CHAPTER VI

Administrative Organisation and Social and Cultural Policy

WE have seen in the previous chapter that by 1784 the East India Company's administration of India had been brought under its control by the British Government and that its economic policies were being determined by the needs of British economy. We v/ill now discuss the organisation through which the Company administered its recently acquired dominion.

In the beginning the Company left the administration of its possessions in India in Indian hands, confining its activities to supervision. But it soon found 'that British aims were not adequately served by following old methods of administration. Consequently, tbe Company took all aspects of administration in its own hand, Under Warren Hastings and Cornwallis, the administration of Bengal was completely overhauled and the foundations of a new system based on the English pattern laid. The spread of British power to new areas, new problems, new needs, new experiences and new ideas led to changes in the system of administration. But the overall objectives of imperialism were never forgotten.

The British administration in India was based on three pillars: the Civil Service, the Army, and the Police. This was so for two reasons. For one, the chief aim of British-Indian administration was the maintenance of law and order and the perpetuation of British rule. Without law and order British merchants and British manufacturers could not hope to sell their goods in every nook and corner of India. Again, the British, being

foreigners, could not hope to win the affections of the Indian people; they, therefore, relied on superior force rather than on public support for the maintenance of their control over India. 'Hie Duke of Wellington, who had served in India tfnder his brother, Lord Wellesley, remarked after his return to Europe;

> **Tbe system of Government in India, ,the foundation of authority, and the modes of supporting it and of carrying On the operation* of government arc entirely different from the systems and modes adopted in Europefor the tame purpose.... The foundation tad the Instrument of all power there Is the sword.**

Civil Service

The Civil Service was brought into existence by Lord Cornwallis. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, the East India Company had from the beginning carried on its trade in the East through servants who were paid low wages but who were permitted to trade privately. Later, when the Company became a territorial power, the same servants assumed administrative functions. They now became extremely corrupt, By oppressing local weavers and artisans, merchants, and zamindars, by extorting bribes and 'gifts' from rajas and nawabs, and by indulging in illegal private trade, they amassed uotold wealth with which they retired to England. Clive and Warren Hastings made attempts to put an end to their corruption, but were only partially successful.

Cornwallis, who came to India as Governor-General in 1786, was determined to purify the administration, but he realised that the Company's servants would not give honest and efficient service so long as they were not given adequate salaries. He therefore enforced the rules against private trade and acceptance of presents and bribes by officials with strictness. At the same time, he raised the salaries of the Company's servants. For example, the Collector of a district was to be paid Rs. 1500 a month and one per cent commission on the revenue collection of his district. In fact the Company's Civil Service became the highest paid service in the world. Cornwallis also laid down that promotion in the Civil Service would be by seniority so that its members would remain independent of outside influence.

In 1800, Lord Wellesley pointed out that even though civil servants often ruled over vast areas, they came to India at the immature age of 18 or so and were given no regular training before starting on their jobs. They generally lacked knowledge of Indian languages. Wellesley therefore established the College of Fort William at Calcutta for the education of young recruits to the Civil Service. The Directors of the Company disapproved of his action and in 1806 replaced it by their own East Indian College at Haileybury in England.

Till 1853 all appointments to the Civil Service were made by the Directors of the East India Company who placated the members of the Board of Control by letting them make some of the nominations, The Directors fought hard to retain this lucrative and prized privilege and refused to surrender it even when their other economic and political privileges were taken away by Parliament. They lost it finally in 18S3 when the Charter Act decreed that all recruits to the Civil Service were to be selected through a competitive examination.

A special feature of the Indian Civil Service since the days of Cornwallis was the rigid and complete exclusion of Indians from it, It was laid down officially in 1793 that all higher posts in administration worth more than

£ 500 a year in salary were to be held by Englishmen. This policy was also applied to other branches of Government, such as the army, police, judiciary, engineering. In the words of John Shore, who succeeded Cornwallis:

> **The fundamental principle of** the English **had been to make the whole Indian nation subservient, in** every **possible way, to the interests and benefits of ourselves. The Indians have been excluded From every honour, dignity, or office, which the lowest Englishmen could be prevailed to accept.**

