Chapter II

HISTORICAL RETROSPECT OF RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN INDIA: VEDIC TO PRE-INDEPENDENCE

The Indian history begins with the Indus Valley Civilisation, some three thousand years before the beginning of the Christian era with the birth of Jesus Christ. The highly developed state of civilisation among the people of Indus Valley presupposes an existence of system of education.\(^1\) Education is no exotic implant in India. There is no country where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful an influence as in India. F.W. Thomas evidenced this fact in 1891 in his work in the ‘History and Prospects of British Education in India’. A telescopic view of India’s ancient and medieval concept of education reveals descriptions on stone and copper, palm leaves, manuscripts of temple archives as well as pages upon pages of printed material. The knowledge which has thus been preserved, is unrivalled in its antiquity and the intellectual subtlety of its contents by anything which has been produced by any other civilisation of the world.\(^2\)

The Indus Valley education had little to do with the religion of the people. Unlike the Valley civilisation, education was essentially an integral part of the religion of the Aryans and as today it had no independent identity. According to Upnishads individual must merge with God to escape from rebirth, decay and dissolution. The merging of self could be realised and achieved through ‘Sarvana’, ‘Manana’ and ‘Niddidhyasana’. ‘Sarvana’ means listening to the words or texts as uttered by his guru or teacher. ‘Manana’ means deliberation or reflection or the topic taught and ‘Niddidhyasana’ means yoga or meditation through which truth is to be realised.\(^3\) Listening, studying and thinking are the integral parts of education to discover the hidden truths of internal (body) and

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external (outside) world. According to the contemporary thinking too, education is the ‘third eye’ of man, which gave him insight into all affairs and taught him how to act, as mentioned in ‘Mahabharata’ that there was no ‘eye’ that matched education. Thus the form of education can be changed but not the very idea of it.

In ancient times the human life was divided into four stages of Ashramas—‘Brahmacharya’ (student life), ‘Grahastha’ (married life), ‘Vanaprastha’ (retired life), ‘Sannyasa’ (life of renunciation). The first of four Ashramas is ‘Brahmacharya Ashrama’ which means the leading of life according to a Brahman. In this Ashram the student or ‘Brahmachari’ spent twenty-five years with his teacher studying the Vedas and leading a life of self control. The education and control of ‘Brahmacharya’ prepares a person for future life. It means the education of ancient India also covered the divisions like Primary, Secondary and Higher which is a characteristic feature of the education of present time. Though Shudras were denied the Right to Education but it was accessible to all the upper three castes free of cost. To ensure literacy or education to the largest possible number of people the ‘Upanayana Ceremony’ which marked the initiation of a child into the literacy and religious education, was made obligatory for all the Aryans, both males and females. Gender discrimination did not exist in this era. Every Aryan, i.e. every Brahmin, Kshtriya and Vaishya, thus received elementary literacy and religious education. The ‘Upanayana Ceremony’ can be described as a system of studentship. The ceremony takes three days during which the teacher holds within the pupil to impart him a new birth and regenerated life where the pupil

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7 C.P.S. Chauhan, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
emerges as a ‘Dviya’ or twice born. According to ancient period a student owes his first birth to his parents who give him only his body, his second birth is spiritual which unfolds his mind and soul, given by the teacher who recreates the pupil in a new body of learning. As girls were also allowed to receive education, records confirm female’s participation in public debates on philosophy, logic and metaphysics. Women sages were called ‘Rishikas’ and ‘Brahmvadinis’. Rig-Veda refers to several Rishikas; such as Ramsa, Lopamudra, Apala, Kadru, Visvavara, Ghosha, Juhu, Vagambrini, Jarita, Kamayani, Paulomi, Yami, Urvasi, Saranga, Indrani, Savitri, Devajami, Nodha, Aknishtabhasha Sikatanivavari and Gaupayana etc.

The Vedic Rishis exercised the rites for Brahmacharya to the young girls in education. After completing her education as Brahmacharini, girls achieved the dignity of Brahmacharinis and then got merged in their husband’s life as rivers merge with the oceans. This is a noticeable point that Vedic society of India insisted on the girl’s education and encouraged for their marriages with learned husbands. Yajurveda states that a daughter, who completed her Brahmacharya should be married to one who is learned like her. Unlike the Vedic period the girls used to have non-formal education from their elder brothers, parents, and learned guests in the post Vedic period and the tradition of imparting learning to women remained restricted to high-up Brahmin families only. For example King Drupad had appointed a learned Brahmin, Brihaspati Arthashastra to teach his daughter (Draupadi) at home.

