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Development of Education

Under Company Rule

For the first 60 years of its dominion in India, the East India Company, a trading and profit-making concern, took no interest in the promotion of education. Some minor exceptions were efforts by individuals—

- The Calcutta Madrasah was established by Warren Hastings in 1781 for the study of Muslim law and related subjects.
- The Sanskrit College was established by Jonathan Duncan, the resident, at Benaras in 1791 for study of Hindu law and philosophy.
- Fort William College was set up by Wellesley in 1800 for training of civil servants of the Company in languages and customs of Indians (closed in 1802).

The Calcutta Madrasah and the Sanskrit College were designed to provide a regular supply of qualified Indians to help the administration of law in the Company's court, and the knowledge of classical languages and vernaculars was useful in correspondence with Indian states.

Enlightened Indians and missionaries started exerting pressure on the Government to promote modern, secular, Western education, as they thought that Western education was the remedy for social, economic and political ills of the country. Missionaries thought that modern education would

destroy the faith of Indians in their own religions and they would take to Christianity. Serampore missionaries were, in particular, very enthusiastic about spread of education.

A Humble beginning by Charter Act of 1813

The Charter Act of 1813 incorporated the principle of encouraging learned Indians and promoting knowledge of modern sciences in the country. The Act directed the Company to sanction one lakh rupees annually for this purpose. However, even this petty amount was not made available till 1823, mainly because of the controversy raged on the question of the direction that this expenditure should take.

Meanwhile, efforts of enlightened Indians such as Raja Rammohan Roy bore fruit and a grant was sanctioned for Calcutta College set up in 1817 by educated Bengalis, imparting English education in Western humanities and sciences. The government also set up three Sanskrit colleges at Calcutta, Delhi and Agra.

Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy

Within the General Committee on Public Instruction, the Anglicists argued that the government spending on education should be exclusively for modern studies.

The Orientalists said while Western sciences and literature should be taught to prepare students to take up jobs, emphasis should be placed on expansion of traditional Indian learning.

Even the Anglicists were divided over the question of medium of instruction—one faction was for English language as the medium, while the other faction was for Indian languages (vernaculars) for the purpose.

Unfortunately there was a great deal of confusion over English and vernacular languages as media of instruction and as objects of study.

Lord Macaulay's Minute (1835)

The famous Lord Macaulay's Minute settled the row in favour of Anglicists—the limited government resources were to be devoted to teaching of Western sciences and literature through the medium of English language alone. Lord Macaulay held the view that "Indian learning was inferior to European learning"—which was true as far as physical and social sciences in the contemporary stage were concerned.

The government soon made English as the medium of instruction in its schools and colleges and opened a few English schools and colleges instead of a large number of elementary schools, thus neglecting mass education. The British planned to educate a small section of upper and middle classes, thus creating a class "Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" who would act as interpreters between the government and masses and would enrich the vernaculars by which knowledge of Western sciences and literature would reach the masses. This was called the '**downward filtration theory**'.

Modern ideas, if not education, did filter down to the masses, though not in a form desired by the rulers, but through political parties, press, pamphlets, public platforms, etc. Modern education only helped this process by making available the basic literature on physical and social sciences to nationalists, thus stimulating their capacity to make social analysis—otherwise the content, structure and curricula of modern education served colonial interests.

Efforts of Thomson

James Thomson, lieutenant-governor of NW Provinces (1843-53), developed a comprehensive scheme of village education through the medium of vernacular languages. In these village schools, useful subjects such as mensuration and agriculture sciences were taught. The purpose was to train personnel for the newly set up Revenue and Public Works Department.

Wood's Despatch (1854)

In 1854, Charles Wood prepared a despatch on an educational system for India. Considered the "Magna Carta of English Education in India", this document was the first comprehensive plan for the spread of education in India.

1. It asked the government of India to assume responsibility for education of the masses, thus repudiating the 'downward filtration theory', at least on paper.

2. It systematised the hierarchy from vernacular primary schools in villages at bottom, followed by Anglo-Vernacular High Schools and an affiliated college at the district level, and affiliating universities in the presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

3. It recommended English as the medium of instruction for higher studies and vernaculars at school level.

4. It laid stress on female and vocational education, and on teachers' training.

5. It laid down that the education imparted in government institutions should be secular.

6. It recommended a system of grants-in-aid to encourage private enterprise.

Developments

In 1857, universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were set up and later, departments of education were set up in all provinces. The Bethune School founded by J.E.D. Bethune at Calcutta (1849) was the first fruit of a powerful movement for education of women which arose in 1840s and 1850s. Bethune was the president of the Council of Education. Mostly due to Bethune's efforts, girls' schools were set up on a sound footing and brought under government's grants-in-aid and inspection system.

An Agriculture Institute at Pusa (Bihar) and an Engineering Institute at Roorkee were started.

The ideals and methods of Wood's Despatch dominated the field for five decades which saw rapid westernisation of

education system in India, with educational institutions run by European headmasters and principals. Missionary enterprises played their own part. Gradually, private Indian effort appeared in the field.