Why did the British follow such a policy? Many factors combined to produce it. For one, they were convinced that an administration based on British ideas, institutions, and practices could be firmly established only by English personnel. And, then, they did not trust the ability and integrity of the Indians. For example, Charles Grant, Chairman of the Court of Directors, condemned the people of India as "a race of men lamentably degenerate and base; retaining but a feeble sense of moral obligation;... and sunk in misery by their vices." Similarly, Cornwallis believed that "Every native of Hindustan is corrupt". It may be noted that this criticism did apply to some extent to a small class of Indian officials and zamind&rs of the time. But, then, it was equally if not more true of British officials in India, In fact, Cornwallis had proposed to give them high salaries in order to help them resist temptations and to become honest and obedient. But he never thought of applying the same remedy of adequate salaries to eradicate corruption among Indian officials,

In reality, the exclusion of Indians from higher grades of services was a deliberate policy. These services were required at the time to establish and consolidate British rule in India. Obviously the task could not be left to Indians who did not possess the same instinctive sympathy for, and understanding of, British interests as Englishmen. Moreover, the influential classes of British society were keen to preserve the monopoly of lucrative appointments in the Indian Civil Service and other services for their sons. In fact they fought tooth and nail among themselves over these appointments. The right to make them was a perpetual bone of contention between the Directors of the Company and the members of the British Cabinet. How could the English then agree to let Indians occupy these posts? Indians were, however, recruited in large numbers to fill subordinate posts as they were cheaper and much more readily available than Englishmen.

The Indian Civil Service gradually developed into one of the most efficient and powerful civil services in the world. Its members exercised vast power and often participated ,in the making of policy. They developed certain traditions of independence, integrity, and hard work, though these qualities obviously served British and not Indian interests, At the same time they gradually came to form a rigid and exclusive and proud caste with an extremely conservative and narrow outlook. They came (o believe that they had an almost Divine right to rule India. The Indian Civil Service has often been called the 'steel frame[1] which reared and sustained British rule in India. In course of time it became the chief opponent of all that was progressive and advanced in Indian life and one of the main targets of attack by the rising Indian national

movement.

Army

The second important pillar of the British regime in India was the army. It fulfilled three important functions. Jt was the instrument through which the Indian powers were conquered; it defended the British Empire in India from foreign rivals; and it safeguarded British supremacy from the ever-present threat of internal revolt.

The bulk of the Company's army consisted of Indian soldiers, recruited chiefly from the area at present included in U.P. and Bihar. For instance, in 1857, the strength of the army in India was 311,400 of whom 265,900 were Indians. Its officers were, however, exclusively British, at least since the days of Cornwallis. In 1856, only three Indians in the army recieved a salary of Rs. 300 per month and the highest Indian officer was a *subedar.* A large number of Indian troops had to be employed as British troops were far too expensive. Moreover, the population of Britain was perhaps too small to provide the large soldiery needed for the conquest of India. As a counterweight, the army was officered entirely by British officials and a certain number of British troops were maintained to keep the Indian soldiers under control. Even so, it appears surprising today that a handful of foreigners coul d conquer and control India with a predominantly Indian army. This was possible because of two factors. On the one hand, there was absence of modem nationalism in the country at the time. A soldier from Bihar or Avadh did not think, and could not have thought, that in helping the Company defeat the Marathas or the Punjabis he was being anti-Indian- On the other, the Indian soldier had a long tradition of loyally serving those who paid his salary. This was popularly known as loyalty to the salt. In other words, the Indian soldier was a good mercenary, and the Company on its part was a good paymaster. It paid its soldiers regularly and well, something that the Indian rulers and chieftains were no longer dping.

Police

The third pillar of British rule was the police whose creator was once again Cornwallis. He relieved (He zamindars of' their police.functions and, established a regular police force to maintain law and• order. In this respect, he went, back to, and modernized, the old Indian system <5f *thaws.* Interestingly, this put India ahead of Britain where a system of police had not developed yet. Cornwallis established a system of circles or *thanas* headed "by a *daroga,* who was an Indian. Later, the post of the District Superintendent of Police was created to head the police organisation in a district. Once again, Indians were excluded from all superior posts. In the villages the duties of the police continued to be performed by village-watchmen who were maintained by the villagers. The police gradually succeeded in reducing major crimes such as dacoity. One of its major achievements was the suppression of *thugs* who robbed and killed travellers on the highways, particularly in Central India. The police also prevented the organisation of a large- scale conspiracy against foreign control,

and when the national movement arose, the police was used to suppress it. In its dealings with the people, the Indian police adopted an unsympathetic attitude. A Committee of Parliament reported in 1813 that the police committed "'depradations on the peaceable inhabitants, of the same nature as those practised by the dacoits whom they were employed to suppress.' ' And William Bentinck, the Governor-General, wrote in 1832:

