

# Development of Modern Education in Colonial India

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**Abstract:-** There was a network of education centres like Pathshalas, Tols, Madarasas, and Maktabas in India before coming the British. The British, who had come as traders and had become rulers and administrators, had influenced the economic, political and educational systems of the country. Although their main purpose to come India was to get more and more profit through trading with India. But they changed their aim to see deteriorated political situation of India. They became virtual ruler of India gradually. But it was not so easy to control and manage over India without changing her social, cultural and educational system. First of all they paid their attention on to create a new education system. The education system, introduced in India, by the British, based on the doctrine of Macaulay (1835) became a means of colonization. Essentially, it wiped off the faith of Indians in their own culture and changed the basic philosophy of Indian people against the Indian nature and outlook. Education could have played a major role in encouraging social mobility, eliminating superstition from socio-cultural sphere, increasing productivity and uplifting the status of women and tribal segment of India. However, the British rule used education as an instrument of colonization and converting the Indian intelligentsia into government clerks.

**Keywords:-** Charter Act 1813, Imperialism; Macaulay's Minute; Vernacular language; Downward filtration, Wood's Despatch. Objectives of the Study: - The paper focuses on the beginning of the modern education and its development in colonial India. The paper also focuses on the British's aims and how they were successful to introduced western education in India.

**Methodology:** - This paper studies the provision of education/learning in India under the authority of the East India Company and the British Crown. It is based on secondary source.

**Introduction:** - Development of education system during the British period was determined by the needs of the colonial powers. If we analyse the development, we will find that the colonial interests of the British always shaped the then educational policies of India. One should not suppose that there had been no educational system before the coming of the East India Company. The British came to India and gradually established themselves in Bengal. The modern system of education came to be established in India during the British period at the cost of the traditional indigenous system. Before the British established a new system of education in India both the Hindus and the Muslims had their own systems of education. Both the systems went into forgetfulness gradually and suffered a setback because of political disorder and lack of a strong centralised political authority and want of suitable patronage. The Western Missionaries who had already been in the field now entered in right deep into the field. Thus the modern system of education in India germinated in the attempt of Christian Missionaries to spread their religion. The first among them were the Roman Catholic Missionaries, who organized educational activities in the territory under the possession of Portuguese. But in real it was done by the East India Company. The East India Company became a ruling power in Bengal in 1765. When Bengal was occupied by the Company, need of modern education was felt but the Court of Directors refused to take on itself the responsibility for the education of the people of India and decided to leave education to private effort. However, the Indian officers of the East India Company urged the Court of Directors to do something for the oriental learning. Some half-hearted efforts were made by the Company's Government to foster oriental learning. Warren Hastings, the Governor General of Bengal, himself an intellectual, set up the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781 for the study and learning of Persian and Arabic. The other step in this regard took by Jonathan Duncan, in 1791, the British resident at Benares; a Sanskrit College was opened at Benares for the cultivation of laws, literature and religion of the Hindus. These early attempts for the education of the people in oriental languages met with little success.

**Charter Act 1813:-** The development of modern system of education in India may be said to have begun with the Charter Act of 1813 which provided through the Section 43 that "a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India; and that any schools, public lectures, or other institutions, for the purposes aforesaid, which shall be founded at the Fort William, Fort St. George, or Bombay, or any other part of the British territories in India, in virtue of this Act shall be governed by such regulations as may from time to time be made by the said Governor – General in Council". But the sum allotted by the charter was not utilize till as late as 1823 when a Central Committee of Public Instruction was appointed on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 1823. Most of the members of the committee admired the oriental education. But it was opposed by the Angelistic, they admired western education. They thought that it was useless to spend the money on oriental education.

**The Charter Act 1833:-**The Charter of 1813 was eventually renewed in 1833 for another term of 20 years. It did not contain any direct educational clauses but added a Law Member to the Executive Council of the Governor General of Bengal which had hitherto consisted of three members only. The first Law Member to be appointed was Macaulay. The controversy between the Anglicists and the Orientalists did not settle at that time. The Secretary of the General Committee of Public Instruction in his two letters dated the 21<sup>st</sup> and the 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 1835 referred the issue to the Governor - General of India in Council. The result was the famous Minute of Lord Macaulay, which attempted to provide a solution to the dilemma posed by the educational clause in the Charter Act of 1813. Macaulay advocated about the adaptation of Downward Filtration Process, he believed that education from the upper class would filter down to the masses, so through English education, he wanted to create a class of person Indian in blood and colour but English in testes, in opinion, in moral and in intellect. Macaulay observed that the oriental institutions were not suitable to the need of time where the medium of instruction was Sanskrit and Persian. It was the beginning of a new change in India's national awakening and her great recovery and her total regeneration in social, political, economic and culture field. Lord William Bentinck (1828-1838) endorsed the Minute by writing one line beneath it, "I give entire concurrence to the sentiments expressed in the Minute". The Resolution of March 1835 was passed by Lord William Bentinck, which was the first declaration of the British Government in the sphere of education in India. This Resolution eventually determined the aim, content

