



Education under British Rule

Dr. Updesh Chhimwal, Assistant Professor,

2) Dr. Nitu Tiwari

Govt. Raza P.G. College, Rampur (UP)

Abstract- Just before British arrival, Indian education system was conventional and unaware of the rapid development of the west. Study of science and technology was neglected and it was mainly focused on religion, law, literature, logic and philosophy. Area of higher education was very limited and Nawabs, landlords and kings gave protection to the higher education institutions. Among Hindus, Brahmins' education was based on Sanskrit. Due to become official language, Farsi was famous in both Hindus and Muslims. Although it is quite noticeable that literacy rate of 18th century was better than the later British reign. In 1813 **Warren Hastings** wrote, **"Generally Indians have more skill in reading, writing and in mathematics in comparison to any European country. Education of women was neglected other than the women of higher class."** To improve the condition of education and Indians social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswarchand Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Irawati Karve, M.G. Ranade etc came and brought many positive changes with them.

Key words:- Warren Hastings, 18th century, Iswarchand Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Irawati Karve, M.G. Ranade, Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Introduction- In the colonial period, when the East India Company started establishing political power by winning many territories of India, the company felt the need of economically, socially, culturally and religiously prosperous Indians to strengthen its position in India, but the affluent class Indians did not see the activities of the Christian clergy in a friendly way, so despite constant pressure, they were hesitating to interfere directly in the field of education. That's why initially they adopted liberal education policy in India. Under this policy, "Calcutta Madrasa" was established in 1781 and "Banaras Sanskrit College" in 1791. Most of the students of these two colleges were from the upper class Hindus and Muslims and they used to be appointed on good posts of the company.

"In the political and civil spheres, the Company's rulers were shrewd in governing the people and they started ruling over them as per the local religious civil code."

In the beginning to spend on education, the company fixed only a meagre amount of one lakh rupees, for which a committee was formed to spend, to implement the educational rules made in the 'Charter Act' of 1813. This aspect of the educational policy was called the **Oriental educational policy**. The committee started giving financial assistance to Calcutta Madrasa and Banaras Sanskrit College. In 1833, the Eastern and Western dispute arose. At such a time, on June 10, 1834, **Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859)** came to India as a law member of the Company. Then Governor General Lord William Bentick appointed him as the Chairman of the Education Committee. Macaulay presented his report on 2 February 1835, in which it was advised to give education of western knowledge and science to Indians, which was accepted by Bentinck. In 1837, English was given the status of 'official language'. Now the knowledge of English language has been made mandatory for government jobs, due to which the promotion of English language started rapidly. According to Macaulay, Indian languages are unsophisticated and scientifically inferior. Insulting Indian literature and language, he said,

"Though I am ignorant of the knowledge of Sanskrit and Arabic language, but only one cupboard of the best European library contains more valuable than languages and all literature of Indian and Arabic books. Orientalists should accept this fact with pleasure."¹

Macaulay described Indian medical science as inferior even to western veterinary medicine. He left no stone unturned to describe India's history, geography and astrology inferior to western knowledge and science. In his report, Macaulay set the goal of the British and said,

"We have to create a class of contacts between ourselves and the millions of people whom we rule, who will be Indian in colour and blood but in taste, thought, morality and intelligence it will be English. We will have to develop the language of the people on that class according to the western standards."²

Macaulay's intention was not good towards Indians. He used to look at Indians with inferiority. He wanted to root out Indian religion, culture and philosophy. Macaulay expressed this desire in a letter to his father-

"It is my firm belief that if our scheme of education is carried out, after 30 years there will be no idol worshipers among the upper class of Bengal."³

Macaulay was a supporter of giving education only to the upper class in India. For this, he emphasized on the **Downward Filtration Theory**. According to which **"Government should give higher education to the people of the upper class of the society, so that civilization reaches to the public through filtering."**⁴

