

ABSTRACT

The Hindu view of education expresses a concern with all the activities of the mind between birth and death. This is reflected in the very strong intellectual tradition which has characterized Hindu civilization since ancient times, extending over disciplines such as medicine, the sciences, mathematics, linguistics, architecture, astronomy, psychology and philosophy. The approach to education is an inherently holistic one which views life as a composite whole, as opposed to the western approach of compartmentalisation.

Yet, despite this strong tradition in education, the 1950 Statistical Digest revealed that an alarming 48.5% of the Indian population could neither read nor write English. Eliminating Christian and Muslim Indians, it was estimated that 60% of the Hindu population was illiterate. It must be noted, however, that their knowledge and ability to read and write Hindi and Sanskrit were not taken into account when compiling these figures.

This appalling situation existed in the midst of a proliferation of Government and denominational schools that offered free primary education since the 1930s. Indeed, by that time there were proportionally more denominational than Government schools - the prominent ones being Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian.

The irony was that by 1884 the Indian immigrants had taken the decision to settle permanently in Trinidad, yet more than half a century

later Hindus, who formed the vast majority, were staying out of the education system with devastating results. They were virtually imprisoned in agriculture and under-represented in the civil service and independent professions.

Why were the Hindus not participating in the education process, at least at the primary level where education was free? Was there a deliberate policy by the authorities to keep Hindus out of the system? This research would be probing these questions and the role of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, hereto referred as the SDMS, in correcting this imbalance .