CHAPTER - V

Beginnings of the Modern Education in Punjab

5.1. The British India:

The Britishers came to India in 1600 A.D. when Queen Elizabeth granted monopoly rights to trade with India and the Far-East to some enterprising merchants of the city of London. It gradually led to the establishment of the British East India Company.\(^1\) Although the company was established in the beginning of the seventeenth century, it undertook no educational activities during the whole century and remained mainly a commercial enterprise.

5.2 Charter Act of 1698:

The East India Company's attention was first drawn to educational matters by the Charter Act of 1698, to maintain priests and schools in its garrisons. However, these provisions were meant mainly for the children of the Coy's European servants. Being a body of trading merchants, the Company did not show much interest in the educational matters of India.\(^2\)

5.3 Establishment of Schools:

The Company also encouraged the establishment of schools, e.g. St. Mary's School at Madras in 1715, at Bombay.

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1. For details see P.E. Roberts, History of British India, (London, 1947), Chapter IV.

2. For details about the educational policies of the East India Company see B.D. Basu, Education in India under the East India Company, Allah, 1946. For the development of modern India Education see B.D. Srivastava, The Development of Modern India Education, Bombay, 1963.
in 1718 and at Calcutta in 1731 A.D. These and other similar schools were supported by subscriptions and donations from the philanthropic and religious persons and grants of the Company.

The main educational activity of the East India Coy during the eighteenth century was the encouragement to the charity schools. The real beginning of the educational activities of the British government can, however, be traced during the decade 1781-91 A.D., when Warren Hastings, the First Governor General of India, founded the Calcutta Madrasah for Arabic and Persian studies and Jonathan Duncan, the Resident of Benaras, established a college at Beneras for the cultivation of Sanskrit learning in 1781 and 1791 respectively. The main objective of the foundation of these schools was to train Indian assistance to the English judges in order to interpret the Hindu and Muslim jurisprudence.

5.4 The aim of such institutions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was to consolidate and strengthen the British power in India. Side by side with the educational activities of the Company, certain institutions were also founded by the missionaries. The main difference between the two was that while the objectives of the Company were political and administrative, those of the missionaries were religious and philanthropic. Both types, however, had great value and these did pioneer work which led to the building up of the modern educational system in India.

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1. For the role of the missionaries in the spread of English education in India see infra, pp. 350-362.
5.5 **Interest in Oriental Studies:**

The British people in particular and the Europeans in general were deeply interested in oriental studies. They were also for the preservation and cultivation of the literary heritage of India. They were interested in knowing the laws and religions of the people living in this region. The same policy they had adopted in the expansion of English education in other parts of India.

5.6 **The Charter Act of 1793:**

In the Charter Act of 1793, Charles Grant had aimed to foster Christian propaganda. The Government had been persuaded to send chaplains and school masters throughout the British India. Wilberforce renewed his effort again in 1813 and became effective in influencing the formation of the British policy towards English education in India. He was in favour of the propagation of Christianity in India to eradicate 'the ills of Hindu society'.

The Government, consequently, made grants of 'one lakh rupees a year out of the Indian revenue, for 'the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction of a knowledge of European sciences among the Indian people'. This however, did not have much effect because the general policy of the East India Company was to encourage traditional learning in

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2. Ibid.
India by giving pecuniary aid, and not to interfere with the education or to suggest alternative methods, for fear that this might contravene the policy of religious neutrality.\(^1\)

5.7 **The Government Policy:**

The Government thus, continued to adopt a policy of religious neutrality and a policy of the encouragement of oriental learning. However, the despatch of the Court of Directors, dated 18th Feb. 1824 A.D., presented some general principles of the British policy on Indian education. It marked a turning point in the educational development, because it stressed the superiority of the western education. However, there was no decision suggesting English as the medium of instruction so far, probably because it was considered an alien language for the Indians. However, the Indian were themselves enthusiastic for learning English. They were aware of its advantages,\(^2\) and soon it became fashionable to learn English.\(^3\) There was thus a marked change in the British policy towards the Indian education after 1835.

5.6 **The Controversy: Anglicist and Orientalist:**

This kind of educational policy created ultimately a controversy about education in India. There were two groups of thought regarding the type of education to be imparted to

1. Ibid.
the Indians. The first group of thought was known as the
Anglicists, who were in favour of European education for the
Indians. They stood for English as the medium of instruction
and were supported by the missionaries also. T.B. Macaulay,
and some younger officials of the Company vehemently argued
in favour of English. The cause of English was also supported by
some progressive Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Macaulay was in all praise of English, which he
thought was not only the language of the ruling class but also
the language of commerce throughout the east and also because
it had gained familiarity with the higher classes. Macaulay
wanted to do away with the study of Arabic and Sanskrit and
pointed out that the Hindu and Muslim law could be codified
in English. He thus recommended the spread of western learning
through the medium of English language. His purpose was to
create a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but
English in tastes, in opinions, morals and intellect for a
cultural conquest of India. He also suggested the closure of
existing institutions of oriental learning and the money thus
spared to be spent on the promotion of English.