The British government used to issue charters for the company after every 20 years. The Manifesto of 1833 was followed by the Manifesto of 1853. On July 19, 1854, an educational policy with 100 articles was announced by a committee headed by Sir Charles Budd on the recommendation of a parliamentary committee. This education policy was called **Wood's Dispatch**. Wood's manifesto is called the Magnacarta of the English crest. The manifesto acknowledged that

"Many of several important matters nothing creates attraction so much as education. This is our sacred duty that through all available means, we should impart that knowledge to the Indian subjects through our contact so that they can be enriched with physical and moral qualities through education."⁵

In the manifesto, emphasis was laid on reforming the prevailing education system by introducing vocational education at the secondary level. Such education should be given to students in secondary schools only, which can prepare them for future professional life, that is, in this period itself, students should be given economic, social and mental education. Complete information about the areas should be made available. Along with this, emphasis was also laid on women education and secular education. Wood's Despatch made education only a means to get a job, along with making the rules of grants rigid. H.R. James praised this manifesto saying

"The manifesto of 1859 has an integral place in the history of Indian education; everything that preceded, points to it and everything that follows it, comes from it."

After the revolution of 1857, the reins of governance of India came into the hands of the British Parliament. Wood's declaration ended the monopoly of the missionaries. Lord Ripon appointed the Indian Education Commission or Hunter Commission on 3 February 1882 to investigate the condition of Indian education. Sir William Hunter was the chairman of this commission. Out of 21 members of this commission, 7 members were Indians. The commission suggested that education should be divided into two parts at the high school level itself. The first part was to prepare the students for higher education and the second part was to give professional employment oriented education to the students. This report was accepted in 1884. The management of primary education was handed over to the institutions established under the Local Self-Government Act. Individual efforts in the field of education were strengthened by the grant amount rule. Hunter commission on education gave necessary suggestions to regularize and organize the help system to remove the defects. Complete freedom of religious education was given to the schools. Proper emphasis was also given on the education of women.

The Hunter Commission accepted English as the medium of instruction at the high school level and emphasized its importance. This led to the dominance of English in the middle schools. Due to over-emphasis on English, native languages were greatly harmed and they could not progress. According to Nurullah and Nayak-

"The importance of English in secondary education increased and by 1902 the teaching of English became the main objective of secondary education. As a result, the study of Indian languages was neglected."⁶

Due to the recommendations of the Hunter Commission, higher education definitely developed, but there was a lack of uniformity in the universities. Lord Curzon became the Viceroy of India in 1899. In 1901, Curzon held a secret conference of 15 members in Shimla, in which none of the members were Indians. 150 resolutions were passed in the conference. The purpose of this conference was to suppress the nationalist ideology. Lord Curzon announced a commission on 27 January 1902. Lord Riley was the chairman of this commission. One of the 9 members of the commission was a Hindu and a Muslim. **"Curzon also strongly criticized the functioning of Indian universities. He said that the ideal university should have two aspects. It should be a place for the dissemination of knowledge and the promotion of learning and it should be a humane factory where character is formed in the firehouse of experience and it should be tested on the test of truth."**⁷ The commission recommended that new universities should not be opened. Emphasis was on raising the level of matriculation and higher classes. At the same time, emphasis was laid on the study of classical languages and on the best education system of English.

In 1914, the progress of education was interrupted due to the First World War. In 1916, Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee, Director of Education, Bengal, informed the government about the problems of Calcutta University. In such a situation, the government appointed the Calcutta University Commission, also known as the **Sadler Commission**, under the chairmanship of **Dr. Michael Sandler**, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds. The commission was also commissioned by Sadler. This commission was appointed to investigate the Calcutta University only, but it was given the right to investigate other universities for comparative studies. In March 1919 after tireless work of about 7 months, the commission presented the report. The report is divided into 13 parts. The commission recommended reducing government control over the university. With the arrangement of **'Pass Course'** and **'Honors Course'**, it was also recommended to give place to Indian languages in them. Arrangements should also be made to establish education department in universities and to appoint lecturers. The commission for women's education recommended to the government that purdah schools should be arranged. Along with encouraging co-education, **'Special Board of Women's Education'** should be created in Calcutta University.