The Muslim rulers imported their own system of education consisting of ‘Maktab’, ‘Madarsas’, ‘Mosques’ and ‘Khanqahs’ to meet the needs of

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12 Ibid., pp. 150-151.
13 N.L. Gupta, Women Education through the Ages, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2000, p. 120.
14 Ibid., p. 20.
education, Islamic administration as well as to cater the needs of growing Muslim population. The medieval period education can be divided into two levels, lower and higher. The ‘Maktab’ provided for a lower level of education comparable to school education, while ‘Madarsas’ were meant for higher education.\textsuperscript{15} Teaching in ‘Maktab’ was meant for reading, recitation and understanding of those parts of Quran, which were necessary for prayers. It can be easily said that the curriculum of ‘Maktab’ covered the Primary and Elementary Education imperative for that era. The ‘Madarsas’ as an expanded vision carried out the teaching of Arabic and Persian, which were essential for meeting social needs and demand. On one hand ‘Maktab’ prepared children for social interaction and social living and on the other hand ‘Madarsa’ imparted much higher level of instructions for social adjustment and development as a form of vocational training. While some Muslim Kings did try to propagate only Islamic teachings through education, other Muslim Kings gave generous aids to Hindu ‘Pathshalas’ also and allowed Sanskrit and other regional languages as a medium of instruction. This manifested the humanist trend in education, however limited it may be.\textsuperscript{16} Thus the medieval Indian philosophy of education was built up by Hindus and Muslims together. As Sarojni Naidu has aptly remarked, “The impact of the Muslims and the Hindus has evolved the present Indian culture. We can not, even if we are foolish enough to try, untwist this closely intertwined and inter-twined unity of culture that makes modern India”.\textsuperscript{17}

Like the Vedic system, admission in the ‘Maktab’ was given only after the first ceremony.\textsuperscript{18} On the occasion of admission, the child was taken to the ‘Maktab’ in new clothes. He was required to repeat some verses of the ‘Quran’. If he could not do this, he was just asked to pronounce ‘Bismillah’ and this

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{18} The education of a child began with a Ceremony comparable to “Upanayana” practiced by Hindus in ancient India. This Ceremony was called “Bismillah”.

started his education. The ‘Bismillah Ceremony’ heralded his educational career. The ceremony was held when a child was four years, four months, four days old. After a few days of this ceremony the child was required to write a few words. Besides reading, writing and arithmetic the children were also taught Persian literature, grammar, letter writing and accountancy.  

‘Madarsas’ were established to provide higher education during that period, which became the centers of higher learning. These institutions subsisted often on the royal benedictions, who gave them lands, jagirs, financial grants etc. The ‘Madarsas’ were generally well managed. The Kings took interest and did not interfere in their working. The famous ‘Madarsas’ founded during muslim rule were at Ajmer, Allahabad, Bihar, Bijapur, Burdwan, Calcutta, Delhi, Lahore, Lucknow, Multan and Murshidabad. These ‘Madarsas’ had attached the students from all parts of the country.

By the time the British came to India as traders of the East India Company and to spread their religion with the attempts of Christian Missionaries. However, the British period was a breakthrough in the development of education in India. The Modern System of Education in India was started to take place with the efforts of Britishers. But this is also an important fact that in the beginning the British as traders, though interested in the classical and spiritual education of the Hindus and of Muslims, were reluctant to take an interest in the education of the people under their rule till 1813.

The Charter Act (1813)

The Charter of 1813 forms a turning point in the history of Indian education. As it was published due to efforts of Charles Grant he is regarded as the father of modern Indian education. This Act completely empowered the Missionaries to go to India and spread education there. In the Charter Act a

20 Ibid, p. 41.
22 R.N. Sharma, R.K. Sharma, op. cit., p. 76.
clause was annexed to the effect, that, “A sum of not less than one lakh of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and enforcement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the science among the inhabitants of the British territories in India.” However, this was to be spent for Primary, Secondary or Higher education. The Charter Act of 1813 presented basically the three objectives that were:

(i) The revival and improvement of literature;
(ii) The encouragement of the learned natives of India;
(iii) The introduction and promotion of knowledge of sciences among the inhabitants of British territories in India.

The Charter Act gave no direction regarding the method to be employed to secure these objectives consequently the two kinds of problems were faced. First, what should be the form of education, and second, who should be imparted instruction. However, this Act was the first legislative recognition of the Right to Education. Perhaps the freedom of Missionaries to spread the education emerged as a sense of motivitation in Indians themselves and thus both the State and private (established by Indian people) educational institutions and organisations started to establish in the country. Consequently a well organised modern system of education came into existence. Important changes in the type of education were introduced in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the series of educational development The Minute of Lord Macaulay and subsequent Resolution of Government of 1835 came into existence and had established the schools to teach European literature and science. These schools became immediately popular because of the great interest shown in English education by

some of the educated Indians and more particularly by leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy.\textsuperscript{27}

Thomas Babington Macaulay, a profound scholar came to India in 1834 as a legal member of the Governor’s Executive Council. He had studied the problems of British education in India and made a statement before the House of Commons. He said that, “Are we to keep the people of India ignorant in order that we may keep them submissive? Or do we mean to awaken ambition and to provide it with no legitimate means? It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system until it has out grown that system, that by good Government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better Government, that having become instructed in European knowledge, they may in some future age demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come, I know not, whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history”\textsuperscript{28}

