SECTION : SEVEN

SOME CONCLUSIONS
Chapter XXII

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Education in India was nothing new when the British introduced their system of education. In every part of the country some system of education was prevalent to suit the needs of the people. The British rulers did not develop that system of education but introduced the Western system which is still vogue in our country. It has no doubt developed a new outlook but has produced a general feeling of dissatisfaction.

The official policy was not consistent. This was changing according to the changing circumstances. First, there was the stage of Missionary activity in the field of education and State quiescence. This was followed by a stage of spasmodic and unsystematized official efforts. Then there was a systematic effort of the Government directed mainly towards the promotion of collegiate education. Fourthly, there was the recognition of public instruction as a State obligation and an effort to fulfil it
by the extension of secondary education. Lastly, there was a systematic effort for the development of elementary education among the masses. The policies changed as days passed by.

The aims and objectives of education were also different at different times. At first the official policy was that of conversion through Western education. With this motive Government openly encouraged Missionary activities. It was the view of Macaulay that no Hindu who had received an English education would ever remain sincerely attached to his religion. Macaulay, however, was wrong and Government had to change soon their policy of encouraging conversion. Government introduced a system of education that would train the Indian youth for taking up subordinate posts in the East India Company. The search for employment after obtaining a school certificate, college diploma or University degree, had been undoubtedly a dominating factor in dictating the method and organisation of Indian education at least throughout the nineteenth century. But along with this dominating motive the philanthropic aims of education were also present. Persons like Munro, Elphinstone, Hardinge and Ripon never forgot this aim while enunciating their educational policy. So it is wrong to say that the Government introduced Western education only with the sole aime
of training men for the services. The different objectives of the educational policy were emphasised at different times by the different authorities. The lure of service diminished in course of time as posts became scarce and seekers after service more numerous. Along with this problems of indiscipline and irreverence cropped up. Government now emphasised the need for moral education and the building up of the character of the youth. Even the idea of education for citizenship and training for self-government came up later not as a deliberate objective of education but only as a by-product of the educational policy of the Government.

But one thing was definitely lacking - the objective of 'complete education' or the development of the full personality of the individual. Much emphasis was laid on this aspect of training by Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. Tagore held the view that education must combine the introspective vision of the universal soul with the spirit of the outward expression in service. The English education on the other hand emphasised more the actual service for human welfare and the assertion of the primacy of the human will. Like Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi believed in a complete education. His view was that along with mental training, the total conscious and graded pursuit of economic activities also would give the child the most suitable type of
education for social living. His principal idea was to impart the whole education of the body and the mind and the soul through the handicraft that was taught to the children. The motive and aim of education for both Tagore and Gandhi was that it must be comprehensive and aim at the development of the total personality of the individual in harmony with society and nature. The educational policy followed by the Government of India lacked such an ideal.

Government's policy in the beginning was to educate only the upper classes of the society. They believed in starting from the top instead of raising the foundation! The education of the higher classes, they believed, would permeate in course of time to the masses from above. This policy of educating first the top classes and leaving the masses ignorant was known as the "Downward Filtration Theory" in education, and the British rulers in India conveniently adopted this policy. The main motive behind this partiality in education was the desire to create a class of people who would be English in everything except colour. This class, Government thought, would be the pillars of British administration in India. Another reason was the lack of identification between the Government and the masses. Government hoped that the upper classes would be the link between the rulers and the ruled and would in course of time educate the masses in turn. This, however, did not happen in India. The British bureaucracy in India
became suddenly jealous and denied the representative character of the educated Indian class and began to educate the masses directly and thereby claimed their leadership. It is true that the educated Indian intelligentsia had no really solid claim to represent the masses; but they certainly had a better claim to do so than the British bureaucracy.

The policy of introducing Western education resulted in the destruction of a system of education that was prevalent in our country. The indigenous system was no doubt a defective one in many respects, but there were some healthy features too. With the introduction of an entirely new system of education the existing institutions were allowed to decay slowly. The existing structure was allowed to fall down and a new edifice in its place with no strong foundation was built. This was not a sound policy. The best thing would have been to continue with the old traditions and allow the old to run smoothly into the new. Instead of that, the British Government set up a new rival system of education and consequently the indigenous system died out.

Government's policy of encouraging higher education resulted in the negligence of mass education. Institutions for higher learning flourished but there was no proportionate growth of elementary schools. This brought out a top-heavy
structure, which more or less neglected the foundation of a really sound educational system. Education remained as a privilege of the few and nothing serious was done for developing the mass education. But very soon higher education outstripped the economic development of the country and the supply of educated persons outgrew the demand for jobs.

An important decision taken by the policy makers during the nineteenth century was the introduction of English as the medium of instruction. This decision was taken after careful thinking and much controversy. The idealism of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the undeveloped state of the indigenous vernaculars and the needs of the administration, combined to make the language of the rulers the medium of instruction, not only of higher education, but gradually of school education as well. This undue importance to English retarded the development of the Vernaculars as suitable media of instruction and, worse, it retarded education itself. Learning through an alien medium handicapped the child. The policy had to be modified. The demand for Vernacular medium was everywhere and Government introduced the compromise policy of "English for the elite and the Vernaculars for the multitude." The officials, however, took no concrete steps for the improvement of the Vernaculars or for their introduction as medium of instruction. The Vernaculars were neglected and it was felt that they
were not fit for medium of communication and instruction. With the rise of nationalism in India there was greater demand for introducing Vernaculars. Government gave the choice of introducing them or keeping English as the medium to the management. The question is a live issue even today in so far as the higher education is concerned.

