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Evolution of Indian Education: The Stages

Dr. Vishnu Kumar*

ABSTRACT : *The history of modern Indian education is traced through some reports of various commissions. Macaulay (1833) accepted the responsibility of providing primary education to the Indians. The objective of education was to provide education of European literature and science and English language, so that the Indians can help the British rulers in their administration. Woods Dispatch (1854) recommended specific course contents, setting up of Department of Public Instruction in five provinces of India, establishment of universities, teacher training centres and provision of grants-in-aid system to the schools. Hunter's Commission (1882) recommended withdrawal of government from running of the schools; instead private bodies were to take charge of schools. It suggested diversified courses for polytechnic school. Hartog Commission (1929) suggested stopping quantitative expansion and starting diversified courses. Zakir Hussain Committee Report (1937) called for a national system of education. Gandhiji's Basic Education scheme was examined.*

THE FUNCTION OF EDUCATION : "India claims and has the right to glory in an ancient and long enduring culture, an age of centuries in which art, science, literature and philosophy flourished and the influence of Indian thought spread far beyond the bounds of the Indian world" (O'Malley, 1941). In any country, education is an attempt by the society to transmit its way of life to the succeeding generation so that they can be prepared for the life in the community. The form of education is determined by the values of the society.

EDUCATION IN BRAHMINIC PERIOD : Education in ancient India was in the hands of Brahmins, and children of three higher caste citizens (Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaisya) used to receive education at the guru's residence. They would be sent to guru's house after upanayana (initiation ceremony of wearing a sacred thread), and reside in the teachers' homes for 12 years for a life of celibacy (brahmacharya). The teachers behaved as their parents and the pupils were treated as family members of the guru. They were identified with each other and uttered the following prayer, "Sang gacchadvam, Sang badadham, Sang bo manasi jTinati2m, debo bliTtgam yathTi purbe sonFimana upTisate" (Let us be together, let us move together, talk together, our minds be in unity) (Guha, 1963). The ultimate aim of education was for complete realization of self for liberation of the soul from the chains of life. This knowledge leads us from unreality to reality, from darkness to light, from death to immortality.

BUDDHIST EDUCATION : Buddhist education centred around monasteries, whereas, Vedic education was given in the teacher's house and focused on the study of vedas. Buddhist education, at first, was confined to those aspirants wishing to enter the order, but was later given to the whole community. "Thus, it has an institutional character, i.e., the monasteries served as centres of learning and their doors were open for all irrespective of caste, community or country from which they travelled, (i.e., East Indies, Turkistan, Mongolia, China, Korea, Tibet and other places)" (Mookerji, 1947). Buddhism was originally conceived and imparted as ethical principles. Buddha was concerned about the suffering, disease and death of the human beings. He suggested following astanga marga (eight-fold path) namely, 1. Right knowledge 2. Right thought 3. Right speech 4. Right activity 5. Right means of livelihood 6. Right endeavour 7. Right memory 8. Right contemplation (Mookerji, 1947) These are the eight steps, the eight great truths deciphered by Buddha for the guidance of human life. By following this path, man can cut the bondage of misery.

MUSLIM EDUCATION : Islam has, from its inception, placed a high premium on education and has enjoyed a long and rich intellectual tradition. Knowledge (ilm) occupies a significant position within

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Islam, as evidenced by the more than 800 references to it in Islam's most revered book, the Koran. Such verses provide a forceful stimulus for the Islamic community to strive for education and learning. Islamic education is uniquely different from other types of educational theory and practice largely because of the all-encompassing influence of the Koran. The Koran serves as a comprehensive blueprint for both the individual and society and as the primary source of knowledge. The advent of the Koran in the seventh century was quite revolutionary for the predominantly illiterate Arabian society. Arab society had enjoyed a rich oral tradition, but the Koran was considered the word of God and needed to be organically interacted with by means of reading and reciting its words. Hence, reading and writing for the purpose of accessing the full blessings of the Koran was an aspiration for most Muslims. Thus, education in Islam unequivocally derived its origins from a symbiotic relationship with religious instruction.

EDUCATION DURING BRITISH ERA : Evolution of the modern system of education proceeds in a zigzag fashion, with rally and rout. The circumstances shape its course and when a foreign ruler governs its progress, much of the system evolves through the fancy of the ruler. The indigenous education came to a nought when the British rule fashioned the system of education modelled after their own. We shall attempt to trace the progress of education through the reports available at different periods.

MACAULAY'S MINUTES (1833) Macaulay in 1833 published a report, which prophesied that the government is going to train a bunch of Bengalis in such a way that they will serve their British masters in their administrative work, "they would be able to fill up the subordinate posts" in the administrative machinery (Government of India, 1953). Consequent to Macaulay's Minute, a government communiqué (1835) expressed that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India". They promised to open schools and colleges to teach English to the local Indians. Education was to be imparted with the limited object of preparing pupils to join the service, and not for life.

WOOD'S DISPATCH (1854) In 1854, a review of the existing system showed that much of the system was inadequate. Through a report known as Woods Dispatch (1854), they proceeded to provide useful and practical knowledge to the people of India, which they were incapable of obtaining from the schools of that time. In the report some specific recommendations were made. These are:

- * To cause diffusion of knowledge of improved arts, science, philosophy and literature of Europe.
- * To set up separate departments of public instruction in the five provinces of Bengal, Madras, Bombay, North West Province and Punjab.

HUNTER'S COMMISSION : Hunter Education Commission was a landmark commission appointed by Viceroy Lord Ripon with objectives to look into the complaints of the non-implementation of the Wood's Despatch of 1854; the contemporary status of elementary education in the British territories; and suggest means by which this can be extended and improved. This commission, headed by Sir William Wilson Hunter, had submitted its report in 1882.

The commission recommended grants-in-aid for the indigenous schools on the basis of "Payments by Results". The aided schools would charge lower rates of fees than those charged by similar government aided institutions and these schools should be allowed to employ more Indian graduates trained in European Universities. The commission emphasized that although there has to be exclusion of the religious education, there should be some sort of arrangement to give sense of right and wrong to students and for this purpose, the text books on moral education should be prepared. In the government aided schools, the principal or the professor should deliver a series of lectures on duties of man and citizen. The commission also gave due weightage to physical education in its recommendations.

ZAKIR HUSSAIN COMMITTEE REPORT (1937) In 1937, the Congress approached Gandhi for a well-thought out plan of primary and secondary education. His ideas were discussed by Zakir Hussain Committee (1937). Education in Emerging Indian Society: The Challenges and Issues

- o Universal, free primary education,
- o Secondary education, according to the ability and aptitude of the learners,
- o Diversification from the age of 14 years in various streams.

SARGENT'S REPORT (1944) In 1944, Postwar Report of Sir John Sargent was published. The broad outlines of the report are as follows: At the primary stage (6-11 years), all children are to have a common curriculum. After this stage, children (11-14 years) should have a secondary course

of 5-6 years' duration which should be adequately planned for entry into industrial, commercial and technical occupations as well as to universities. The report suggested that there may be a third group of schools which would recruit pupils aged 13 years from the other two types of schools, and provide them with a general education with a strong vocational bias to fit them for direct entry into commerce or industry. So the recommendations could not be implemented. The report suggested development of adult education scheme, Indian University Grants Commission and an All India Council for Technical Education

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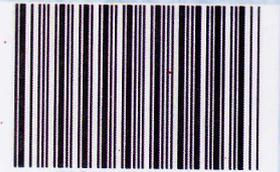
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