The second group was known as the Orientalists. It
was led by H.T. Princep, who was then the Secretary to the
Government of Bengal in the Education department. This group

1. Macaulay has been variously described by his admirers
and critics. The former regard him as the torch-bearer
in the path of progress, whereas the critics of Macaulay
attributed the present discontent and political unrest
in India due to the spread of English education, for
which Macaulay was to be blamed.
was in favour of encouragement of Sanskrit and Arabic literature. This group (orientalist) was split into the groups again over the question of the medium of instruction. The Committee for Public Instruction, since its inception in 1823 A.D., was sharply divided over its policy with regard to the medium of instruction. Out of the ten members, half were in favour of giving instruction through oriental languages, whereas the other half supported the adoption of English as the medium of instruction.¹

5.9. Macaulay Minutes and its Impact:

The Anglo-Orientalist controversy was settled, however, in 1835 A.D., when the Macaulay Minute was passed by Lord William Bentick. In this resolution it was stated that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of the European literature and sciences among the natives of India.²

Thomas Babington Macaulay was appointed President of Board of Education. He had an invincible faith in the greatness of European civilization and in the value of English language 'as the expression of its spirit'.³

1. This group was especially strong in Bengal and was influenced by the views of Warren Hastings and Minto. A.R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, (Bombay, 1976), p.146. The other group was strong in Bombay under the leadership of Munro and Elphinstone. It thought that the education should be given to the masses only through the medium of vernacular. Ibid.


Macaulay's propositions were simple. He held that 'we ought to employ them (our funds) in teaching what is worth knowledge, that English is better worth than Sanskrit or Arabic; that it is possible to make native of this country thoroughly good English scholars, and to this our efforts ought to be directed.'

Before 1835, in India, English was the language of the British ruling class only. Now it was destined and designed to be the language of the people at large. However, when the minutes of 1835 were passed, the reaction of this act in Punjab was 'very slow.' The important effect of the introduction of English medium in the Government schools was that children from all classes and castes entered the Government schools, while the enrolment in the indigenous schools was practically decreased. We learn from Leitner's report that the effect of Macaulay minute was much on the endowment fund 'which abolished the stipendiary allowances to students in the Oriental colleges.'

The introduction of English as the medium of instruction in the Government schools saw the promulgation (1844) that

1. Ibid.
2. G.S. Chhabra, Advanced History of the Punjab, Ludhiana, 1972), Vol. II, p. 400. He further states that as late as 1854, the number of Government schools in the Punjab was only a dozen.
3. B. Kuppuswamy, Social Change in India (Delhi, 1972), p. 268.
Preference should be given to English educated men in the recruitment for government services. Thus the aim of education became employment under government service.¹

Macaulay's views were one sided. He had certain prejudices about the Indian and European literature. He held the opinion that 'A single self of good European literature was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.'² Again he wrote, 'If we teach Indians through the medium of Sanskrit and Arabic, then we teach them false history, false astronomy and false medicine.' The real aim of Macaulay was to produce and prepare a 'class of persons, Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.'³

The main purpose of the introduction of English education and the aim of the birth of a new liberal class knowing even indigenous languages and educational systems had been given to personnel to serve the British administration. Their use in business and commerce was also in view.

5.10 Contribution of the Missionaries:

The Christian missionaries contributed much in the spread of English education in India. It had been one of the methods of the Europeans including the British, to send Christian missionaries in various parts of India from the very

¹. B. Kuppuswamy, op. cit., p. 269.
². Ibid.
³. Ibid.
⁴. R.C. Majumdar (ed.) Ibid., p. 43.
beginning. The British Government had the aim of fostering Christian propaganda even at the time of the Charter of 1793 A.D., and had already sent Chaplains and school masters throughout India.

The effort was again renewed in India in 1813 A.D. In Parliament, it was declared that 'the remedy for the ills of the Hindu society was neither philosophy nor civilization, but the propagation of Christianity in India.' The west had a sense of superiority and Christian missionaries were their representatives. They brought a new civilization to India and wanted to spread it by adopting a number of means and methods. They were identified with the governing classes and thus they 'unconsciously assumed aims of superiority'. They had a sense of pride as well as that of a service in fostering education in the country. Education being a tool of change in the society and culture, attracted them much and therefore they became engaged in spreading English in India.