> As for the police 50 far from being a protection to the people, I cannot letter illustrate the public feeling regarding it, than by the following Tact, that nothing can exceed the popularity of a recent regulation by which, if & robbery has been committed, the police are *prevented [rom* making any enquiry into it, eiccpt upon the requisition of the persons robbed: that is to say, the shepherd is a more rave- nous beast of prey than the wolf.

Judicial Organisation

The British laid the foundations of a new system of dispensing justice through a hierarchy of civil and criminal courts. Though given a start by Warren Hastings, the system was stabilised by Cornwallis in 1793. In each district was established a Diwani Adafat, or civil court, presided over by the District Judge who belonged to the Civil Service. Cornwallis thus separated the posts of the Civil Judge and the Collector. Appeal from thei District Court lay first to four Provincial Courts of Civil Appeal and then, finally, to the Sadar Diwani Adalat. Below the District Court were Registrars' Courts, headed by Europeans, and a number of subordinate courts headed by Indian judges known as Munsifs and Amins. To deal with criminal cases, Cornwallis divided the Presidency of Bengal into four Divisions, in each of which **a** Court of Circuit presided over by **the** civil servants was established. Below these courts came a large number of; Indian, magistrates **to** try petty oases. Appeals from **th«** Courts **of** Circuit lay. witft the **Sadftr Nlzamat Adalat.** The, criminal **coorls** applied **Muslim Criminal** ¡ Law in. a. modified and less **harsh** form **so that the teariflg apact** of **limbs and . such** olherpumshmentswercprohibited, **The eml ce>uc!s^Opyed ih£ ,<gistomary law thi^yhad-pwyailed in any area ojr** among a section of the people since times immemorial. In 1831, William Bentinck abolished the Provincial Courts of Appeal and Circuit. Their work: was assigned first to Commissions and later to District Judges and District Collectors. Bentinck also raised the status and powers of Indians in the judicial service and appointed them as Deputy Magistrates, Subordinate Judges and Principal Sadar Amins. In 18^5, High Courts were established at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay to replace the Sadar Courts oFDiwani and Nizamat.

The British also established a new system of laws through the processes of enactment and codification of old laws. The traditional system of justice in India had been largely based on customary law which arose from long tradition and practice, though many laws were based on the *shastras* and *sharial* as well as on imperial authority. Though they continued to observe customary law in general, the British gradually evolved a new system of laws. They introduced regulations, codified the existing laws, and often systematised and modernised them through judicial interpretation. The Charter Act of 1833 conferred all lawmaking power

on the Governor-General-in-Council. All this meant that Indians were now to live increasingly under man-made laws, which might be good or bad but which were openly the products of human rtason, and not under laws which had to be obeyed blindly and which could not be questioned as they were supposed to be divine and therefore sacred.

In 1833, the Government appointed a Law Commission headed by Lord Macaulay to codify Indian laws. Its labours eventually resulted in the Indian Penal Code, the Western-derived Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure and other codes of laws. The same laws now prevailed all over the country and they were enforced by a uniform system of courts. Thus it may be said that India was judicially unified.

The Rule of Law

The British introduced the modern concept of the rule of law. This meant that their administration was to be carried out, at least in theory, in obedience to laws, which clearly defined the rights, privileges, and obligations of the subjects and not according to the caprice or personal discretion of the ruler. In practice, of course, the bureaucracy and the police enjoyed arbitrary powers and interfered with the rights and liberties of the people. One important feature of the concept of the rule of law was that any official could be brought before a court of law for breaches of official duty or for acts done in excess of his official authority. The Tule of law was to some extent a guarantee of the personal liberty of a person. It is true that previous rulers of India had been in general bound by tradition and custotn. < But they always had the legal right-to take any administrative steps they wanted and there existed no other authority before whom their acts could be questioned. The Indian rulers and chiefs sometimes exercised this power to do as they wanted. Under British rule, on the other hand, administration was largely carried on according to laws as interpreted by the courts though the laws themselves were often defective, were made not by the people through a democratic process but autocratically by the foreign rulers, and left a great deal of power in the hands of the civil servants and the police. But that was perhaps inevitable in a foreign regime that could not in the very nature of things be democratic or libertarian.

