castes confounded with each other. Before that period, the different kingdoms were in a flourishing condition; the laws were respected, and justice and civil order prevailed; but, unfortunately, at present everything in many of the provinces must give way to absolute authority and despotic sway.