5.11 Missionaries and English Education in the Punjab:

Though the missionaries were active in spreading English education in the Punjab since the beginning of the nineteenth century, yet when Punjab became a British province


2. K.M. Pankkar, *op.cit.* p.48; For a detailed discussion on the subject see also K.M. Panikkar's *Asia and Western Dominance*, London, 1953.
(in 1849), many changes were brought about by them in the system of education here. Missionaries were the first to establish their schools here. In 1843 A.D., the first missionary institution was established for boys at Kotgarh near Shimla by the Church Missionary Society and after that in 1848, the American Missionary Society established the first English School at Jullundur.

In 1849, another school was established at Lahore by the same mission. The subject of the mission schools included English, Geometry and Geography. There were some societies which were very active in Punjab. These were: General Baptist Missionary society, the Church Missionary Society, The London Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Mission and the Scotch Missionary Society.

5.12 Aims of the Missionaries:

The main aim of the missionaries was to impart education and to spread Christianity among the Indian people by a proselytizing spirit. They attacked polytheism and the caste inequalities among the Hindus, for Christianity fundamentally stood for one God and social equality. Missionaries in fact

1. In 1851 A.D., the American Presbyterian School was opened at Ludhiana. American society and Church mission established their schools at Amritsar and Ambala in 1853 and 1854 respectively. The Amritsar school was the best of these schools.
played a great role in the education of the Punjab. About the role of the missionaries in promoting the English education in Punjab, Leitner observed:

'The Christian missionary schools have hitherto been also the semi-religious schools that have received grants in aid from Government, and there seems to be no doubt that India is indebted to the Missionaries for much of her education, and for the formation of a higher standard of practical morality.'

There is no denying the fact that the missionaries worked hard in making English education popular in the Punjab. They were active not only for the expansion of primary or secondary education in the region but also for higher education. The attention was paid by them also to the cause of technical and female education, though at a later stage. The impact of their educational activities was felt much in the Punjab society during the first half of the nineteenth century and onwards. The work of missionaries in fact had a notable success. Especially their educational institutions introduced a new spirit of understanding and a better appreciation of life in the community and gave 'an added impetus to a rethinking of values'.

1. According to one report, there were only three colleges up to 1864 A.D. Two were Government colleges and one was established at Delhi and other was founded at Lahore. The third was the Lahore Mission College which was also established in 1864 at Lahore. According to the same report Lahore Mission College was much progressive than the other two Government Colleges. P.N.Kirpal, Selections from Educational Records, (Delhi, 1960), p.154.


RANJIT SINGH AND THE ENGLISH EDUCATION

As we have already seen in the previous pages, until the advent of the British, the educational system in the Punjab had been essentially religion based. The Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh was power-locked, insular state. The Maharaja did admit into his service, many foreigners including Frenchmen, Italians, Englishmen, Americans, Russians and the Greeks, but they had to restrict themselves wholly to their professional duties. The Maharaja would not let them intervene in the social and religious life of the people in any manner.  

It was nevertheless, one of Ranjit Singh's ambitions to have an English school established in his capital for the benefit of the children of his family and the sons of the Sardars. He spoke about it to several visiting priests. Specifically for this purpose, he invited to Lahore John C. Lowrie, an American missionary, as early as 1834.

Interesting side-lights are thrown on the education of the princes by the Europeans in their accounts of Ranjit Singh's court. Osborne, for instance, gives a very delightful sketch of Partap Singh, 7 years old son of Prince Zher Singh. 'Partap Singh', he writes, 'was handsomely dressedarmed with a small ornamented shield, sword and matchlock, all like a miniature covered with jewels. He is one of the most intelligent boy I have ever met with... His manners are in highest degree attractive, polished and gentlemanlike, and totally free from all awkwardness so generally found in the European children of that age'.

W.G.Osborne further informs that Hon'ble Emily Eden received a pretty letter from little Partap, in reply to which she signed Persian answer. Her company was inspring to

boy whom she found genuinely set for learning English. About his father, Honighberger observed that Sher Singh had an intense desire for knowledge and devoted great attention to European skill, industry and learning. He patronised Sikh priests like Bhai Gurbaksh Singh as well as artists like Herr Schofft.

