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INDO-GER FRIENDSHIP FOR EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL
ADVANCEMENT OF KERALA.

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I propose in this short paper to identify briefly some of the possible areas of co-operation between the German Democratic Republic and the State of Kerala. Such co-operation is highly desirable as it would be of the utmost value in vocationalising our still largely colonial and traditional education and infusing the much-needed humanist-scientific spirit into our stagnant culture. Incidentally I will also refer to the pioneering service rendered to our educational system, language and literature by an eminent son of Germany, whose great contribution to the cause of our cultural advancement has not yet been adequately acknowledged and appreciated.

Vocationalisation of education.

The bane of our present system of education, as every one admits, is that it does not impart skills necessary to make us good workers and good farmers. The vital need of the hour is the application of science and technology for industrial and agricultural production. This alone will enable us to wipe out poverty and modernise our tradition-bound society. Only a system of production-oriented education can create the necessary climate and prepare the required personnel for such a transformation. Despite repeated attempts, we have failed in exactly this task of education reform, and still fondly cling to the outmoded and reactionary system of education, the result being that even after 25 years of freedom more than 70 percent of Indian citizens are totally uneducated, while the education imparted to the rest is by and large useless.

The crucial importance of a revolution in Indian education has repeatedly been emphasised by all our nation builders, and Mahatma Gandhi's experiments in this field are still green in our memory. But Gandhiji envisaged an ideal Indian society which would be predominantly agricultural, and as little industrialised as possible and still less mechanised. However, after the attainment

of freedom India took, without any reservation, the road of industrialisation, mechanisation and planned economy, and now we have irrevocably decided that we shall not be satisfied with anything less than Socialism.

The building up of a socialist society presupposes the building up of socialistic system of education, and here we can profit from the experiences of Socialist countries. But unfortunately our educational experts and executives are largely educated or trained in the United States of America or Great Britain from which countries emanate most of our half-hearted and half-baked educational reforms. No wonder these are foredoomed failures in the conditions obtaining in India.

If we are sincere about our profession of Socialism being the goal of our country, we must tear down the present system of education and rebuild it on sound foundations. As it is, our educational system is the weakest at the secondary stage, and I feel that radical educational reform should be introduced at the secondary stage. I do not know much about the educational system as it obtains in the GDR, but I am informed that all secondary education in the GDR is polytechnicalised. We too have our polytechnics, but they are post-secondary, and the instruction imparted in them is still largely bookish and impractical. Not only the syllabi and curricula, but the whole philosophy underlying the present method of imparting instruction in the polytechnics have to be revolutionised, if they are to be of any use to us.

Our Junior Technical Schools are attempts at polytechnicalising secondary education. But these schools are still at the formative stage and if carefully handled now, they may be made into model institutions, pioneering in the polytechnicalisation of our secondary education.

My point is this: The Government of Kerala may explore the possibilities of getting the co-operation, and if possible the collaboration, of the Government of the German Democratic Republic in reforming and equipping our polytechnics and Junior Technical Schools on the model of similar institutions in the GDR. Experts

may be exchanged, and training facilities may be made available to our teachers in the GDR. I am convinced that co-operation at this level between our State and the GDR will pave the way for a radical revolution in our secondary system of education which is of so crucial an importance in modernising our society.

Work-experience for students.

Feble and hesitant attempts are now being made in our State for imparting work experience to students at the secondary stage. Being a member of a committee constituted by the Government to inject work experience into our system of education, I fully know how inadequate our preparations are for making it a success. Here also we may learn much from the experience of the GDR. I am informed that the GDR has institutionalised work experience of students in their factory system. Every factory has to make adequate provision for giving practical training to students, to appoint the necessary personnel, and to ensure the safety of students undergoing this training. This is exactly what we also should do, if we mean business. I strongly urge on the Government of Kerala to ask some of our educational experts to study the practice of the GDR in this field, and to see if something similar can be introduced here also. Co-operation of the GDR may be sought for the training of the required personnel, who will be employed in factories and will see to it that regular batches of students are received, given meaningful training and made the richer for it.

Translation of German books into Malayalam.

Our window upon the world is still English, and for instruction and inspiration we are still depending on Anglo-American publications. This means that we are largely unaware of the intellect and the mind of the heartland of Europe. Translations of German classics and current publications will contribute to an immense enrichment of our intellects and minds. Fortunately for us, there is now provision for the study of German in some of our colleges. This should be strengthened and an adequate number of really competent translators and interpreters should be trained and employed in translating

worthwhile books from German into Malayalam. Scientific and literary periodicals in German should be introduced into our libraries. Translations of articles of current importance from these journals should be made available to our periodical press. In the beginning this requires some planning and institutional arrangement.