As the educational objectives of the rulers were limited the scope of training too was limited. There was an over-emphasis on purely literary education and this has done an inconceivable harm to the young generation of our country. Technical education and industrial education were ignored. This policy was partly due to the lack of interest of the rulers in the industrial development of the country. The over-emphasis on purely literary education cramps the originality of children and thousands of promising children with practical bend of mind were condemned as 'misfits' and 'unfits.' Later a few institutions were started for imparting practical education but these remained experimental ones and the general system continued to be that of excessively literary and insufficiently vocational.

As the emphasis was on literary education there was a domination of examinations in the educational system of our country. In the secondary school system the School Leaving Certificate was the aim of the students as it was the minimum qualification for the entrance to the University and into the
lower ranks of Government service. The whole system of education became text-book-centred and examination-centred. Undue importance was given to the study of prescribed text books and passing the examination with a view to obtain degrees and certificates. The acquisition of a general knowledge, moral training and culture were neglected. Knowledge was pursued more as a means to material progress and worldly success than for providing the secrets of a happy and virtuous life.

A system of education which was purely literal and examination centred became rigid in course of time. No allowance had been made in the education of the boys and girls for differences in sex and in secondary education no provision had been made for varied aptitudes. In rural schools no account of village life had been taken, and in the urban school of the practical, commercial and industrial pursuits of the towns and city. The children and youth, irrespective of sex, age, intellectual capacity and natural and inherited aptitudes had been cast into a uniform educational mould at every step of the educational ladder, from the primary to the middle school and from the latter to the high school and the University. The system of education was artificially simplified into the moulding of the varied individual faculties on a common pattern. A rigid uniformity and disregard
of practical intelligence were the consequences of such a system of education.

The policies of the Government of India were largely decided by financial considerations. The funds available were limited but the demand was from everywhere. Government policy was formed on the basis of treating education only as a legitimate object of expenditure and not as an imperative charge on the revenues, as is done by every civilised Government of the twentieth century. It had been the declared policy of the Government of India to utilise private effort to the full extent in the extension of education in general and of secondary education in particular. Here and there, Government schools were maintained or founded, but the policy of gradual withdrawal from the field of education was followed by the Government. Government, however, wanted to maintain a few model institutions and exercise control over the remaining private schools through the Department of Public Instruction established in each province. This policy of utilising private efforts to the fullest extent and to take no initiative proved detrimental to the cause of primary education though it had achieved success in the case of secondary education. The majority of secondary schools received about 15 to 30 per cent of their total expenses from the Government in the form of annual grants. The remaining expenses were met by fees,
endowments, subscriptions and donations which were classified as "expenditure from private funds." These heavy contributions from private funds amounting to more than two-thirds the expenditure proved the contention of the popular parties that the rise in the number of secondary institutions was due entirely to the earnestness of the people for higher education and in no way to the encouragement of the Government. The public criticized the Government for having been entirely apathetic to the interest of the people in the matter of education. The Government had never spent a penny more than what it could conveniently spare after all other wants were satisfied.

The greatest wrong inflicted on Indian education by the educational policy of the Government had been on the spiritual side. The inculcation of moral principles formed no part of Indian education. A godless system of education was prescribed more than a century ago for the sake of observing "strict religious neutrality". Education was divorced from religion and a system of education based on the traditional code of ethics was uprooted. The general opinion was that the Indian youth were freed from the control of the old beliefs without putting them under the yoke of any other system of moral order. As an antidote to this evil, religious education ed in a dogmatic and class book style was suggested.
The Government were blamed for an educational policy which, respecting Hindu susceptibilities, concerned itself exclusively with secular subjects and was absolutely independent of faith and creed.

Lastly education in India during the British period was not based on an integrated culture preserving all the values of the past and adding to them the new values acquired from the West. On the other hand it was one-sided. The past was forgotten and the individuality of India was sacrificed. India too has a life and spirit of its own, and so it could have been developed best provided her education had been Indian. Education in England grew up from the past as a living organic part of the life of the people. An educational system suitable for the industrial country would not have been suitable for a purely agricultural country that India was under British rule and any blind adoption of such a system was only a duplication, if not a caricature. A knowledge of Western arts and sciences was no doubt essential but what was needed most was the policy of synthesis rather than of substitution. India should have evolved her own system of education in the light of her own traditions and let them grow up gradually.

On the whole the educational policy of the Government
of India did not aim at providing education for leadership, education for the industrial regeneration of India, education for the defence of the mother land and education required by the people of a self government nation. But any criticism of the system based on imperfect analogies is often unjust. It is not just, for instance, to compare Indian system in its infancy with natural systems of the Western world. Again the common charge that the higher education of India had been built up on a slender foundation of popular education is one that might have been levelled against every country in Europe at some period of its history. India was only passing through stages taken by other countries in their time. Inspite of the many defects the system helped India to become a political unity. There had been also a wide growth of religious tolerance due to the spread of the Western education. Still further, the study of European history and English literature had awakened in many Indian minds a love of country rising above the narrower love of caste and sect.

A historic review of the educational policy would convince any one that it has been a process of mere adjustments, of grouping of subjects and additions and omissions of courses of studies, keeping the frame work untouched. The various Commissions and Government Resolutions failed to suggest a method of demolishing the structure and build-
ing up a new one. Attempts were made for mechanical but not organic adjustments, additions or deletions without in any way breaking the frame-work. This policy of patching up of the defective system was weak. As the Education Commission recently pointed out there is no place for half-hearted policies in the days ahead. We must either build a sound, balanced, effective and imaginative educational system to meet our developing needs and respond to our challenging aspirations or be content to be swept aside by the strong currents of history. The most important and urgent reform needed in education is to transform it, to endeavour to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby make it a powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of the national goals.