Chapter Three
WOMEN EDUCATION FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY
(Ancient, Medieval and British Period)

3.1 Silent History Speaks Louder Than the Words

Education in India has always been valued more than mere considering it as a means towards earning a good living. Right from the pre-historic days, education has been given a predominant position in the Indian society. Ancient India considered knowledge as a third eye that gives insight into all affairs. Education was imparted in the Gurukulas, Agrahars, Viharas and Madarasas, throughout the country. The great universities flourished in India when most of the western world was groping in the dark. Those were the halcyon days when India led the world in scientific knowledge and philosophical speculations. Great scholar Max Muller has narrated in his own words: “If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions to some of them which well deserve the attention of even those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India”. Though the glimpses of the original Indian education is still felt yet what it is today is the mix and match version of different rules. The impact of colonial rule on India has or made the education system less innovative, non creative and least original. Had the colonial rulers built their education on this great tradition by introducing modern science and technology into curriculum, perhaps, Indian education system would have topped on the world map.

3.2 Women Education in Vedic Period

To understand the social, political and cultural setup of the Vedic period and the Aryan civilization we need to peep into the four Vedas; Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda and their branches; Brahmanas and Upanishads. There are no historical and archaeological sources for the Vedic period in Indian History, therefore, historians always relied on the Vedas for the information. The Vedic period is divided into two parts; the Early Vedic Period and the Later Vedic Period.

In the early Vedic period the family system was patriarchal in nature but women had control over the entire family unit and they enjoyed equal status with man. In the Vedic period women could take part in the sacrificial rituals along with their husband. Women had
patriarchal rights and privileges and they were given proper education. In upper class families Upanayana ceremony was performed for both girls and boys and education was considered important for getting a suitable match for marriage. There are no evidences of Child Marriages and therefore education was possible for women. Women were divided into two sections; Brahmavadinis who could study theology and philosophy throughout their life and Sadyodvahas who used to study till marriage.

In the Vedic Period there were many literary women like “Visvavara”, “Apala” and “Ghoshia” who used to compose hymns and mantras and could be compared to the rishis. There were women teachers called as Upadhyayinis. Lopamudra composed 179 hymns for Rig Veda along with rishi Agasthya. Education of women in the Vedic period proves that the Aryans believed in the right social order, equality and respect for the women. There was no gender discrimination in the Vedic period. Due to this equal social order birth of a daughter was welcomed as that of the son. Society was free of the social evils like female infanticide, sati pratha, child marriages, pardha pratha, etc. Even widows were allowed to live a life of dignity and widow remarriage was allowed.

Marriage ages for girls was after the attainment of puberty and girls were having right to selection of her life partner. Inter-caste marriages were allowed in the society as the society was divided into varnas not the rigid system of caste.

Women enjoyed social freedom and freedom of movement. They were allowed to attend fairs and festivals and could move outside and attend political Shabas and assemblies along with their husband. Husband and wife were considered as the equal halves of one another and one substance and had to perform all their duties towards religion and society equally. The status of women started degenerating in the Later Vedic period when the society started following caste system which is very rigid in nature.

3.3 Women Education in the Smriti Period/Later Vedic Period

The Aryan social rules started changing with the invasion of Alexander in 326 B.C. along with his soldiers who did not give much regards to the chastity of women. Therefore, strict laws and codes were made by the Hindu society. Period between 500 B.C. and 600 B.C. saw great changes in the Aryan social structure. The historical sources to know about the Later Vedic period are the Brahmanas, Upanishads and the great epics as well as Artha Shastra written by Chanakya. These literary sources throw light on the position of women which became quite restricted in the Later Vedic period. Family was patriarchal and women’s role
was marginalised, she lost her importance and was treated as chattel, and was expected to be obedient which secluded her from rest of the society. Writers of the Smriti period Chanakya, Manu and Yajnavalkya were in favour of seclusion of women.

The laws made by the Smiriti writers like Manu and Yajnavalkya did not favour equality of women and degraded her. Women lost their right to choose the life partner and were married before attaining puberty and rights related to divorce, property and inheritance were taken away from her. Widows’ condition became miserable and they were denied remarriage and had to lead a life of restrictions and seclusions. They were denied presence in the auspicious ceremonies. Indian women were denied their rightful position in the family as well as society. Society started considering women as weak and thus was supposed to be protected and disciplined. There was no sense of social justice in the laws and codes made by the law makers who were all men and their attitude was chauvinistic and their rules literally degraded women for generations and till date. Child marriages were encouraged as women were considered a child-bearing machine. A small girl child was burdened with lot of responsibility of child-rearing an age when she herself was not mature physically and mentally. This practice of child marriage is still followed in the country after the passage of the centuries in the name of social rules and ethics.

A number of restrictions were imposed on women as per the Artha Shastra written by Chanakya. His one of the rules states that if a woman goes out for sports or to see a woman during day time is supposed to pay a fine of six panas (Indra, 1958). Women were denied ‘Right to Freedom’ and were restricted at home. For this condition Emily Dickinson has articulated ironically in one of her poems: “they put me in the closes, because they liked me still”.