Equality before Law The Indian legal system under the British was based on the concept of equality before law. This meant that in the eyes of law all men were equal. The same law applied to all persons irrespective of their caste, religion, or class. Previously, the judicial system had paid heed to caste distinctions and had differentiated between the so-called high-born and low-born. For the same crime lighter punishment was awarded to a *Brahmin* than to a *non-Brahmin.* Similarly, in practice zamindars and nobles were not judged as harshly as the commoner. In fact, very often they could not be brought to justice at all for their actions. Now the humble could also move the machinery of justice.

There was, however, one exception to this excellent principle of equality before law. The Europeans and their descendants had separate courts and even laws, In criminal cases they could be tried only by European judges. Many

English officials, military officers, planters, and merchants behaved with Indians in a haughty, harsh, and even brutal manner. When efforts were made to bring them to justice, they were given indirect and undue protection and consequently light or no punishment by many of the European judges before whom alone they could be tried. Consequently, miscarriage of justice occurred frequently,

Iu practice, there emerged another type of legal inequality. Justice became quite expensive as court fees had to be paid, lawyers engaged, and the expenses of witnesses met. Courts were often situated in distant towns. Law suits dragged on for years. The complicated laws were beyond the grasp of the illiterate and ignorant peasants. Invariably, the rich could turn and twist the laws and courts to operate in their own favour. The mere threat to take a poor person through the long process of justice from the lower court to the highest court of appeal and thus to face him with complete ruin often sufficed to bring him to heel. Moreover, the widespread prevalence of corruption in the ranks of the police and the rest of the administrative machinery led to the denial of justice. Officials often favoured the rich. The zamindars oppressed the ryots without fear of official action. In contrast, the system of justice that had prevailed in pre-British times was comparatively informal, speedy, and inexpensive. Thus, while the new judicial system marked a great step forward in so far as it was based on the laudable principles of the rule of law and equality before law and on rational and humane man-made laws, it was a retrograde step in some other respects: it was now costlier and involved long delays.

Sodal and Cultural Policy

We have seen that British authorities reorganised and regulated India's economy in the interests of British trade and industry and organised a modern administrative system to guarantee order and security. Till 1813 they also followed a policy of non-interference in tbe religious, social, and cultural life of the country, hut after 1813 they took active steps to transform Indian society and culture. This followed the rise of new interests and new ideas in Britain during the 19th century. The Industrial Revolution, which had begun in the middle of the 18th century, and the consequent growth of industrial capitalism, were fast changing ali aspects of British society. The rising industrial interests wanted to make India a big market for their goods. This could not be accomplished merely by adhering to the policy of keeping peace, and required the partial transformation and modernisation of Indian society. And so, in the words of the historians Thompson and Garratt, "the mood and methods of the old brigandage were changing into those of modem industrialism and capitalism."

Science and techonology also opened new vistas of human progress. The 18th and 19th centuries witnessed a great ferment of new ideas in Britain and Europe which influenced the British outlook towards Indian problems. All over Europe "new attitudes of mind, manners, and morals were appearing." The great French Revolution of 1789 with its message of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity generated powerful democratic sentiments and unleashed the force of modem nationalism. In the realm of thought, the new trend was represented by Bacon,

Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Adam Smith, and Bentham; in the realm of literature by Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Charles Dickens. The impact of the new thought—the product of the intellectual revolution of the 18th century, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution—was naturally felt in India and affected the official notions of government.

The three outstanding characteristics of the new thought were rationalism or faith in reason and science, humanism or love of man, and confidence in the capacity of man to progress. The rational and scientific attitude indicated that only that was true which was in conformity with human reason and capable of being tested in practice. The scientific progress of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and the tremendous powers of production released by the application of science to industry were visible proofs of the power of human reason. Humanism was based on the belief that every human being was an end in himself and should be respected and prized as such. No man had the right to look upon another human being as a mere agent of his own happiness. The humanistic outlook gave birth to the doctrines of individualism, liberalism, and socialism. According to the doctrine of progress, ail societies must change with time: nothing was or could be static. Moreover, man had the capacity to remodel nature and society on rational and just lines.