In 1835 Macaulay had submitted his detailed plan of education to Government popularly known as ‘Macaulay’s Minute’ of British education in India, in which he advocated the education of the upper class and through them the education of others (theory of ‘Downward Filtration’) and made a rigorous plea for spreading western learning through the medium of English.\textsuperscript{29} It is therefore often contended that Lord Macaulay’s Minute was designed to create a class of person who should be Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. In addition to it during the same year under the influence of Macaulay on March 7, 1835, Lord William Bentinck, Governor General of India, issued a Resolution saying that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literatures and science among the natives of India and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education should be used for English education.\textsuperscript{30}\textsuperscript{30} This landmark declaration of Lord Bentinck initiated a definite form to the educational policy of British India.

\textsuperscript{27} Shiv Kumar Saini, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 39.  
\textsuperscript{28} Lakshmanswami A. Mudaliar, “Education in India”, p. 22, in Shiv Kumar Saini, \textit{Ibid.}  
\textsuperscript{29} N. Jayapalan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 5.  
Charles Wood’s Despatch (1854)

During the period of first forty years from 1813 to 1853, no significant progress could be made in Indian education, especially in Primary Education. This period was mainly confined to the conquest and conciliation of the British power in India. Education was, therefore, a back-bench subject which came up for discussion at frequent intervals and which was allotted only a meagre portion of the total administrative expenditure. Also, no separate department of education could be set up during this period, and the problems of Indian education were discussed, as they arose from time to time, by the Governor General or the officials of the company.31

For the first time the British Parliament deliberated seriously and perhaps also sympathetically to the development of education in India.32 After Macaulay’s Minute (1835), the Court of the Directors of East India Company in England appointed a select Committee of the House of Commons to hold a thorough enquiry into educational developments in India.33 The Committee reported that the question of education in India would not be ignored any longer and its development will not be in any case harmful to British Empire.34 On the basis of the enquiry, the Wood’s Despatch – an important document on education was prepared. It is said to have laid the foundation of present education system of India.35 It was known as Wood’s Despatch, after the name of Sir Charles Wood. It covered the entire field of education and emphasised the establishment of graded schools as University, Colleges, High Schools, Middle Schools, Schools and also emphasised on useful education for the public.36 As the public itself was unable to get such an education, increase in the number of

32 Shiv Kumar Saini, op. cit., p. 39.
33 M.K. Jain, Committees and Commissions: Elementary Education Select Documents, Shipra Publications, New Delhi, 2007, p. 3.
36 R.N. Sharma, R.K. Sharma op. cit., p. 103.
schools at all stages including primary was emphasised. It realised the need of educating the masses through the mediums of both Vernacular as well as of English language.\textsuperscript{37} The Despatch appraised ‘oriental learning’ regretted the adoption of the ‘Downward Filtration Theory’ and admitted that the education of the masses had been totally neglected.\textsuperscript{38}

The Despatch envisaged the provision of a network of graded school in all the provinces. By graded school it meant colleges at the top, high and middle schools in the middle and elementary indigenous schools at the bottom.\textsuperscript{39} It also recommended a grant-in-aid system for all these schools (both Government and private schools) which imparted good secular education.\textsuperscript{40} It was done under Government plan to encourage indigenous system of education at lower level.\textsuperscript{41}

The Despatch of 1854 laid the foundation on which the future education in India was to be built. Before Wood’s Despatch, the Government’s only aim was to provide a higher type of education to a few people. For the first time it prepared to spread education among the masses through the system of grant-in-aid. Although the Despatch did not refer to the ideal of universal literacy and compulsory education for all children upto a certain age but proposed an outline for all these things in future. Widely acclaimed as the ‘Magna Carta of English Education in India’\textsuperscript{42} it became a cornerstone, benchmark and launching pad for the future policies and planning of education in India.

**The Indian Education Commission (1882)**

Contrary to the expectations of Despatch, the Government did not only withdraw from the field of education but also failed to build up a system of mass education through grants-in-aid. Thus as a matter of fact, Elementary Education

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\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Shiv Kumar Saini, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

\textsuperscript{40} Ram Chandra Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

\textsuperscript{41} C.P.S. Chauhan, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

was much neglected at the expense of Secondary and Higher Education.\textsuperscript{43}

Therefore the first Indian Education Commission under the president-ship of Sir William Hunter was appointed by Lord Ripon in 1882. It is also known as Hunter Commission which submitted its report in 1883. The appointment of this Commission was necessitated by two reasons: the first was the desire of the Government to review in a comprehensive manner the progress of education in India after the Despatch of 1854, and the second reason was the agitation conducted by the Missionaries in England to the effect that the educational system of India was not carried on in accordance with the directives of Wood’s Despatch of 1854.\textsuperscript{44} Thus it was very clear that the Despatch could result in only minor changes in educational policies, without any substantial progress being made in the domain of Primary Education. The Indian Education Commission 1882 examined the conditions of education in each province, identified the defects and recommended that the principles of the Despatch of 1854 should be further developed. The Commission felt that Primary Education had not received due attention and asked for a proper share of public funds when the departments of education came into existence.\textsuperscript{45} The enquiry of the Commission led to a great educational awakening in India and its main findings agreed largely with the Despatch of 1854 dominated the Indian education policy till 1902.