After the Crown Took Over

Hunter Education Commission (1882-83)

Earlier schemes had neglected primary and secondary education. When education was shifted to provinces in 1870, primary and secondary education further suffered because the provinces already had limited resources at their disposal. In 1882, the Government appointed a commission under the chairmanship of W.W. Hunter to review the progress of education in the country since the Despatch of 1854. The Hunter Commission mostly confined its recommendations to **primary** and **secondary** education. The commission—

(i) emphasised that state's special care is required for extension and improvement of primary education, and that primary education should be imparted through vernacular.

(ii) recommended transfer of control of primary education to newly set up district and municipal boards.

(iii) recommended that secondary (High School) education should have two divisions—
- literary—leading up to university.
- vocational—for commercial careers.

(iv) drew attention to inadequate facilities for female education, especially outside presidency towns and made recommendations for its spread.

The next two decades saw rapid growth and expansion of secondary and collegiate education with the participation of Indians. Also, more teaching-cum-examining universities were set up like the Punjab University (1882) and the Allahabad University (1887).

Indian Universities Act, 1904

The dawn of 20th century saw political unrest. The official view was that under private management the quality of education had deteriorated and educational institutions acted as factories producing political revolutionaries. Nationalists accepted the decline in quality but accused the Government of not doing anything to eradicate illiteracy.

In 1902, **Raleigh Commission** was set up to go into conditions and prospects of universities in India and to suggest measures for improvement in their constitution and working. The commission precluded from reporting on primary or secondary education. Based on its recommendations, the Indian Universities Act was passed in 1904. As per the Act,

(i) universities were to give more attention to study and research;

(ii) the number of fellows of a university and their period in office were reduced and most fellows were to be nominated by the Government;

(iii) Government was to have powers to veto universities' senate regulations and could amend these regulations or pass regulations on its own;

(iv) conditions were to be made stricter for affiliation of private colleges; and

(v) five lakh rupees were to be sanctioned per annum for five years for improvement of higher education and universities.

Curzon justified greater control over universities in the name of quality and efficiency, but actually sought to restrict education and to discipline the educated towards loyalty to the Government.

The nationalists saw in it an attempt to strengthen imperialism and to sabotage nationalist feelings. Gokhale called it a "retrograde measure".

Government Resolution on Education Policy—1913

In 1906, the progressive state of Baroda introduced compulsory primary education throughout its territories. National leaders urged the government to do so for British India (Gokhale made a powerful advocacy for it in the Legislative Assembly).

In its 1913 Resolution on Education Policy, the government refused to take up the responsibility of compulsory education, but accepted the policy of removal of illiteracy and urged provincial governments to take early steps to provide free elementary education to the poorer and more backward sections. Private efforts were to be encouraged for this and the quality of secondary schools was to be improved. A university, it was decided, was to be established in each province and teaching activities of universities were to be encouraged.

Saddler University Commission (1917-19)

The commission was set up to study and report on problems of Calcutta University but its recommendations were applicable more or less to other universities also. It reviewed the entire field from school education to university education. It held the view that, for the improvement of university education, improvement of secondary education was a necessary pre-condition. Its observations were as follows:

1. School course should cover 12 years. Students should enter university after an intermediate stage (rather than matric) for a three-year degree course in university. This was done to
   (a) prepare students for university stage;
   (b) relieve universities of a large number of below university standard students; and
   (c) provide collegiate education to those not planning to go through university stage.

   A separate board of secondary and intermediate education

should be set up for administration and control of secondary and intermediate education.

2. There should be less rigidity in framing university regulations.

3. A university should function as centralised, unitary residential-teaching autonomous body, rather than as scattered, affiliated colleges.

4. Female education, applied scientific and technological education, teachers' training including those for professional and vocational colleges should be extended.

In the period from 1916 to 1921 seven new universities came up at Mysore, Patna, Benaras, Aligarh, Dacca, Lucknow and Osmania.

In 1920, the Government recommended Saddler report to the provincial governments.

Education Under Dyarchy

Under Montagu-Chelmsford reforms education was shifted to provincial ministries and the government stopped taking direct interest in educational matters, while government grants, liberally sanctioned since 1902, were now stopped. Financial difficulties prevented any substantial expansion but still education grew, especially under philanthropic efforts.

Hartog Committee (1929)

An increase in number of schools and colleges had led to deterioration of education standards. The Hartog Committee was set up to report on development of education. Its main recommendations were as follows.

1. Emphasis should be given to primary education but there need be no hasty expansion or compulsion in education.

2. Only deserving students should go in for high school and intermediate stage, while average students should be diverted to vocational courses after VIII standard.