and medium of instruction in India. Promotion of Western science and arts was accepted as the declared object of the British Government in India. Bentinck's proclamation gave birth to the following results in Indian education:

1. The aims of education in India were determined by the British.
2. The promotion of Western arts and sciences was accepted as the declared object.
3. The printing of oriental works was to be stopped because it was wastage of money.
4. New grants or stipends to students of oriental institutions were to be stopped in future.
5. The medium of education would be English.
6. This proclamation promised to supply Government with English educated Indian servants (clerks) cheap but capable at the same time.

**Policy of Downward Filtration Theory:-** Macaulay thought that it was impossible, with the limited means, to educate the masses. So he found the theory of "Downward Filtration". It was suitable to educate the upper classes only and leave it to them, to spread education among the masses. He mentioned in his Minute, "It would be more suitable to provide higher education to higher classes than to give to elementary education to the mass" This theory decided the education policy of India. The immediate aim of getting educated people to run the various jobs in the administration was fully achieved. It also helped in creating a faithful class of people. Wood's Despatch, 1854:- After Macaulay the history of India witness work of Sir Charles Wood in the field of education. The Charter Act of the East India Company was to be reviewed in 1853 by the British Parliament. The British Parliament appointed a Special Parliamentary Committee to suggest a suitable educational policy for India. The suggestions of the Committee were favourably considered by the Board of Directors. Sir Charles Wood became the president of the Board of Control in 1854 after the renewal of the Charter Act of the Company in 1853. He made recommendations mainly the medium of instruction. In primary level the vernacular languages take as a medium of instruction and the modern Indian language consider as medium of instruction at the secondary stage. As 'Filtration Theory' failed, Wood emphasised useful education for the public. The ultimately purpose of the Despatch was just well-guarded attempt to impose Western knowledge and learning and English language on the Indian people. Sir Charles Wood also recommended on girl's education, according to him government should perform all the possible functions by which girl's could get education in well organized institutions. The dispatch recommended that teacher should be trained. For this purpose each presidency should have teacher training school. However, education under the East India Company ended with the Wood's Despatch of 1854 as the Company ceased to be a political power in 1858 and the Government of India came directly under the crown. An immediate outcome of this despatch was the passing of the three Universities. The recommendations of the University Acts of 1857 were universities at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay and Education Departments in each province of British India should be created. But before any further action could be taken the Government of India was transferred from the Company to the Crown. Thus the centre of interest in education now shifted from London to Calcutta, parliamentary interest in Indian education was reduced to minimum and the Government of India became the most effective authority to deal with important educational issues.

**The Indian Education Commission (1882):-** The educational development in India dragged by another commission called Hunter Commission 1882, which is also known as Indian Education Commission and it was first Indian Education Commission under British India. Sir William W. Hunter, a member of the Governor General's Executive, was its chairman. The commission surveyed throughout the country within eight months. Finally in 1883 the Commission submitted its voluminous report of about 600 -700 pages with 222 resolutions. The Commission recommended the complete withdrawal Government from direct enterprise and the transfer of all primary schools to the control of local self-government bodies such as municipalities and local boards. Thus it made the Government free from responsibility. With regard to secondary schools and colleges, the Commission was of opinion that the Government should withdraw as early as possible from the direct management of secondary and collegiate education. The Major Recommendations of the Commission included:

1. Encouragement and support to indigenous schools for extending elementary education by declaring elementary education of the masses as the most important priority area in education to which demanding government efforts should be directed.
2. Freedom to the management committees for choosing vernacular language as a medium of instruction depending on the local needs.
3. Establishment of secondary schools by the state, for instruction in English based on the system of grant-in aid, and setting up of primary schools with the support of local people.
4. Gradual transfer of all government secondary schools to local native management committees with due consideration of maintenance of standards and quality of education.
5. Bifurcation of secondary education into two streams—one leading to the entrance examination of the universities and the other of a more practical character preparing the students for commercial jobs.