The proposals of the Commission were accepted by the Government of India by Resolution of 1884. The proposals which had the most direct effect on subsequent Government policy were those relating to the expansion of Primary Education and its management by the Local Bodies, set up under the Local Self-Government Acts of Lord Ripon’s Government in 1883-85 including the development of the grant-in-aid system and the encouragement of private enterprise.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{43} Suresh C. Ghosh, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 368.
\textsuperscript{44} Kuldeep Kaur, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{46} Shaloo Sharma, \textit{History and Development of Higher Education in India}, Vol. 4, Sarup and Sons, New Delhi, 2002, p. 5.
Gopal Krishna Gokhle’s Bill (1910-12)

Gopal Krishna Gokhle believed that, “An illiterate and ignorant nation can never make any solid progress and must fall back in race of life.”\(^\text{47}\) Gopal Krishna Gokhle rendered a remarkable service for Primary Education in India. He noticed that after the Act 1904, Primary Education was gaining good ground, but it was not at in conformity to the growing population of India. Only 2.38 per cent boys and 2.07 per cent girls were able to get education.\(^\text{48}\) Thus with the influence of the example of England to introducing a new era in Primary Education in 1902 and by the influence of the Baroda State of making Primary Education compulsory in 1906\(^\text{49}\) he moved a Resolution in Imperial Legislative Council on March 19, 1910, which stated:

“I think that this question of compulsory and free Primary Education is now in this country the question of questions. The well being of millions upon millions of children who are waiting to be brought under the humanizing influence of education depends upon it. The increased efficiency of the individual the higher general level of intelligence, the stiffening of the moral backbone of large sections of the community, none of these things can come without such education. In fact the whole of our future as nation is inextricably bound up with it My Lord, however, this resolution may be disposed of here today, I feel that in this matter we are bound to win.\(^\text{50}\)."

But it was withdrawn on the assurance of the Government that it would be examined carefully. When within the next one year nothing tangible was done

\(^{48}\) N. Jayapalan, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
\(^{49}\) The King of Baroda, Maharaj Sajaji Rao Gaekwara has the credit of making the first successful experiment of compulsory education in India. Literally minded and educational lover, King of Baroda declared in 1982 that there would be compulsory Primary Education in a Taluqa of Amraili City, consisting of 9 villages in his State. All the boys from 7 to 10 years of age were to receive education in Primary Schools.
for the progress of Primary Education, Gokhle introduced a private Bill to provide for the gradual introduction of the principle of compulsion into the Elementary Educational system of the country on 16 March 1911. According to this Bill, compulsory Primary Education could be started by seeking prior consent of the local covets of their area where a definite number of children from six to ten years of age were receiving education. However the efforts of Gokhle could not bear fruit. This Bill was also rejected and strongly opposed in the Imperial Legislative Assembly, and was defeated by thirty-eighth to thirteen votes with the reason that the country was not prepared for compulsory education and this would entail large financial expenditure on the part of the Government. Though, his Bill was rejected indirectly it opened commendable vistas in many ways. The State administrative machinery for Primary Education gained momentum and the nation became conscious of the need for education of the masses. As the result Primary Education was made free in the North-Western provinces in 1912, and in the United Provinces, the Punjab, Assam and in the Central Provinces the charges were nominal.

**The Education Resolution (1913)**

Despite the categorical rejection of Gokhle’s Bill its major achievement was that the attention of the entire country was focused on education. In 1913, the Government of India itself reconsidered its policy on education and issued another resolution on it. It refused to recognise the principle of compulsory education for financial and administrative reasons but accepted the widest possible extension of Primary Education on a voluntary basis. The 1913 Education Resolution provided for expansion and improvement of Primary Education, proposed to streamline inspection and supervision, appointed trained teachers, improved school facilities, subsidised private schools as ‘Maktabs’ and

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52 N. Jayabalan, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
53 Ibid.
‘Pathshalas’ and encouraged girl’s education. The positive highlight of the resolution was, “The proposition that illiteracy must be broken down and that Primary Education has, in the present circumstances of India, a predominant claim upon the public funds, represents accepted policy no longer open for discussion. For financial and administrative reasons of decisive weight the Government of India have refused to recognise the principle of compulsory education, but they desire the widest possible extension of Primary Education on a voluntary basis. As regards free Elementary Education, the time has not yet arrived when it is practicable to dispense wholly with fees without injustice to the many villages which are waiting for the provision of schools. The fees derived from those pupils who can pay them are now devoted to the maintenance and expansion of Primary Education, and a total remission of fees would involve to a certain extent a mere prolonged postponement of a provision of schools in villages without them”.