The new currents of thought in Europe came into conflict with the old outlook and produced a clash of attitudes among those who determined Indian policy or ran the Indian administration. The older attitude, known as the conservative or traditional attitude, was that of making as few changes in India as possible. The early representative!) of this attitude were Warren Hastings and Edmund Burke, the famous writer and parliamentarian, and the later ones were the famous officials Munro, Malcolm, Elphinstone, and Metcalfe. The conservatives maintained that Indian civilisation was different from European civilisation but was not necessarily inferior to it. Many of them respected and admired Indian philosophy and culture. Realising that it might be necessary to introduce some Western ideas and practices, they proposed to introduce them very very cautiously and gradually. Favouring social stability above all, they opposed any programme of rapid modernisation. Sweeping or hasty innovations, they felt, would produce a violent reaction in the country. The conservative outlook remained influential in England as well as in India up to the very end of British rule. In fact, the majority of British officials in India were generally of conservative persuation. But among the policy makers in Britain it was a gradually diminishing view because the course of trade and events was showing that the conservative policy did not lead to the desired expansion of trade or provide adequately for the perpetuation of British supremacy.

By 1800 the conservative attitude was fast giving way to a new attitude which was sharply critical of Indian society and culture. Indian civilisation was condemned as static; it was looked down upon with contempt, Indian customs were considered uncivilised, Indian institutions corrupt and decadent, and Indian thought narrow and unscientific. This critical approach was used by most of the officials and writers and statesmen of Britain to justify political and economic

enslavement of India and to proclaim that it was incapable of improvement and must therefore remain permanently under British tutelage. However, a few Englishmen, known as Radicals, went beyond this narrow criticism and imperialistic outlook and applied the advanced humanistic and rational thought of the West to the Indian situation as they saw it. The doctrine of reason led them to believe that India need not always be a fallen country for all societies had the capacity to improve by following the dictates of reason and science. The doctrine of humanism led them to desire the improvement of Indian people. The doctrine or progress led them to the conviction that Indians were bound to improve. And so the Radicals, representing the better elements of British society, desired to make India a part of the modern progressive world of science and humanism.

The humanism of these men was aroused by the social injustice of such institutions as the caste system and untouchability, such customs as *Sail* and infanticide, and the low status of women in general and of widows in particular. Their scientific minds were also outraged by the many superstitions that gripped the minds of the Indian people and by the complete absence of the scientific outlook in the country. To them, the answer to India's ills appeared to lie in the introduction of modern Western sciences, philosophy, and literature—in fact, in all out and rapid modernisation. The Radicals got an opportunity to influence Indian policies through James Mill, one of the leading Radical philosophers of England, who came to occupy in 1817 the very important position of Chief Examiner in the office of the Court of Directors, and William Bentinck, who was a Radical and who became the Governor-General of India in 1829. Also some of the officials who came to India in the 1820's and after were deeply influenced by the Radical outlook. Moreover, the reforming Whigs were in power in England after 1830.

It must, however, be emphasised at this stage that such honest and philanthropic Englishmen were few and that their influence was never decisive so far as the British administration of India was concerned. The ruling elements in British-Indian administration continued to be imperialistic and exploitative. They would accept new ideas and adopt reformist measures only if, and to the extent that, they did not come into conflict wdth commercial interests and profit motives. Modernisation of India had to occur within the broad limits imposed by the needs of easier and more thorough-going exploitation of its resources. Thus modernisation of India was accepted by many English officials, businessmen, and statesmen because it was expected to make Indians belter customers of British goods and reconcile them to the alien rule. In fact many of the Radicals themselves no longer remained true to their own beliefs when they discussed Indian policy. Instead of working for a democratic government, as they did in Britain, they demanded a more authoritarian regime, described by them as paternalistic. In this respect they were at one with the conservatives who too were ardent champions of u paternalism which would treat the Indian people as children and keep them out of the administration. The basic dilemma before the British administrators in India was that while British interests in India could not be served without some modernisation, full modernisation would generate forces

which would go against their interests and would in the long run endanger British supremacy in the country. They had, therefore, to follow a delicately balanced policy of partial modernisation, that is, a policy of introducing modernisation in some respects and blocking and preventing it in other respccts.

