

INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH EDUCATION IN INDIA- WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MADRAS PRESIDENCY

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Abstract: The British administration in India witnessed significant changes in the cultural life of the people. English education may be regarded as the chief contributing factor to the great regeneration of India in the 19th century, generally referred to as the Renaissance. It is, therefore, necessary to trace the history of this education in some detail.

Keywords: Committee, Controversy, English Education, Madras Presidency,

Whatever may be true of other countries, in India at any rate where more than eighty per cent of the population is agricultural and another ten per cent industrial, it is a crime to make education merely literary and to unfit boys and girls for manual work in after life. Indian Education system is the oldest in the world. The Ancient Indian education was developed by the Vedas and Upanishads. Ideally, education is the principal tool of human growth, essential for transforming the unlettered child into a mature and responsible adult.

Need of English Education in India:

In addition to native language diversity, India needs a common language to preserve the unity of the country. There is a controversy as to where English or Hindi should be used as the official language. English is still being used in all national gatherings and Hindi has not grown to replace it. Hence English should be used as the official language, and also as a link language.ⁱ Administrative needs of the company required Indians well versed in the classical and vernacular languages. In the judicial department, Indians conversant with Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian were required to sit as assessors with English judges and expound Hindu or Muslim law from Sanskrit or Persian or Arabic books. Besides, the knowledge of Persian and vernaculars were valued in the political department for correspondence with rulers of Indian states. The clerical staff in the revenue and commercial departments had contacts with the uneducated masses and for them knowledge of vernaculars was a must. However, for higher grade of staff in the company's service knowledge of English as well as vernacular is essential.

The main factor which tipped the scale in favour of English language and western literature was the economic factor. Indians wanted a system of education which could help them to earn their livelihood. Progressive Indian elements also favoured the spread of English education and western learning.ⁱⁱ

Spread of the English Language

The English language, not many generations hence will be spoken by millions in all the four quarters of the globe; and our learning, our morals, our principles of constitutional liberty and our religion, embodied in the established literature, and diffused through the genius of the vernacular languages, will spread far and wide among the nations. But the origin, rise and progress of English education in Tamilnadu and its gradual development into an important branch of administration of the state constitutes one of the significant episodes.ⁱⁱⁱ When Lord William Bentinck's minutes of 7th March 1835 was received, the authorities in Madras interpreted it as prohibiting the use of vernacular languages as media of instruction in institutions maintained by government. When dealing with this point and with certain proposal of the Board of Public Instruction which had previously been forwarded for the opinion of the Committee of Public Instruction, the supreme Government recommended the withdrawal of aid from the collectorate and talsildaree schools and the establishment of an English college of Madras and of provincial schools at some of the important stations in the interior. If funds were not sufficient the collectorate and the talsildaree schools were accordingly abolished in 1833, as also the Board of Public Instruction.

In the place of this Board a new committee, entitled the Committee of Native Education was appointed with instruction to submit proposals for the establishment of normal schools at Madras for the training of teachers for English schools, which was in contemplation to establish afterwards in the province. But the committee submitted more comprehensive scheme which included proposals for the immediate establishment of four English schools in different parts of city and also of normal schools and a college of Madras.^{iv} Mention may be made of the Fort William College set up by Lord Wellesley in 1800 for the training of civil servants of the company, in the languages and customs of India. The college published English – Hindustani Dictionary and some other books.^v The Government of Lord William Bentinck in the resolution of 7th March 1835 accepted the view point of

Macaulay that in future, the object of the company's Government should be the promotion of European literature and sciences, through the medium of English languages and in future all funds were to be spent for that purpose. "The Macaulayan system" was a systematic effort on the part of the British Government to educate the upper classes of India through the medium of English language. Education of the masses was not the aim of Macaulay. "It is impossible for us" wrote Macaulay in 1835, "with our limited means to attempt to educate the body of the people". He rather put implicit faith in the 'infiltration theory'. He believed that the English educated persons would act as a 'class of interpreters' and in turn enriches vernacular languages and literature and thus the knowledge of western sciences and literature would reach the masses. Thus a natural corollary of Macaulay's theory was the development of vernacular languages as ancillary to the teaching of English^{vi}.

Charter Act of 1813

The Charter Act of 1813 provided an annual expenditure of one lakh of rupees "for the revival and promotion of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories. The main factor which tipped the scale in favour of English language and western literature was the economic factor. Indians wanted a system of education which would help them to earn their livelihood. Progressive Indian elements also favoured the spread of English education and western learning.^{vii}

The Charter Act 1813 may be regarded as a turning point in the history of Indian education. It was for the first time that the British Parliament recognized the importance of education and set aside a definite sum of money for its encouragement. Till now the Company did not regard itself responsible for educating the Indian people. After 1813 it became its sacred duty to do so. A sufficiently large amount of sum hence forth began to be set aside annually for the propagation of education.

The Charter of 1813 is also important because the missionaries received full freedom for proselytizing and conducting educational activities as they chose. It was after this date that missionaries began to rush into India and establish schools and colleges. The foundation of the modern education system was thus laid.

