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Digitization: Fang-ching Tsai, Graduate Research Assistant, School of Information Resources & Library Science, University of Arizona, Tucson, 1515 East, First St. Tucson, AZ 85719.

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PART B

WHY OF SCHOOL LIBRARY:
LINES OF APPROACH

PART B/E

WHY OF SCHOOL LIBRARY

CHAPTER BA

ANSWER BASED ON AUTHORITY

1 Four Lines of Approach

The questions "Why should there be a library in each school?" and "Why should there be provision for a library hour in the time-table of each class?" are fundamental ones. They are also pertinent ones. Therefore, we should first seek to answer these questions. As a preliminary measure, we shall examine these questions from four different angles:

1 Is there any well known and compelling authority in the theory of education, for the provision of library work by each student, as part of his course;

2 Is there any educational tradition developed in course of time, about the necessity for the work of each student in the class room, being correlated with and followed up by the work of the student in the school library;

3 Has school library work by each student been in vogue in other countries — particularly the countries said to be in an advanced state of development? If so, is it necessary and useful for us to imitate them; and

4 Does an intensive consideration of the theory of education point to the need for library work by each student as a useful and necessary adjunct to his class room work.

2 Answer Based on Authority

21 AUTHORITY FROM REVEALED BOOKS

One of the forces influencing and regulating human ideas and action is Authority. The Authority may date even from Pre-historic times. It may be found in the sacred (revealed) books of different religions — forming the earliest institutions regulating human attitude and conduct. It would be an interesting subject for research to find out the sanction, if any, in revealed encyclopaedic books such as the Vedas, the Yi-King, the Tripitakas,

the Talmud, the Bible, the Koran, or the Granth-Saheb, for library hours in educational institutions. But, it is doubtful, if such an ancient sanction could be given sufficient weight in the context of today.

22 AUTHORITY FROM POWERFUL PERSONALITY

Authority of many kinds are traceable to the direction of powerful historic personalities of the past or even of today. The Authority emanating from a person is likely to go out of context even more quickly than Authority from Pre-historic sources.

23 AUTHORITY FROM CORPORATE BODY

In modern times, characterised by democracy, Authority often emanates not so much from an individual as from a corporate body made of several individuals. Generally speaking, a corporate body *qua* corporate body has a much larger expectation of life than an individual. Therefore, in course of time, the members of a corporate body will be replaced by others. A time will soon come when the corporate body lays down directions different from the old ones. In fact, the changes in the directions given may be too frequent to be followed up in practice. The supreme corporate body is, no doubt, the Government of the State. It may give its direction about School Library Work, through its Director of Education. This also is liable to frequent change. The direction of a Government may not be understood and implemented alike by all. Here is an example. About 50 years ago, the Government of Madras wished to lower the curricular load for examination. Therefore, it introduced the so called "B Group subjects" to be studied by students, not for examination purposes but for general information. But, within two decades, the system died unnoticed and unhonoured, as a result of neither the schools nor the teachers approving or understanding the educational philosophy behind the scheme.

CHAPTER BB

ANSWER BASED ON TRADITION

1 Tradition of the -Last Two-Centuries

The present Tradition of our schools originated with Wood's Despatch on Education to the Directors of the East India Company early in the nineteenth century. During that time we had no printed books for use in schools. We did **nit** have even text books. Indeed, the production of school text books was just then being initiated by the Vernacular Book Society established by the British Government. Thus, the Tradition of school library could not have started at that time. Perhaps, a century later some English books — not only of the text book kind but also of the near-text book kind — came to be produced in India or were imported from UK in small quantities. Some schools bought copies of some of them and locked them up in cup-boards, and kept them in small rooms. They were seldom brought into use by students. This Tradition continued till very recently in most schools. Perhaps it is being continued even today in some schools.

2 Tradition Two Centuries Earlier

Before the nineteenth century, no Tradition about school library or its use by students could have been started — or atleast appreciably practised — in any country of the world. For, books other than text books were not printed for students' use. It was only due to the pioneering enterprise of John Newbery, a few general books for students were published in the English language, during the second half of the eighteenth century (*See Sec PF2*). Their number did not increase nor were their subjects sufficiently varied till late in the nineteenth century, to form functional libraries in schools fit to be correlated with class room work.

3 Failure of Tradition

Thus generally speaking there has been hardly any Tradition to give sanction to the establishment of school libraries and to correlate the students work in school libraries with their work in the class room.