The policy of modernising Indian society and culture was also encouraged by the Christian missionaries and religious-minded persons such as William Wilberforce and Charles Grant, the Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, who wanted to spread Christianity in India. They too adopted a critical attitude towards Indian society but on religious grounds. They passionately believed that Christianity alone was the true religion and that all other religions were false; those who,,believed in such religions were to them 'heathens', ‘pagans’ and even ‘semi-barbarians’. They supported a programme of Westernisation in the hope that it would eventually lead to the country's conversion to Christianity. They thought that the light of Western knowledge would destroy people’s faith in tbeir own religions and lead them to welcome and embrace Christianity, They therefore opened modem schools, colleges, and hospitals in the country. The missionaries were, however, often most unwilling allies of the rationalist Radicals whose scientific approach undermined not only Hindu or Muslim mythology but Christian mythology as well. As Prof. H.H. Dodwell has pointed out: “Taught to question the validity of their own gods, they (the westernised Indians) questioned also the validity of the Bible and the truth of its narrative." The missionaries also supported the paternalistic imperialistic policies since they looked upon law and order and British supremacy as essential for their work of religious propaganda. They also sought the support of British merchants and manufacturers by holding out the hope that Christian converts would be better customers of their goods.

The Radicals were given strong support by Raja Rammohun Roy and other like-minded Indians, who were conscious of the low state to which their country and society had sunk, who were sick of caste prejudices and other social evils, and ‘who believed that the salvation of India lay in science and humanism. We will discuss the outlook and activities of these Indians at length in the next chapter.

Other reasons why the Government of India followed a policy of can** tious and gradual innovation and not of all out modernisation were continuous prevalence of the conservative outlook among the British officials in India and the belief that interference with, their religious beliefs and social customs might produce a revolutionary reaction among the

Indian people. Even the most ardent Radicals paid heed to this warning for, along with the other members of the British governing classes, they too desired most of all the safety and perpetuation of British rule in India. Every other consideration was of secondary importance. As a matter of fact, the policy of modernisation was gradually abandoned after 1B58 as Indians proved apt pupils, shifted rapidly towards modernisation of their society and assertion of their culture, and demanded to be ruled in accordance with the modem principles of liberty, equality and nationality.

Hnmanitariam Measures

The official British efforts at reforming Indian society of its abuses were on the whole very meagre and, therefore, bore little fruit. Their biggest achievement was the outlawing of the practice of *Sati* in 1829 when William Bentinck m a i t a crime to associate in any way with the burning of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre. Earlier the British rulers had been apathetic and afraid of arousing the anger of the orthodox Indians. It was only after Rammohun Roy and other enlightened Indians and the missionaries agitated persistently for the abolition of this monstrous custom that the Government agreed to take this humanitarian step. Many Indian rulers in the past, including Akbar and Aurangzeb, the Peshwas, and Jai Singh of Jaipur, had made unsuccessful attempts to suppress this evil practice. In any case, Bentinck deserves praise for having acted resolutely in outlawing a practice which had taken a toll of 800 lives in Bengal alone between 1815 and 1818 and for refusing to bow before the opposition of the orthodox supporters of the practice of *Sati,*

Female infanticide or the practice of killing female children at the time of their birth had prevailed among some of the Rajput clans and other castes because of paucity of youngmen who died in large numbers in warfare and because of the difficulties of earning a livelihood in unfertile areas, and in parts of Western and Central India because of the prevalence of the evil custom of dowry in a virulent form. Regulations prohibiting infanticide had been passed in 1795 and 1802, but they were sternly enforced only by Bentinck and Hardinge. Hardinge also suppressed the practice of making human sacrifices that had prevailed among the primitive tribe of Gonds. In 1856 the Government of India passed an Act enabling Hindu widows to remarry. The Government acted after Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and other reformers had carried on a prolonged agitation in favour of the measure. The immediate effects of this Act were negligible.

All these official reforms touched no more than the fringes of the Indian social system and did not affect the life of the vast majority of the people. It was perhaps not possible for a foreign government to do more.