But the Charter of 1813 did not specify how the sum of rupees one lakh was to be spent. Consequently, controversies sprang up. The main issues were:

1. Should the elementary education of the masses or higher education of the upper classes be provided?
2. Should the Oriental or Western learning be emphasized?
3. Should the oriental language or English be the medium of instruction?
4. Should the state or any other agency be responsible for education?^{viii}

Appointment of Board of Education

In 1834 the Government of India appointed a Board of Education. It was a step toward the eventual formation of an educational policy and also in response to appeals made by Indian leaders like Rajaram Mohan Roy and Radha Kanto Deb who pressed the government for a new educational policy. In 1834 Lord Maculay took over the presidency of the Board - a Board divided over the Anglicist and orientalist points of view.

Orientalist

The plea of the Orientalist was that a thorough knowledge of Arabic or Sanskrit was superior to a superficial acquaintance with English.

Anglicist

The Anglicist believed that a knowledge of English was the only means of learning western sciences and ideas and the only proper medium of receiving and conveying education of any kind.^{ix}

Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy

The Charter of the East India Company was renewed in 1813 and a sum of one lakh rupees was sanctioned for educational purposes. With this, violent controversies regarding the medium of instruction and the type of education to be imparted originated. It was only in 1823 that the General Committee of Public Instruction was set up in Calcutta for implementing the legislation of 1813. The Committee began its work by patronising oriental learning, thus sparking off the well-known Orientalist-Anglicist controversy^x. The "Orientalists" spoke for the revival of the classical languages like Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. On the other hand, the "Anglicists", who preferred English education, maintained that Sanskrit and Persian were no longer creative in the life of India and that they had no more than an antiquarian values Indian culture could be enriched by the literature and

science of the West, which taught in English to a selected few would, by them, be mediated in the vernaculars to the whole country and would in time be the means of quickening the life of India^{xi}.

The controversy went on for some time and reached its peak in the 1830's. The Charter Act of 1833 raised the educational grant to ten lakh rupees per year. A question was raised how this amount was to be spent. In the General Committee of Public Instruction, opinion was divided some favoring oriental learning and others advocating encouragement to English education. On account of these controversies no proper educational program could be carried out till the end of 1834. At least in January 1835 the views of both parties were placed before T .B. Macaulay, who was a Legal Member of the Governor General's Council. Macaulay rejected the arguments of the Orientalists through his forceful Minutes in which he made a vigorous plea for spreading Western knowledge through the medium of English.^{xii}

Macaulay was a prominent representative of the emerging nationalist ego of imperial Britain. Manifesting an inflated self-image of Western civilization, he wrote in his Minutes that a "single shelf of a good European library is worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."^{xiii} It was not Macaulay but Charles Grant who first conceived the idea of educating Indians through the medium of English. In 1797 Grant argued in the British Parliament in favour of the introduction of English language in India by saying that English was a means of assimilating the conquered people to the ways of the British. As a leader of the evangelicals who wanted to fight the moral and religious corruption among the "heathen", Grant advocated the introduction of Western arts, philosophy and religion, in order that it might "silently undermine and at length subvert, the fabric of error"^{xiv}. From Grant many others took the cue with the result that the Anglicist lobby had grown considerably by the time of Macaulay's pronouncement. Though Macaulay spoke generally, in the Minutes, about the intellectual improvement of the people, he hoped for the day when educated Indians would be "English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." People tend to blame Macaulay for promoting the policy of English education for India. But the fact is that he merely aided a process that had already started. The controversies regarding the medium of instruction were found mostly among the British officers of the Company. Indian opinion was almost non-existent and even if it was, it was not taken into account while making policy decisions. However, Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar did voice their views and, in fact, they (particularly Roy) pleaded for the promotion of a more enlightened system of instruction embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy and other useful sciences under talented European teachers.^{xv}

The educational policy developments in south India have to be viewed in the context of the educational condition prevalent in the whole country during the early period of missionary Endeavour^{xvi}.

Settlement of the controversy

The famous Macaulay "minute" of 1835 settled the issue in favour of English. He brushed aside the arguments in favour of the mother tongue on the ground that the Indian languages were too poor and crude to serve as vehicles of thought and expression. Macaulay also rejected the use of both Arabic and Sanskrit. The proposal made by Macaulay was accepted by the Governor General of India, Lord William Bentick, who proclaimed that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, only through English and that the fund appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone.

This well known minute was really an important confrontation between traditional Indian values and British values. Macaulay specifically intended to instill western values. He wanted to create, as he said, "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and intellect". The English education produced a new class whose language and behavior were different from the rest of the people. However the same English education also produced some of India's most powerful reformers, who worked hard to re-establish Indian values.