Centre of German Studies in the Calicut University.

It is a matter of utmost pleasure that a National Institute for German studies is being established in the Calicut University which will be financed by the Union Government and assisted by the GDR. This, incidentally, is the first National Institutes, such as the National Laboratories and IITs, being in other States. I am afraid that the importance of this centre has not yet been fully understood by the authorities, let alone the public of Kerala, who tend to think that it means simply the endowment by the GDR of a lectureship or professorship of German language in the Calicut University.

In my opinion, the Centre for German Studies should in fact be a centre for the study of European heartland through the medium of German language and dissemination of ideas gained by this study through the media of Indian languages. There should be facilities here for the study of current European philosophy, Technology, Politics, literature, theatre, music and other arts. The centre also should provide for large-scale translations from German, and must have its own publication wing. From the very inception of the centre we must have this comprehensive vision, and while selecting the site and constructing buildings for it this idea should never be lost sight of. The centre should have a good library as its core, a theatre for showing European films and performing plays, concerts, dances, etc., and an up-to-date Printing Press. It should be adequately staffed and should provide at least preliminary facilities for research.

Coming to research, it may be profitable to remember that there are at present chairs for Indology in 8 German Universities and some

of the most eminent Indologists now living are Germans. Their research is now mainly centred in areas which are little, if at all, studied in India, such as Buddhism and Jainism and Archaeo-sociology. For a proper study of Buddhism it is necessary that in addition to Pali and Sanskrit texts, texts in Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese and some of the little-known Central Asian languages are collected, compared and studied. India at present offers very little facility for such studies. While German Indology of the present is mainly engaged in exactly this. This is a vital area for the study of our culture, for, our religious practices, folkways and traditions have their root more or less at the period covered by these studies. This is also the juncture of time when most of our modern languages took shape. Unfortunately this period remains the most obscure in Indian history. Concerted researches into this period is a sine-qua-non for the reconstruction of our history just at the crucial point of our contact with Islam, which so profoundly affected the subsequent course.

Dr. Hermann Gundert.

Finally I would suggest that the proposed Centre for German Studies at Calicut University be named after Dr. Rev. Herman Gundert in grateful recognition of the invaluable service he rendered to our language, literature and system of education. This extra-ordinarily gifted man, proficient in 18 languages, devoted more than 55 years of his long life for the study of Malayalam, collecting little-known manuscripts, interviewing people, mapping dialects and applying his trained scholarship and sharp intellect to an analysis and systematisation of our language. The result is the celebrated Malayalam-English Dictionary, which was published in 1872. His Grammar of Malayalam language is the first authoritative grammar of our language. From 1852 to 1854 he worked as Inspector of Schools in Malabar and South Canara Districts and compiled a text of poems and pieces of prose (Pathanala) to be taught in schools. This was the first collection of its kind in Malayalam. Pioneering the trail for future historians he wrote a history of Kerala called Kerala pashama setting

forth in considerable detail the relations of Europeans with Kerala starting from the 16th century. Considerable research has gone into the composition of this work. He has 21 Malayalam books to his credit besides a large number of articles in periodicals on learned subjects.

With his two monthly magazines Paschimodayam and Rajyasamacharam it was Dr. Gunderdt who planted the seed of journalism in Malayalam. Of these the first one contained prose articles on History, Geography and Natural Sciences. Thus it can be said that he also laid the foundations for a scientific literature in Malayalam.

Born in Stuttgart on 14th of February, 1814, Gunderdt studied in the University of Tübingen and got a Doctorate in Philosophy. As a missionary he came to India in 1836. He joined the Basel Mission in 1838 and on his way to Mangalore came to know about Malayalam in October 1838 at Trivandrum. It was a case of love at first sight, or should I say, at first hearing? In 1839 he selected Ilikkummu, a village near Tellicherry for his headquarters where he stayed for 20 years. Gunderdt returned to Germany in 1859 badly battered in health, but worked at his magnum opus for 10 more years. It bears eloquent testimony to his thoroughness of method, that he insisted on himself correcting the proofs of his dictionary from Germany, though the printing was being done at Mangalore.

It is only in the fitness of things that the memory of this great son of Germany is perpetuated in that tract of the country in the service of which he dedicated his abundant energies and extraordinary genius. What can be a more fitting memorial to this savant than a full-fledged National Institute for Indo-German Studies?

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