Spread of Modem Edaca Hoa

The British were more successful in helping to revolutionise the intellectual life of India through the introduction of modern education. Of course the spread of modem education was not solely the work of the Government r the Christian missionaries and a large number of enlightened Indians also played an important

part.

For the first 60 years of its dominion in India the East India Company— a trading, profit-making concern—took little interest in the education of its subjects. There were, however, two very minor exceptions to thi« policy. In 1781, Warren Hastings set up the Calcutta Madrasah for the study and teaching of Muslim law and related subjects; and, in 1791, Jonathan Duncan started a Sanskrit College at Varanasi, where he was the Resident, for the study of Hindu Law and Philosophy. Both these institutions were designed to provide a regular supply of qualified Indians to help the administration of law in the courts of the Company.

Missionaries and their supporters and many humanitarians soon began to exert pressure on the Company to encourage and promote modern secular westernised education in India, While the humanitarians, including many Indians, believed (hat modern knowledge would be the best Temedy for the social, economic, and political ills of the country, the missionaries believed that modern education would destroy the faith of the people in their own religions and lead them to adopt Christianity. A humble beginning was made in 1813 when the Charter Act iacurporated the principle of encouraging learned Indians and promoting the knowledge or modern sciences in the country. The Act directed the Company to Spend the sum of one lakh of rupees for the purpose. But even this petty amount was not made available by the Company authorities till 1823.

For years a great controversy raged in the country on the question of the direction that this expenditure should take. While one section of opinion wanted it to be spent exclusively for the promotion of modern Western studies, others desired that, while Western sciences and literature should be taught to prepare students to take up jobs, emphasis should be placcd on the expansion of traditional Indian learning. Even among those who wanted to spread Western learning differences arose on the question of medium of instruction to be adopted in modern schools and colleges. Some recommended the use of Indian languages, called vernaculars at the time, for the purpose, while others advocated the vise df English. Unfortunately, there was a great deal of confusion on this question. Many people failed to distinguish between English as a medium and English as a subject for study and between Indian languages as a medium and traditional Indian learning as the main object of study,

The two controversies were settled in 1835 when the Government of India decided to devote the limited resources it was willing to spare to the teaching of Western sciences and literature through the medium of English language alone. Lord Macaulay, who was the Law Member of the Governor-General's Council, argued in a famous minute that Indian languages were not sufficiently developed to serve the purpose, and that "Oriental learning was completely inferior to European learning". It is to be noted that, though Macaulay's views betrayed prejudice against and ignorance of India's past achievements in the realms of science and thdught, he was on solid ground when he held European knowledge in the fields of physical and social sciences to be superior to the existing Indian knowledge which though advanced at one time had stagnated too long and lost touch with reality. That is why the most advanced Indians of the time led by Raja Rammohun Roy fervently advocated the study of Western knowledge, which was seen by them as "the Key to the treasures of scientific and democratic thought of the modern West.' ' They also realised that traditional education had bred

superstition, fear, and authoritarianism. In other words, they realised that the salvation of the country lay in going forward and not in looking backwards. In fact, no prominent Indian of the 19th and 20th centuries deviated from this approach. Moreover, throughout the period of modern history the pressure exerted by Indians anxious to imbibe Western knowledge played an important part in persuading the Government to expand its educational activities on modern lines.

The Government of India acted quickly, particularly in Bengal, on the decision of 1835 and made English the medium of instruction in its schools and colleges. It opened a few English schools and colleges instead of a large number of elementary schools. This policy was later sharply criticised for neglecting the education of the masses. In fact, the emphasis on the opening of institutes of modern and higher education was not wrong. If for nothing else, a large number of schools and colleges were needed to educate and train teachers for elementary schools. But along with the spread of higher education, the education of the masses should have been taken in hand- This the Government would not do as it was not willing to spend more than an insignificant sum on education. To make up for the paucity of expenditure on education, the officials had recourse to the so-called "downward filtration theory' Since the allocated funds could educate only a handful of Indians, it was decided to spend them in educating a few persons from the upper and middle classes who were expected to assume the task o£ educating the masses and spreading modem ideas among them. Education and modem ideas were thus supposed to filter or radicate downwards from the upper classes. This policy continued until the very end of British rule, even though it was officially Abandoned in 1854. It may also be pointed out here that even though education did not percolate downwards, modern ideas did to a

large extent, though not in the form desired by the rulers. Through political parties, the press, pamphlets, and public platform, though not through schools and textbooks, the educated Indians, or the intellectuals, spread ideas of democracy, nationalism, anti-imperialism and social and economic equality and justice among the rural and urban masses.