Since in some provinces Elementary Education was already free and in the majority of the provinces liberal provision was already made for giving free elementary instruction to those boys whose parents cannot afford to pay fees. Thus Local Governments have also been requested to extend the application of the principle of free Elementary Education amongst the poorer and more backward sections of the population. The Resolution advocated three cardinal principles of educational policy:

- The curricula of Primary and Secondary Schools should be made more practical and useful;

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58 Ibid.
Facilities of higher education should be provided in India so that Indian students may not have to go abroad;

Instead of increasing the number of existing institution their standard should be raised.\textsuperscript{60}

Inter alia, the other major recommendations (related to Primary Education) of the Government Resolution 1913 included:

- The inspection and management of private schools should be made more efficient;
- In the urban schools teaching of geography and school excursions, should form part of the curricula;
- Teachers of Primary Education should have refresher courses during vacation;
- The number of students under one teacher should range between thirty and forty;
- For the education of women, there should be special curriculum of practical utility for girls and too much importance should not be attached to their examinations.\textsuperscript{61}

The Government of India Resolution of 1913 promised to open ninety-one thousand Primary Schools in addition to the existing one lakh schools for boys\textsuperscript{62}. The First World War which broke out the next year delayed the implementation of many recommendations set out in the resolution\textsuperscript{63}. Whatever the reasons, the provisions were not truly implemented. The only good thing about the policy was that the field of school education has not clearly separated from that of higher education.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p. 41.
\textsuperscript{61} V. R. Taneja, \textit{Socio-Philosophical Approach to Education}, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2005, p. 139.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
For the expansion of Primary Education only assurances were given which, as a matter of fact could not be fulfilled. The struggle between quality and quantity, which had hitherto been confined to Secondary and College education, had now entered the field of Primary Education also. It was on account of Governments insistence on the quality improvement in education at all levels that the desire for the expansion of Primary Education could not be materialised. However Government of India Resolution on Educational Policy 1913 made it clear to Government that can not further ignore the popular demand of mass education. Meanwhile Calcutta University Commission was appointed by the Government of India in 1917 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Michal Sadler, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Calcutta that only dealt with the certain aspects of Secondary and University education.

**Developments in Primary Education (1921-1947)**

The year 1921 is a significant landmark in the history of Elementary Education in India. In this year the department of education was transferred to an Indian Minister responsible to legislature. The overall progress of Elementary Education during this period was faster than in the preceding one, owing as much to the general social awakening among the people, as to the deliberate attempts of the Government and the Local Bodies to expand it both on a voluntary and on a compulsory basis. This period was especially important as it witnessed:

- The passing of several Acts of Primary Education in British Provinces;
- The execution of a several schemes of compulsion and expansion on a voluntary basis;
- The large increase in the number of schools and pupils; and
- Spread of literacy.

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64 N. Krishnaswamy, Lalitha Krishnaswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
66 C.P.S. Chauhan, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
The continuation of passing of Compulsory Education Acts was the major development of this period. Compulsory Primary Education had been the declared policy underlying the Primary Education Acts that were passed in various provinces during the years 1918 to 1926. These Acts give powers to the Local Authorities to introduce a compulsory system of Primary Education in their respective areas. Though the Acts are different in different provinces and the powers given to the local authorities vary to a considerable extent, they all recognise the great need for universal instruction. In the Punjab, Bihar and Orissa compulsion can be resorted to, under the Acts, in the case of boys only. In the United Provinces it should be first enforced in the case of boys, and later on, on the application of the Municipal Board, the Government have the power to notify that it should apply to girls as well. In all other provinces, compulsion can be enforced in the case of both boys and girls. The Table 2.1 provides for the list of various Provincial Acts on Compulsory Primary Education.

The main features of these Acts included:

(i) The objects of these Education Acts in all the provinces were the same, i.e. eradication of illiteracy through compulsory education.

(ii) The Acts transferred large powers of administration and control over Primary Education to the Local Authorities, i.e. to the Local Self-Government Institutions.

(iii) All Acts make it a duty of the Local Authorities to study the needs of their areas and to prepare schemes for the expansion and development of Primary Education within their jurisdiction.

(iv) The age of compulsion for Elementary Education varies from province to province. In Provinces with a four years course, it is generally fixed at six to ten except in Punjab where the optional age – period of seven to eleven

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69 Dinker D. Desai, *Primary Education in India: Suggestion for its Improvement and Expansion*, Servants of India Society, Bombay, 1938, p. 5.
is also provided; on the other hand, in Provinces with a five years’ course, the age of compulsion is general fixed at six to eleven.