3. For improvements in standards of university education, admissions should be restricted.

Sergeant Plan of Education

The Sergeant Plan (Sergeant was the educational advisor to the Government) was worked out by the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1944. It recommended—

1. pre-primary education for 3-6 years age group; free, universal and compulsory elementary education for 6-11 years age group; high school education for 11-17 years age group for selected children, and a university course of 3 years after higher secondary;

Wardha Scheme of Basic Education (1937)

The Congress had organised a National Conference on Education in October 1937 in Wardha. In the light of the resolutions passed there, **Zakir Hussain committee** formulated a detailed national scheme for basic education. The main principle behind this scheme was 'learning through activity'. It was based on Gandhi's ideas published in a series of articles in the weekly *Harijan*. Gandhi thought that Western education had created a gulf between the educated few and the masses and had also made the educated elite ineffective. The scheme had the following provisions.

(i) Inclusion of a basic handicraft in the syllabus.

(ii) First seven years of schooling to be an integral part of a free and compulsory nationwide education system (through mother tongue).

(iii) Teaching to be in Hindi from class II to VII and in English only after class VIII.

(iv) Ways to be devised to establish contact with the community around schools through service.

(v) A suitable technique to be devised with a view to implementing the main idea of basic education—educating the child through the medium of productive activity of a suitable handicraft.

The system, rather than being a methodology for education, was an expression of an idea for a new life and a new society. The basic premise was that only through such a scheme could India be an independent and non-violent society. This scheme was child-centred and cooperative.

There was not much development of this idea, because of the start of the Second World War and the resignation of the Congress ministries (October 1939).

high schools to be of two types: (i) academic and (ii) technical and vocational.
2. adequate technical, commercial and arts education.
3. abolition of intermediate course.
4. liquidation of adult illiteracy in 20 years.
5. stress on teachers' training, physical education, education for the physically and mentally handicapped.

The objective was to create within 40 years, the same level of educational attainment as prevailed in England. Although a bold and comprehensive scheme, it proposed no methodology for implementation. Also, the ideal of England's achievements may not have suited Indian conditions.

Development of Vernacular Education

During the early 19th century vernacular education was in a sorry state of affairs. It was mostly dependent on contributions from wealthy zamindars.

1835, 1836, 1838 : William Adam's reports on vernacular education in Bengal and Bihar pointed out defects in the system of vernacular education.

1843-53 : James Jonathan's experiments in North-West Provinces (UP), as the lieutenant-governor there, included opening one government school as model school in each tehsildari and a normal school for teachers' training for vernacular schools.

1853 : In a famous minute, Lord Dalhousie expressed strong opinion in favour of vernacular education.

1854 : Wood's Despatch made the following provisions for vernacular education:

1. Improvement of standards
2. Supervision by government agency
3. Normal schools to train teachers

These gave impetus to the cause of vernacular education

1854-71 : The government paid some attention to

secondary and vernacular education. The number of vernacular schools increased by more than five-fold.

1882 : The Hunter Commission held that State should make special efforts for extension and improvement of vernacular education. Mass education was to be seen as instructing masses through vernaculars.

1904 : Education policy put special emphasis on vernacular education and increased grants for it.

1929 : Hartog Committee presented a gloomy picture of primary education.

1937 : These schools received encouragement from Congress ministries.

Development of Technical Education

The Engineering College at Roorkee was set up in 1847; the Calcutta College of Engineering came up in 1856. In 1858, Overseers' School at Poona was raised to the status of Poona College of Engineering and affiliated to Bombay University. Guindy College of Engineering was affiliated to Madras University.

Medical training started with establishment of a medical college in Calcutta in 1835. Lord Curzon did much to broaden the whole basis of professional courses—medicine, agriculture, engineering, veterinary sciences, etc. He established an agriculture college at Pusa which acted as a parent institution of similar institutions in other provinces.

Evaluation of British Policy on Education

1. Even the inadequate measures the government took for the expansion of modern education were guided by concerns other than philanthropic. The government measures for promotion of education were influenced by—

- agitation in favour of modern education by

enlightened Indians, Christian missionaries and humanitarian officials;

- the need to ensure a cheap supply of educated Indians to man an increasing number of subordinate posts in administration and in British business concerns—thus there was an emphasis on English medium as the language of administration and of education;
- the hope that educated Indians would help expand market for British manufactures in India;
- an expectation that Western education would reconcile Indians to British rule, particularly as it glorified British conquerors and their administration.

The British thus wanted to use modern education to strengthen the foundations of their political authority in India.

2. Traditional system of Indian learning gradually declined for want of support, and specially after 1844 when it was declared that applicants for government employment should possess knowledge of English.

3. Mass education was neglected leading to widespread illiteracy (1911—84 per cent and in 1921—92 per cent) which created a wide linguistic and cultural gulf between the educated few and the masses.

4. Since education was to be paid for, it became a monopoly of upper and richer classes and city dwellers.

5. There was an almost total neglect of women's education because (i) the Government did not want to arouse wrath of orthodox sections; and (ii) it had no immediate utility for the colonial rule.

6. Scientific and technical education was by and large neglected. By 1857 there were only three medical colleges at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, and only one good engineering college at Roorkee which was open only to Europeans and Eurasians.