The Secretary of State's Educational Dispatch of 1854 was another important step in the development of education in India. The Dispatch asked the Government of India to assume responsibility for the education of the masses. It thus repudiated the "downward filtration" theory, at least on paper. In practice, the Government did little to spread education and spent very little on it. As a result of the directions given by the Dispatch, Departments of Education were instituted in all provinces and affiliating Universities were set up in 1857 at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the famous Bengali novelist, became in 1858 one of the first two graduates of Calcutta University.

For all the loud claims that it made, the Government of India under the Company and later under the Crown did not really take serious interest in spreading Western learning or any other learning in India. Even the limited effort that was made was the result of factors which had little to do with philanthropic motives. Of some importance in this respect was the agitation in favour of modern education by progressive Indians, foreign Christian missionaries, and humanitarian officials and other Englishmen. But the most important reason was the Government's anxiety to economise in the cost of administration by getting a cheap supply of educated Indians to man the large and increasing number of subordinate posts in administration and British business concerns. It was manifestly too costly and perhaps not even possible to import enough Englishmen for the purpose. This emphasis on a cheap supply of clerks explains why the schools and colleges had to impart modern education, which lilted its recipients for their jobs in the westernised administiation of the Company, and why these institutions had to emphasise English which was the language of the masters as well as the language of the administration. Another motive behind the educational policy of the British sprang from the belief that educated Indians would help expand the market foT British manufactures in India. Lastly, Western education was expected to reconcile the people of India to British rub particularly as it glorified the British conquerors of India and their administration. Macaulay, for example, laid down:

> **We must', p rosent do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indians In blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.**

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

The traditional Indian system of education gradually withered away for lack of official support and even more because of the official announcement in 1844 that applicants for government employment should possess

knowledge of English This declaration made English-medium schools very popular and compelled more and more students to abandon the traditional schools,

A major weakness of the educational system was the neglect of mass education with the result that mass literacy in India was hardly better in 1921 than in 1821. As many as 94 per cent of Indians were illiterate in 1911 and 92 per cent in 1921. The emphasis on English as the medium of instruction in place of the Indian languages also prevented th-' spread of education to the masses. It further tended to create a wide gulf between educated persons and the masses. Moreover, the costly nature of higher education tended to make it a monopoly of the richer classes and the city-dwellers,

A major lacuna in the early educational policy was the almost total neglect of the education of girls for which no funds were allotted. This was partly due to the Government's anxiety not to hurt the susceptibilities of orthodox Indians. Even more it was because female education lacked immediate usefulness in the eyes of the foreign officials since women could not be employed as clerks in the Government. The result was that as late as 1921 only 2 out of 100 Indian women were able to read and write; and in 1919 only 490 girls were studying in the four top forms of high schools in Bengal Presidency.

The Company's administration also neglected scientific and technical education By 1857 there were only three medircl colleges in the country at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. There was only one good Engineering College at Roorkee to impart higher technical education and even this was open only to Europeans and Eurasians.

At the root of many of these weaknesses lay the problem of finance. The Government was never willing to spend more than a scanty sum on education. As late as 1886, it devoted only about one crore of rupees to education out of its total net revenue of nearly 47 crores.

We must, however, remember that in spite of all the many weaknesses of the official educational policy, the limited spread of modern education led to the propagation of modern ideas in India and thus helped in its modernisation.

EXERCISES

1. Discuss the basic features of the administrative organisation of India under the East India Company, with special reference to the underlying aims or the administration, the civil service, the army, the police, and the judicial administration.
2. What were the main characteristics of modern thought which influenced British policies in India? Examine the nature and extent of this influence.

3. Examine critically the evolution of modern education and educational policies in the 19th and 20th centuries, with special reference to the factors that Jed to the introduction of modern education
4. Write short notes on:
   (a) Indian Civil Service, (b) The Rule of law, (c) Equality before Law, (d) The policy of partial modernisation, (e) The abolition of the practice of *Safi*, (f) The role of English as medium of instruction, (g) Education of girls, (h) Technical education.