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A NOTABLE EXPERIMENT IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN INDIA

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A NOTABLE EXPERIMENT IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN INDIA.

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One-fifth of India's three hundred millions of people live in some 600 so-called "Native States," whose internal administration is more or less in their own hands, and which therefore are distinct from the remaining territory known as British India which is absolutely under the Crown. This makes possible some such experimentation in education and reform as our American State system affords. Rare, however, is the native Prince, who because of training or progressive spirit cares to endure, much less lead, in this experimentation. That such there must be can be sensed from the fact that the British Government has not in general attempted any religious or moral instruction of students in a land endlessly divided by language, caste, and jealously guarded religious differences.

The conduct of students in the recent period of unrest makes many thoughtful leaders feel that the problem of moral instruction, even amidst tremendous diversity of belief, must be attempted. For, from various reasons the homes of the pupils have ceased to impart moral and religious instruction, and the influence of religious teachers and places of public worship has greatly decreased, so that irreverence and disrespect of authority have been on the increase.

Actuated by such facts, the enlightened Maharaja of Mysore who has under his care one-sixtieth of India's population, has recently inaugurated a scheme of direct moral and religious instruction that is being watched with keen interest not only by India, but by the British Government.

Henceforth in all the schools of the Mysore State moral instruction will be given on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and religious instruction on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The moral teaching will be common to pupils of all persuasions, and will largely be based on books recommended by the Moral Education League of England. The State makes provision for imparting religious instruction by teachers of the various religions, such as Hindu, Mohammedan, Christian, wherever the number of their respective students exceeds twenty. Any private person or body interested in any of these religions may make special arrangements at their own cost for teaching their respective religions where the number of pupils is below twenty. The plan went into operation in November, 1908, but it is too soon to judge of its success.