Table 2.1 Details Regarding the Various Provincial Acts on Compulsory Primary Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Name of the Act</th>
<th>Compulsion Whether for Boys and Girls</th>
<th>Whether Applicable for Rural Areas or Urban Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>Primary Education Act</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>Primary Education Act</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Municipal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>Primary Education Act</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Municipal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Extended to Girls by an Amendment in 1932)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Bihar and Orissa</td>
<td>Primary Education Act</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>City of Bombay Primary Education Act</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>(Applicable to the City of Bombay only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>Primary Education Act</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>Elementary Education Act</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>Primary Education Act</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Applicable to the whole of the Province Except Bombay City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>Primary Education Act</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>District Board Primary Education Act</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>The Rural Areas only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>Primary Education Act</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>The Rural Areas only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all provinces, the Government undertakes to assist the Local Authorities financially in order to enable them to introduce compulsory education.

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(v) In all the provinces, the Local Authorities are given the power to levy an educational cost in order to meet their own share of cost of providing Primary Education, whether on a compulsory or on a voluntary basis.

(vi) The Acts make provisions for prosecuting parents for failure to send their children to school, and all Acts, except that of Madras penalise the employment of children within the age period of compulsion in areas where compulsory education is enforced.\(^{71}\)

One natural outcome of these Acts was the rapid expansion of Primary Education in the period for 1922-27\(^{72}\). The given tables are self explanatory.

**Table 2.2 Progress of Primary Education in India (1921-22-1926-27)\(^{73}\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Year (1921-22)</th>
<th>Year (1925-27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Number of Primary Schools</td>
<td>1,55,017</td>
<td>1,84,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Number of pupils in Primary Schools</td>
<td>61,09,752</td>
<td>80,17,93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Expenditure on Primary Education (Rural)</td>
<td>4,94,69,080</td>
<td>6,75,14,802</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.3 Areas under Compulsion (Early Phase)\(^{74}\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Municipalities and Urban Areas</th>
<th>District Board and Rural Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1,499*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar and Orissa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>1,571</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\*the rural areas in the Punjab are served by the individual schools.

\(^{71}\) Shiv Kumar Saini, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

\(^{72}\) Nurullah, Naik, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

\(^{73}\) Shiv Kumar Saini, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

\(^{74}\) *Ibid.*
As the given tables show that increase in the number of Primary Schools and its pupil was greater than provinces. The expansion between 1922 and 1927 consequently deteriorated the quality of education. The Tenth Quinquennial Review explained the courses of the great expansion between 1922-1927 as follows:

“A burst of enthusiasm swept children into schools with unparalleled rapidity; an almost childlike faith in the value of education was implanted in the minds of people; parents were prepared to make any sacrifice for the education of their children; the seed of tolerance to the less fortunate in life was begotten; ambitious and comprehensive progresses of development were formulated, which were calculated to fulfill the dreams of literate India, the Muslim community, long backward in education, pressed forward with eagerness to obliterates past deficiencies; enlightened women began to storm the citadel of old time prejudice against the education of Indian girls; Government with full concurrence of the Legislative Council, pound out large sums of money on education, which would have been regarded as beyond the realm of practical politics ten years previously.”75 This picture of tenth Quinquennial Review had declared exaggeratedly and unsatisfactory state of Primary Education was pointed out by the Hartog Committee only two years later.

**The Hartog Committee (1929)**

In May 1928, a Commission was appointed under the Chairmanship of Sir John Simon. This Commission appointed an Auxiliary Committee presided over by Sir Philip Hartog to report on the growth of education in British India.76 This committee submitted its report in 1929. The Hartog Committee was not satisfied with the progress of literacy during the period of 1921 to 1927. The Hartog Committee emphasised the importance of Primary Education. The

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Committee blamed the Provincial Governments for poor progress of Primary Education.\textsuperscript{77} It observed that Primary Education had become meaningless and ineffective.\textsuperscript{78} So it argued for its qualitative improvement but the people in the country were rightly asking for quantitative development of Primary Education. Therefore, the recommendations of the Committee aroused sharp reactions. In fact, first of all it was necessary to spread literacy.\textsuperscript{79} Regarding Primary Education the Committee observed that there was a good deal of waste in the system which acted as a set-off against the progress in numbers.\textsuperscript{80} The Committee discussed:

“Throughout the whole educational system there is waste and ineffectiveness. In the primary system, which from our point of view should be derived to produce literacy and the capacity to exercise on intelligent vote, the waste is appalling. So far as we can judge, the vast increase in numbers in Primary Schools produces no commensurate increase in literacy, for only a small proportion of those who are at the primary stage reach class IV, in which the attainment of literacy may be expected. The wastage in the case of girls is even more serious than in case of boys.”\textsuperscript{81}

In the opinion of the Committee, main causes of this waste were:

- Wastage and stagnation;
- Relapse into illiteracy;
- Absence of systematic efforts at adult education;
- Large number of single-teacher schools;
- Ineffective teaching, unsuitable curriculum and inadequacy of inspective staff.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{77} R.P. Pathak, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{78} M.U. Qureshi, \textit{Problems of Indian Education}, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 2005, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{79} Ram Nath Sharma, Rajendra Sharma, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 145.
\textsuperscript{80} Ram Chandra Gupta, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 124-125.
\textsuperscript{81} A. Biswas, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{82} Suresh C. Ghosh, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 430.
The Committee therefore condemned the hasty policy of expansion and recommended the adoption of the policy of consolidation and improvement.