If we minutely scrutinise the recommendations, we have found the policy of organising a system based on the happy blending of private and public efforts right from the primary to the university stage. However the Report encouraged Indian private enterprise and awakened public enthusiasm for the cause of education for the first time in India. The Imperial Government accepted all the recommendations except those in connection with religious education as it was considered difficult to take any step in this direction. In pursuance of the recommendation of Indian Education Commission (1882-83), the government considered seriously the ways and means to develop primary education, and technical education at high school stage. The progress of education during the period from 1882-83 to 1901-02 was reviewed during the period of Lord Curzon, then Viceroy of India.

**Lord Curzon's Educational Policy:** - After implementation of the commission's recommendation various kind of changes were introduced in the field of education. During the period of Lord Curzon, education deserves the most important position. The Simla Conference in 1901, the Indian Universities Commission 1902 and the Indian Universities Act 1904 are the main reforms created by the Lord Curzon in the field of education. In the field primary education his policy was slightly different. Lord Curzon observed that the need for expansion of primary education was greater than any time in the past and the factor responsible for the slow progress of primary education was the inadequacy of grants from government. So Lord Curzon declared that expansion of primary education was a major responsibility of the state and had a major claim to Provincial and District Board budgets for education. For the betterment of education to the Indian natives he adopted a policy to improve the curriculum, introducing physical education and nature study, linking primary education with village life supporting with two-year teacher-training and the Government aids to primary schools were increased. The combine policy of quantitative



expansion and qualitative improvement able to increase the number of primary schools which rose from 93604 in 1901 to 118262 in 1911-12.

### **Government Resolution on Education Policy, 1913:-**

British Government rejected the Gopal Krishna Gokhale's Bill and refused to recognise the principle of compulsory education for paucity of funds; they promised to extend grants for the widest extension of primary education on a voluntary basis and passed the Resolution on Education Policy on February 21, 1913. The Resolution advocated three cardinal principles of educational policy:

- (1) The curricula of primary and secondary schools should be made more practical and useful.
- (2) Facilities of higher education should be provided in India so that Indian students may not have to go abroad.
- (3) Instead of increasing the number of existing institutions their standard should be raised.

The Government Resolution on Educational Policy (1913) also provided for sufficient expansion of lower primary schools with a simultaneous opening of upper primary schools. It proposed to make more efficient inspection and supervision, appoint trained teachers, subsidize *Maktabs* and *Pathshalas*, improve school facilities, and encourage girl's education. The Resolution also provided for expansion of university education considering the existing 5 universities and 185 colleges as insufficient. The universities were to be relieved of responsibility of granting recognition to high schools, and subjects of industrial importance were to be included in the curriculum. The First World War which broke out the next year delayed the implementation of many recommendations set out in the Resolution.

**Calcutta University Commission (1917-19):-** Calcutta University Commission was appointed by the Government of India in 1917 to inquire into the condition and prospects of Calcutta University under the chairmanship of Dr. Michael Sadler, the Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University. The terms and reference included all aspects of secondary, collegiate and university education.

The major recommendations were –

1. Those days, the Matriculation Examination, which marked the end of school stage and constituted an entrance examination to the universities, was conducted by the universities. After two years, another public examination was held (also by the universities) which was called Intermediate Examination. This was followed by the First Degree examination.
2. The duration of under-graduate courses for the first degree should be increased to three years with a provision of Honours courses.
3. A Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education should be established for the purpose of reorganizing High School and Intermediate education on the lines recommended by it and for holding the Matriculation and Intermediate examinations.
4. The universities should, thus, be left to their proper sphere, namely, the provision of under-graduate and postgraduate education and holding of examination for the first, second and research degrees.
5. The universities should have Departments of Education with provision of teaching "Education" as a subject at B.A. level.
6. An Inter-University Board (IUB) should be established to coordinate the work of different Indian universities.

If we look at present educational scenario in India, we find some of the important features which Sadler Commission already mentioned in its Report. The beginning of introduction of the New Pattern of Education 10+2+3 in 1975 has been hailed as landmark in the reforms of education in India. It may be recalled that the 12 years of schooling and three years of degree course were recommended by the Sadler Commission (1917-1919). In this sense the Sadler Commission may be said to be predecessor of the present national educational structure. Education under Dyarchy (1921 -1937) :- During the period of Dyarchy and Provincial Autonomy the British India achieved massive expansion of education. During this period, Government of India Acts 1919 and 1935 were introduced. The most important commission for the general education development was the National Education Movement (1920-1922). According to this commission, National education must be controlled by the Indians, shaped by Indians, and carried on by Indians. In 1921, the Department of Education was transferred to an Indian Minister responsible to Legislature. Being unable to receive sufficient funds from the Government, these ministers could not provide the expected results.