Another child in whose education the Maharaja took a keen interest was Hira Singh, the son of Dhian Singh, the accomplished writer from Jammu and as powerful as the Prime Minister. The Maharaja was struck by his 'boyish promise', 'native simplicity' and 'tutored inference'. Osborne had described him as a boy of 16, intelligent and clever who had taken a fancy to learn English which he studied for some hours every day by special arrangement and in which he had already made a considerable progress. The British official observer thought the young Raja was perhaps the only individual who had ventured to do such a thing openly. The aristocracy of Lahore, long remembered the dignity and the refined manners of the accomplished youth.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was very keen on introducing the study of English in Lahore and invited the Ludhiana Mission to open a school there but the Mission insisted on the study of the Bible as an integral part of the new teaching. Knowing the

1. Ibid.
3. J.D. Cunningham, op.cit., I, p.85.
religious prejudices of his people fully well, the Maharaja, however, could not stipulate to this sort of missionary propaganda and the teaching of English to the princes was thus continued privately. Nonetheless the Maharaja persuaded some of the courtiers to send their children to Ludhiana for education in English at the state expense one of whom being Bishan Singh, the adopted son of Jamedar Khushal Singh whom M'Gregor records as a promising scholar. Moreover, the Sikh boys were attached to the French and English officers to receive education from the foreigners.\footnote{Ibid.}

J.G. Lowrie gives a very interesting account of his visit to Lahore and the discussions he had with the Maharaja and his ministers with a view to exploring the possibility of opening an English School in Lahore. The Maharaja heard of the arrival of Revd Lowrie in Ludhiana through his vakil and sent him an invitation to pay him a visit. Lowrie was received by Fakir Nur-ud-Din, a brother of Fakir Aziz-ud-Din. Nurud-Din introduced the subject of an English school asking how he could teach English to the natives without knowing native language, and how he would act if students wanted to learn different branches of learning and who would decide on the branches to be taught. Later he was visited by Fakir Aziz-ud-Din himself, who initiated conversation first on the happy relations between the two nations and then shifted into the subject of education. The Fakir asked him what had been the course of his studies, whether he had studied in military science and what would become of the Missionary School at Ludhiana if he came to Lahore. The Fakir next brought with him
some boys who would study English under him, and requested him to read out from the 'New Testament', the Gospel of St. John. This the guest compiled with. Some of the Sikh chiefs, he was told, were anxious to have their sons acquainted with English.

Finally, Lowrie interviewed the Maharaja himself who talked with him on God, marriage, health, medicine, military science and on his 'Guest's' learning. The subject of the English school was thrashed out at length, but Lowrie was keen on the study of the Bible and regarded it as the sine-gua-non of any educational enterprise. It was with regrets on both sides that he left Lahore without agreeing upon a concerted plan of action.¹

¹ J.C. Lowrie, Two Years in Upper India, (New York, 1850), pp. 47, 143, 146, 169.
5.14 **Educational Policy of the British Government in the Punjab**

The educational policy adopted by the British Government in the Punjab in the middle of the nineteenth century did not differ from what it had been in other parts of the country. The pattern of education remained almost the same, when the British Government became responsible for the expansion of education in this part of India. The purpose and methods of education had thus its parallels in other parts of the country. However, some local variations in the system were bound to come, because the population to whom education was imparted, was a little different, than it had been in other parts of the sub-continent. This was a matter of investigation, because the variations in the new educational set up in this region were not fully known by then.

Punjab had a number of religious groups in the society. While the interest of the Hindus was to be kept in view, the interest of the Muslims was not to be neglected. The British Government was to look after their religious commitments. Similarly Punjab had a different and promising religious group under the influence of Sikhism. Therefore, while the Government was very keen to spread English language and European institutions and culture in this part, like other parts of India, it was not to despise local sentiments and interests. It therefore, encouraged the indigenous system of education on the one hand and introduced English education on the other. In Punjab thus English language and other modern subjects were also introduced in the vernacular schools.
5.15. Purpose of Introduction of English Education in the Punjab:

As elsewhere in the country, the main purpose of the English education and the aim of the birth of new liberal class knowing even indigenous languages and educational systems had been to give personnels to serve the British administration. We therefore, find some emphasis on the education of English language in the schools of the Punjab after 1844 A.D.

3.16. Hunter Commission Report:

It is reported by the Hunter commission that English knowing people were given preference in the appointment of government services. It therefore, had a natural impact on the expansion of English education in the Punjab. Similarly people were attracted even to the indigenous centres of primary education, because educated people, by and large, had good opportunities of job, besides they enjoyed more respect in the Indian society.

G.W.Lietner observes that the Government had adopted many other policies to attract good scholars for taking more interest in the cause of the spread of education. For example, eminent teachers were highly respected in the society. Rewards were also made to successful teachers and authors by the State and other authorities.1

1. G.W.Lietner, op.cit., p.31.
Another aspect of the educational policy of the British Government was not only to open new educational institutions, but also to give aid to already running ones. Missionaries were also invited and encouraged to extend their support to the vernacular schools and colleges. It had a natural impact on the rich section of the society of the Punjab. They also participated in funding schools and colleges. Consequently, therefore we find a satisfactory growth in primary, secondary and other education in the Punjab, after it became a British province in 1849\(^1\), which however, is beyond the scope of the present study.

\[1.\] W. Hunter, *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, p. 312.