The Committee made the following recommendations:

- Fixing up of the minimum duration of the primary course to a period of four years;
- Liberalisation of school curricula and adjustment of school hours and holidays to seasonal and local requirements;
- Special attention to the lowest class to prevent wastage and stagnation;
- Provision for suitable training refresher courses and conferences and salaries for teachers;
- Rural reconstruction work in the village Primary Schools;
- Strengthening of the inspecting staff, and finally
- Introduction of compulsion after a careful preparation of the ground by the Government which should not feel emplace by handing over the charge of Primary Education to local bodies but keep an active interest in its expansion.  

The Hartog Committee report was warmly welcomed by the bureaucrats and acted as a guide to their activities in education till 1937. But unfortunately little was done upto 1937 to develop Primary Education which can be seen by the Table 2.4:

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Table 2.4 Progress of Primary Education (1926-37)\textsuperscript{84}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>No. of schools</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>1,84,829</td>
<td>80,17,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>1,96,708</td>
<td>91,62,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>1,92,244</td>
<td>1,02,24,288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The progress of compulsory Primary Education was also very slow in various provinces. Only three thousand thirty-four villages and one hundred sixty seven towns could be benefited by the compulsory Primary Education.\textsuperscript{85}

**Government of India Act (1935)**

The Government of India Act 1935 put an end to the diarchic system of administration set up by the Act of 1919, abolished the distinction between reserved and transferred subjects, and placed the whole field of provincial administration under a Ministry responsible to a legislature constituted by popularly elected members. Thus new system of governance, popularly known as Provincial Autonomy, came into operation in 1937 in some provinces of British India. The Government of India Act, 1935 divided all educational activities into two categories Federal (Central) and State (Provincial) and thereby, education of children became the direct responsibility of State Government.\textsuperscript{86}

**Abbot and Wood Report (1936-37)**

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) recommended the appointment of a committee to advise whether any vocational or practical training should be imparted in Primary and Secondary Schools. Abbot and Wood two experts were invited to recognise the problems and its nature and extent.

\textsuperscript{84} Ram Nath Sharma, Rajendra Sharma, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 146.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{86} M.K. Jain, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 13.
The Report enumerated the following points;

1. The education of children in the Primary Schools should be based more upon the national interests and activities of young children and less upon book-learning. Concentration on narrow learning is unsound.

2. The curriculum of the rural middle schools should be closely related to children’s environment and if English is taught to any children of middle school age; it should not be allowed to result in an excessive amount of linguistic load.

3. The mother tongue should as far as possible, be the medium of instruction throughout the high school stage, but English should be a compulsory language for all pupils at this stage. The teaching of English should be made more realistic.

4. The pre-service education course of teachers of primary and middle schools should be a three years course following without any gap in the completion of middle school course.\textsuperscript{87}

**Wardha Scheme of Basic Education (1937)**

In 1937 during the time of assumption of offices in seven provinces the Congress was irrevocably committed to the introduction of universal, free and compulsory Primary Education. But it could not meet unless huge sums of money were provided in the provincial budgets and it was not easy. In that situation Mahatma Gandhi came forward and suggested a self-supporting schooling through a useful and productive work. This famous scheme is known as “Scheme of Basic Education” or “Nai Taleem”. It was a marked change in the system of Primary Education. The orthodox system has been gradually giving place to the Basic system the main principles of which is learning through useful activity or craft.\textsuperscript{88} According to this scheme, the plan of mass education does not


need new funds and that universal, compulsory and free Primary Education could be given to every child if the process of schooling could be made self-supporting by imparting education through a useful and bureaucratic craft. While spelling out his scheme, Gandhi said,

“For the all round development of boys and girls all training school so far as possible, be given through a project-yielding vocations. In other words vocations should serve a double purpose – to enable the pupil to pay for his tuition fee through the products of his labour and at the same time to develop the whole men or women in his or her through the vocation learnt at school. Land, buildings and equipment are not intended to be covered by the proceeds of the pupils’ labour. The Primary Education should equip boys and girls to earn their bread by the state guaranteeing employment in the vocations learnt or by buying their manufactures at prices fixed by the State.”

These proposals were placed by Gandhi in his articles written in Harijan in 1937. In October, 1937, he convened an All India National Educational Conference at Wardha. As a result of wide and fruitful discussion the following four resolutions were passed:

1. That in the opinion of the conference free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale;

2. The medium of instruction be the mother tongue;

3. That the conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout his period should centre round save from of manual productive work, and that all the other abilities to be developed or training to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chase with due regard to the child.