**The Hartog Committee, 1929:-** The continuous pressure for educational improvement resulted in the appointment of Hartog Committee (May, 1928), after his its chairman, Sir Philip Hartog which made wide-ranging proposals for development of both, general and professional education. The Committee submitted its report in September, 1929. The main conclusion of the report was that the quantitative increase of education inevitably led to deterioration of quality and lowering of standard. Quantity had been gained at the cost of quality and therefore the immediate need was to improve the quality rather than increase the numbers still further. The Committee regarded that the transfer of power from the Central to Provincial Governments had been too sudden. It pointed out the need of establishing a centralising educational agency at Delhi. In its opinion the transfer of control over primary education to local bodies was not desirable. The Committee gave a permanent shape to the educational policy of that period and attempted for consolidating and stabilizing education. The report was hailed as the torch bearer of Government efforts. It attempted to prove that a policy of expansion had proved ineffective and wasteful and that a policy of consolidation alone was suited to Indian conditions. However, the suggestions of the Committee could not be implemented effectively and the educational progress could not be maintained due to worldwide economic depression of 1930-31. Most of the recommendations remained mere pious hopes.

**Education under Provincial Autonomy: -** In 1935, the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act. This Act divided all educational activities into two categories only Federal (Central) and State (Provincial). This new system of governance, known as Provincial Autonomy, was introduced in 1937. The Congress party came into power in seven provinces of British India. The Provincial Government undertook certain bold experiment such as Wardha committee formed and Dr. Zakir Hussain was appointed its chairman to redesign the resolution mention by Gandhiji.

In 1938, committee submitted its report, were all the resolution mention by Gandhiji are placed. Now the Fundamental Principles of National Scheme of Education were provided by Wardha Scheme on the basis of interests and requirements of the children. Finally the Scheme of National Education was adopted by Indian National congress in the year 1938. Even after adaptation of basic education policy through recommendation provided by Wardha Committee on Scheme of National Education modifications were being made in the scheme from time to time to make it fit for the new India called Independent India.

**The Sargent Commission 1944:-** According to the report, the university education in India did not fully satisfy the requirements of a National System of Education (NSE). In order to raise the standard of higher education in India, the conditions of admission should be revised. It envisaged a re-organization/re-engineering of the university system, and strongly advised for the abolition of the two-year intermediate course, with the transfer of the first year to the high-schools, retaining the second year in the universities. It also advised for a three-year degree-course in universities and colleges. Keeping attention on quality higher education, the report stated emphatically the importance of establishing a high standard post graduate study, and research in 'pure' and 'applied' aspects of subjects. Establishment of Technical Schools and Technological Departments in universities/colleges, and the admission to these courses based on strict quality were also in the suggestions. Sargent Plan was one of the most comprehensive schemes of education ever proposed by the British Government after the Despatch of 1854. Through this, the government had proposed a detailed outline of the educational programmes to be undertaken by the government during the following 40 years from 1944 to 1984. As the freedom movement was at its full swing those days, this plan could not be implemented because of political turmoil in the country. With India achieving freedom in 1947, this Plan became only a matter of historical significance. 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. However, hardly had the first steps been taken when the British period in the history of Indian education came to an end on 15th August, 1947. The Sargent Scheme envisaged a 40 year educational reconstruction plan for the country which was reduced to 16 years by the Kher Committee.

**Conclusion: -** Thus, like the other developing countries, the contemporary education in India gave birth to western education. In India the traditional component of education was mysterious and metaphysical; its reach was limited specifically to the upper caste. Modern education, on the other hand, is rational and scientific and open to all groups on the basis of merit. Education is seen as the most influential agent of modernisation in India. The foundation of modern education in India was laid by the Britishers. Charter Act of 1813; Macaulay's Minute, 1835; Charles Wood's Despatch, 1854; Hunter Commission, 1882; Gokhale's Bill, 1912; Hartog Committee, 1929; Wardha Scheme of Education, 1932 and the report of Sargent Commission on Post-War Education Development were the major historical landmarks.

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