CHAPTER BC

ANSWER BASED ON IMITATION

1 Individual Imitation and Social Imitation

According to some, "Imitation" is the strongest force influencing human affairs and conduct. According to Gabriel Tarde, the force of Imitation plays an overwhelming part in shaping, not only the affairs of an individual, but also of the community as a whole (70). In other words, Social Imitation* as effective as Individual Imitation.

2 Social Imitation

Will the force of Imitation be of any help in the introduction of library work by students in schools? "Yes, to some extent. Social imitation has begun only during the last three decades." In educational matters, we have been largely imitating UK and USA. It is common in our educational circles to say, "We trans-plant into our country, educational ideas and practices developed in those countries a generation earlier, but only just about the time of those countries giving them up as not worth-pursuing." But, in the case of school library work, those countries have begun to devote their full attention only after World War II. They are still developing the idea with full faith in its usefulness.

3 Great Attention Paid to School Library in UK and USA

During the last two decades, great attention is being paid to the problems of schools libraries in UK and USA — particularly to the best way of correlating students library work with their work in the class room. This can be easily inferred, from the increasing space devoted to school library problems in their educational periodicals. Another evidence is the large number of books on school library work, being produced in those countries. Further, UK has its School Libraries Association and USA has its School Libraries Division of the American Library Association.

4 Contra-Arguments

Some cynics say, "There are many dangers in yielding to the force of Imitation. Imitation is blind. It is of no use for one community to imitate another, without satisfying oneself about the conditions in the two communities being similar." Assuming *ex-cathedra* about the conditions in India being dissimilar from those of UK and USA, the cynics assert about the wisdom of India in imitating UK and USA in school library matters.

5 Support of the Phlegmatic Old to the Cynical Young

The phlegmatic old people would support the cynic by argument such as, "The temperament of the Indian boys is stiffer than that of the Western boys. The Western boys are for activity, adventure, and enterprise in everything. Hence the freedom of the library hour is quite appropriate to the Western Schools. But the Indian boys are temperamentally for a passive quietude. They are more eager to be led and to be told rather than to lead and to explore." These opinions are reinforced by them by an abuse of the "Tropical Sun." According to them, this temperamental difference is brought about by the severe Tropical Sun !

6 The Danger of Incomplete and Little Knowledge

The arguments mentioned in Sec BC5 is traceable to incomplete and little knowledge. They forget that the best world-output of ideas and action of about 1,500 years ago, were put forth by the great Indian thinkers living in the severely Tropical Banaras and its neighbourhood. They also forget the sociological law of the rise and fall of nations. They do not understand that the Indian community having been, during the last few centuries, in a state of cultural exhaustion and intellectual inaction. (*See* Chap DC1). They also forget the Indian community having begun to move up the ascending phase of the current cultural cycle. Evidently, they have not had any opportunity to observe our latest generation — creatures of Independent India — becoming rich in originality, able in leadership, and bubbling with activity. Let us forget these pseudo-arguments. UK and USA are worth imitating. But, we are also now fit to decide the issue by *a priori* methods.

CHAPTER BD

ANSWER BASED ON 'A PRIORI' METHOD

1 Unreliability of "Authority," "Tradition," and "Imitation"

The three methods, used respectively in Chapter BA, BB and BC, to determine the issue of the need and usefulness or other-wise of each school in our country having a school library working in close collaboration with classroom work, implies leaving the decision in the hands of some others:

1 The Method of Authority would leave the decision in the hands of some unknown and unknowable being or an individual or a bureaucracy, taking it away altogether from the hands of the educational and library professions of today;

2 The Method of Tradition would surrender the act of judgement to the generations long dead and totally unfamiliar with the context of today; and

3 The Method of Imitation would transfer the responsibility of judgement to some foreign community, without a reliable knowledge of our country's educational and library context. But in case of the practice of the foreign community being a current one, there will be a good chance of its being of use to us in our own thinking.

2 Thinking it out for Ourselves

By now, our country is shaking off its cultural rest and intellectual in-action. Last year we completed the Silver Jubilee Year of our Independence. Many young minds are ready and fit to face our problems and solve them ourselves. The problem of school library and its relation with classroom work is one such problem. Our teaching and library professions have already put forth young persons devoting their thought to these problems. We can therefore fight our own battle in our own way. In this process, we need not ignore anything of value found in the contributions of Authority, Tradition, and Imitation. We can arrive at an eclectic decision.



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