4. That the conference expects that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers.\textsuperscript{90}

A Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. Zakir Husain to prepare a detailed syllabus on the lines of above resolution. The committee soon submitted its report. It was approved by Mahatma Gandhi and an All India Board (Hindustan Talimi Sangh) was formed to work out in a consolidated manner on a programme of Basic National Education.

In 1938, the Central Advisory Board of Education appointed two Committees under the Chairmanship of Shri B.G. Kher, Premier and Bombay, to examine the scheme of educational reconstruction incorporated in the Wardha Scheme in the light of Wood-Abbot report on general and vocational education. The committee made certain important recommendations, the chief being that Basic Education should comprise a course of eight years from the age of six to fourteen years and that this course, while presenting its essential utility, should consist of two stages – the junior stage covering a period of five years and the senior stage, covering the period of three years. The Committee also expressed the opinion that the Wardha Scheme was in full agreement with the recommendations made in the Wood-Abbot report so far as the principle of learning by doing was concerned. This activity should be of many kinds in the lower classes and later should lead to a basic craft, the produce from which should be saleable and the proceeds applied to the upkeep of the schools.\textsuperscript{91} The Central Advisory Board of Education accepted in general the main recommendations of the two committees except that the view that, “Education at any stage and particularly in the lowest stages can or should be expected to pay for itself through the sales of articles produced by the pupils. The most which

\textsuperscript{90} Udai Veer, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 55-56.

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 74.
can be expected in this respect is that sales should cover the cost of the additional materials and equipments required for practical work."^92

Thus the period of 1937-38 focused on Basic Education through learning by doing. Basic education was defined as education for life through life. The seeds of life-long education for life advocated by the International Commission on the Development of Education, appointed by UNESCO in 1971 can be found in Gandhian approach to education.\(^93\) Although it could not given a fair trail at the Governmental level after independence.

Table 2.5 Expansion of Primary Education (1937-1947)^94

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Primary School</th>
<th>Number of Pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901-02</td>
<td>93,604</td>
<td>30,76,671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>1,55,017</td>
<td>61,09,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-37</td>
<td>1,92,244</td>
<td>102,24,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>1,67,700</td>
<td>130,27,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>1,34,866</td>
<td>105,25943</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Post-War Educational Development in India (1944)

At the end of World War II, a new educational scheme popularly known as Sargent Plan was submitted to the Indian Government. The report derives its name from the name of its author, Sir John Sargent, the Educational Advisor to the Government of India. He was asked to draw up a memorandum for the development of Indian Education in the post war reconstruction period. This report was accepted and published by the CABE\(^95\). The Sargent Plan proposed

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that, “There should be a provision of universal free and compulsory Primary Education for all children between the age of six and fourteen, divided into two stages - Junior Basic (six to eleven) and Senior Basic (eleven to fourteen).” Proceeded by Pre-Primary Education for three to six age groups, while junior basic would be compulsory for all, senior basic would be meant for those who would not join high school”. Sargent Plan was one of the most comprehensive schemes of education ever proposed by British Government after the Despatch of 1857. K.G. Saiyidain who was associated with the working of the Sargent plan has thus appreciated it in these words:

“What is the wider significance of this scheme? It is the first comprehensive scheme of national education. Since it covers the whole area of education as primary, secondary, higher, vocational and technical and teachers training. He further says it is inspired by the desire to provide equality of opportunity at different stages of education. At the primary stage it envisages not merely the provision of free schooling but also of other facilities without which the poorer children cannot fully avail themselves of the educational opportunities – midday meal, books, scholarships, medical inspection and treatment”.

Through this plan the Government had to propose a detailed outline of the educational programmes to be undertaken by the Government during the following forty years from 1944 to 1984. But the fixing of very lengthy time period was a strong criticism of the plan because it had placed India nearly fifty years behind England in terms of educational development. While criticising the plan it must be remembered that the main reason for fixing the period for implementing the plan at forty years was the impossibility of obtaining reasons in terms of men and money with a short period after the conclusion of a devastating World War.

96 Suresh C. Ghosh, op. cit., p. 444.
97 Ibid.
98 Nurullah, Naik, op. cit., p. 338.
This chapter has taken a look at the evolution of the Right to Education and educational policy since ancient India to the independence of the country. While the ancient developments are based on the Vedic traditions, the medieval period has witnessed the influence of Islamic culture on the development of school education in India. The salient features of the modern system of education developed with the establishment of the British rule in India. Beginning with the Charter Act of 1813, the subsequent Acts, Resolutions and Education Commissions, appointed by the British laid down the framework for educational development in India. This was the period when the demand for compulsory Primary Education as the right of children started gaining ground and this chapter has summarised those developments into the culmination in the form of Sargent Commission Report. Which proposed recommendations emphasised to implement the provision of free and compulsory education in the next sixteen years (upto 1960), but unfortunately, the package was rejected by the then prevailing leadership. Hopefully the proposal was finally accepted and saw the light of the dawn in the Article 45 of the Constitution of India.