While some people blamed Macaulay for the troubles that arose in the country, others praised him and regarded him as the "torch bearer in the path of progress." Of course, Macaulay could not be considered as the originator of the system. Although he understood well the spirit of the times and gave expression to it, popular opinion had already been developing in favour of English education due to the work of many Indian leaders and missionaries.^{xvii}

Professor H.H. Wilson's views of 1835 resolution

The views entertained by the opposite section of the educationalists may be explained in the words of professor Wilson who, referring to the change of educational policy under the Resolution of Government, dated, the 7th March 1835, makes the following observations: "The efforts made in the territories more favorably circumstanced to promote the advance of useful knowledge, received from the Governor-General the most solicitous encouragement and considerable progress was made under his auspices, in the multiplication of educational establishments, and the cultivation of the English language and literature. English classes or seminaries were instituted at several of the principal stations in the upper provinces. While at the same time the system of native study pursued at the colleges, exclusively appropriated to the education of Hindus and Mohammedans, was diligently superintended and improved.

Views of Marksman's

The effect which a purely secular English instruction had upon the minds of the native students was also the subjects of a question in reply to which Mr. Marshman said: although Christianity is entirely excluded from the government institutions, yet the instruction which is given in them has had the effect of raising the natives infinitely above their own creed. There are few of those who have received a complete education at the government institutions, who do not held the doctrines and principles of Hinduism in the most through contempt and this is easily accounted for, for all those geographical and astronomical, and historical absurdities which are believed by the Hindus are derived entirely from the Shastras. The native obtains his religious creed from the same sources as his scientific knowledge, and from the same books which as Mr. Macaulay mentioned in his minutes on education, teach him existence of seas of treacle and seas of treacle and seas of clarified butter. Now, when the native finds that the existence of those two seas and indeed, all the facts regarding geography and history given in the shastras are entirely fabulous, when his faith is shaken in one portion of the system, it is scarcely possible that it should not also be shaken in others. Such Mr. Marshman has experienced that the study of English literature and the knowledge of European science which is obtained by the natives although unaccompanied with religious instruction, or instruction in the truths of Christianity, has produced the great effect of shaking the fabric of Hinduism to its very foundation, and that the indirect result which has thus followed the exertions of the Government in the cause of education is highly satisfactory.^{xviii}

Proposal for Education by the Madras Corporation

Another reference to the subject is in a general letter of the Court of Directors to the Governor of Madras, dated 28th September 1687. This letter contains the draft of a proposed municipality for Madras based on the model of those introduced by the Dutch into their eastern settlements, although the verbal form of the charter thus sketched is drawn from one of those constituting an English corporation. The suggestions concerning education are as follows; the court of Alderman may, by virtue of the powers granted by our intended charter, assess and levy a rate upon the inhabitants for the building of one or more free school or schools for teaching the English tongue to Gentoors or moors or other Indian children and for salaries to the schoolmaster, and by degrees for many other good works, their constitution being so framed that our president and council shall always influence their debates and resolutions". In March 1691 Governor Yale remained the corporation that they had as yet done nothing in the way of providing schools and demanded that the funds received for this and other unfulfilled purposes should be restored to government seeing that if the public "are not benefited there is no reason why they should be losers by the corporation". In January 1792 the Court of Directors also called attention to the manners in which education had been neglected. It does not appear that anything special was done.^{xix}

The First School

The first school was started in 1673 for Portuguese Eurasians, British Eurasians and a few natives, in whom the medium of instruction was a debased kind of Portuguese called Feringhi. In 1687, East India Company established a local government of municipality, with powers to levy tax on the inhabitants raising funds for teaching English to gentoos, moors, or other Indian children. In 1717, Danish missionaries established two charity schools in Madras and the company established a school for natives at Cuddalore. The main emphasis of the missionary schools in early years was on elementary education through the medium of the language of the people.

Around the year 1790, on the suggestion of John Sullivan, a resident of Tanjore, provincial schools for the natives, with the active support of the local rulers, Raja of Ramnad, Maharaja of Tanjore and Rulers of Sivaganga, were established for teaching English and Tamil to the natives. The provincial schools at the headquarters trained teachers to be placed in each village.

Between 1822-26 the Governor of Madras Presidency, Sir. Thomas Munro recommended the establishment of collectrate schools at the district level where in English was to be taught and Tahsildary schools at the Taluk level in which vernacular language was to be taught. One school for every 1000 population was considered necessary. An enquiry instituted in 1822 at the orders of Governor Thomas Munro (1820-1827) indicated the existence in the different districts of numerous schools, but mostly restricted among the Brahmins. The statistics furnished by the collectors of the districts indicated that by 1826 there were 12,498 educational institutions for a population of 12,850,941 in the Presidency of Madras. For a population of eight lakhs Madurai district had 844 schools and 13,781 scholars, while for a population of five lakhs Tiruchirapalli had 799 schools. These institutions were of two grades- elementary schools and high schools.^{xx}

In 1830, an important dispatch sent to Madras by the court of Directors stressed the necessity for promoting higher education in English language, in European literature and in science among the natives in order to prepare them to occupy higher situation in civil administration in the country. It was the beginning of the establishment of English schools in the chief centers of the presidency.^{xxi}

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