The Calcutta University Commission has done commendable work in the field of higher education. Although the commission was appointed only to examine the University of Calcutta, yet it made many useful suggestions for the improvement of all Indian universities. In the words of A. N. Basu, **"The Commission's report is the most detailed and authoritative study of the Indian system of education from the secondary to the university level. It is therefore quite natural that it has greatly influenced the future course of secondary and higher education in the country."**⁸

In 1919, the Indians protested against the diarchy under the Government of India Act. The National Education Movement also went along with the Non-Cooperation Movement was gaining momentum. Therefore, the British Government appointed the Simon Commission on 8 November 1927. The Simon Commission appointed a sub-committee under it to study education, headed by Sir Philip Hughes. Hence this committee is also called Hong Committee. The committee submitted its report to the Simon Commission on 11 September 1929. Describing the progress made in the field of primary education as insufficient, the Hong Committee pointed out the problem of wastage and obstruction in the field of primary education. Withdrawal of children from a class before completion of primary education is a hindrance. Among the recommendations made by the committee, salary hike for teachers, increasing government responsibility, teacher training, increasing optional subjects, running courses of industrial education as well as system of women and Muslim education were also recommended.

The independence movement developed the consciousness of self-government. On 2 October 1937, Gandhiji published an article in '**Harijan**' and insisted on calling a conference in Wardha. There was a deep discussion in the conference on the education plan presented by Gandhiji. A committee consisting of 9 members was formed under the chairmanship of Dr. Zakir Hussain. The committee presented its report in the Haripura Congress Conference in 1938. In this education scheme, the education was focused on industrial education. Development of qualities of citizenship, self-reliance, providing education considering the child as the centre and social useful curriculum etc. were important recommendations of this education system. This scheme was implemented in all those provinces where there were indigenous governments. In 1939, this plan was removed by the government officials after the resignation of the indigenous governments, calling it impractical.

As a result of the Second World War, many challenges arose in the field of education. Therefore, the Reconstruction Committee of the Governor General's Executive Committee asked to prepare a post-war education development plan. This work was assigned to **Sir John Sargent**. In 1944, Sir John Sargent submitted his report to the Central Advisory Board of Education. In this report, the committee made provision for free education to the children of 6-14 years. Student teacher ratio should be kept 1:20 in the school. To bring uniformity in the universities of the country **University Grants Committee** should be constituted as well as. Along with this, arrangements should also be made for scholarship for one-third of the students. In the Sargent Report, it was felt that the people of India have an indomitable faith and capacity for progress. In the words of Saiyiddin, "**This is the first comprehensive plan of national education. It does not accept that India will remain behind other countries in the field of education. This plan is based on the belief that like other countries, this country also has ability to make progress in education.**"⁹

After Wood's declaration of 1854, many commissions and committees presented their ideas and reforms in relation to education, but in comparison to all this, the Sargent Plan was an honest and commendable effort of the English government in the field of education. In the words of Srinivasa Mukerje - "**The postulates of this plan are bold and it is clearly stated that the present education system cannot create an effective society.**"¹⁰

Conclusion

On evaluating the all British Era plans and work, we come to know that India got both profit and loss from these schemes. But these plans could not be neglected during the colonial period. Indians got the following **benefits** from the English education system-

1. Social and Political consciousness among Indians Developed.
2. Indians came in contact with western knowledge and science.
3. Scientific thinking developed in Indians. Jagdish Chandra Basu, C.V. Raman like Scientists emerged.
4. Indian fine arts developed.
5. Political and social institutions were established.
6. Feeling of nationalism developed.

Following are the **disadvantages** of English education system-

1. Due to English being the medium of education, the talents of the country could not be developed properly.
2. Education became dependent on the government.
3. The feeling of communalism developed.
4. Indigenous educational institutions were neglected.
5. Attacked the national character and characteristics.
6. Education and education departments were neglected.

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