Slowly and steadily Indian woman became a mere instrument in the hands of man and her position also became subordinate reducing her self confidence. Woman was entangled in the role of daughter, wife, mother etc. and was ment for producing children, managing house, etc. Along with this woman also became an object to be sold and purchased because of the beginning of the practice of bride money which now is called as a custom of dowry. According to Manu nature of woman is wicked thus she must be controlled by strong and superior man. Due to these changes and deterioration in the status of woman this age is called as the “age of transition”.
Man was allowed to remarry in case his wife could not produce a son for him or absolutely barren or was quarrelsome with him. Husband could beat and punish wife for her fault. According to Manu, “a woman should be beaten by a rope or a split bamboo” to keep her in place. Hindu society has kept Manu alive consciously by religiously following his laws and codes though the results of these laws and codes are disastrous for woman.

3.4 Women Education during the Buddhist Period

The Buddhist period in Indian history brought a breath of fresh air and a wave of change for the betterment of woman and womanhood. The period between 3rd Century B.C. and 6th Century B.C. witnessed the Buddhist ideology which was kindness and compassion towards living beings. Buddhism was more liberal towards woman as compared to Brahmanism in which law and order was made by the Dharma shastras. Due to the liberal ideology Buddhism came as a “blessing in disguise” for the oppressed classes and women. Buddha believed in the equality of man and woman for attaining salvation. He thought of improving the status of Indian women who were ill treated by the Hindu religion. All the reforms of Buddha were based on love and compassion for all the living beings including women. According to Buddha women need freedom and equality based on the sense of justice.

Buddhist period saw a lot of changes in the upliftment of the status of women. During the Brahminical period a son was required in a family to get moksha or salvation and if a wife was unable to produce a son was discarded by the husband. But in Buddhist period daughters were given due respect and even adoption of daughters was validated and encouraged. As per the right to equality and freedom of choice women were allowed to choose their life partner. Child marriages were discouraged and the right age of marriage according to Buddha was 20. Buddha encouraged women education like Vedic tradition of educating the girls, elementary education was given at home. Initially women were not given permission for entry in the monasteries but in due course of time they were given admission in the monasteries and the education imparted was same for men and women. In the Kshatriya families women were educated at home. In the Buddhist monastic order women were given entry and became nuns called Therigathas. These nuns composed verses and were renowned chroniclers. They also propagated Buddhism by travelling from place to place; one such example is King Ashoka’s daughter Sanghmitra who went to Sri Lanka to propagate Buddhism.

Buddhist Sangh had given attention to the cultural development and social uplift of the women. There are many examples, which show that Buddhist Sanghs gave high spiritual
training to women. Even among Lord Buddha’s disciples there were Shishyas prominent among them as Dhamma Dinna.

Generally women entered the Sangs out of keen interest and deep religious feelings. Some had also joined in to get rid of the troubles of the worldly affairs. As the Bhikshunis did not like to maintain inferior position, so they were more interested in the studies leading to pious life. Though Buddhist literature does not speak much of the system of education of Bhikshunis, yet, there are some references to new-comer Bhikshunis taking charge of their education. There were Bhikshunis whose spiritual knowledge was very high and they could influence a good number of people. There is a story of a Bhikshuni named Sumka whose lectures influenced the audience very much. Many Bikshunis took the duties of social services also. They served the sick, orphans, etc. and considered it to be their prime duty. Some of them studied philosophy deeply and had become poetess and writers. Some of them had even gone to foreign countries to preach Buddhism. Sheel Bhattrika, Prabhudevi and Viyanka were famous in those days as poetess and writers. Sister of Emperor Ashoka Sanghmitra was a very famous Bhikshuni who had done remarkable services to Buddhism. Some Bhikshunis had studied even politics and took active part in politics of the day. Dr. R.K. Mukerji says, “The Buddhist convent opened out to women opportunities for education and culture and varied spheres of social service in which they made themselves the equal of men supplementing their work in the spread of their faith.” But, during the Buddhist period education was accessible to only the higher class women. According to A.S. Altekar, “Female education could not get any impetous from Buddhism.”

Looking at Buddhistic system of education from various points of view, it may be concluded that the system began to face downfall due to its shortcomings and demerits, which developed in the monasteries and Viharas. In the later period, however, Buddhist system of education had more qualities than its demerits. It laid the foundation of a high culture and inspired people to lead pure, simple and ideal life.

3.5 Women Education during the Medieval Period

The aim of education during the Medieval Period was the extension of knowledge and the propagation of Islamic principles, laws and social conventions. Education was based on religion. Its aim was to make persons religious-minded. The Muslim education also aimed at the achievement of material prosperity. Education was organised in ‘Maktabs’ and
‘Madarsas’. Primary education was given in ‘Maktabs’ and higher education was given in ‘Madarsas’.

i. Maktabs – In ‘Maktabs children were made to remember the ‘Ayats’ of ‘Quran’. They were also imparted the education of reading, writing and primary arithmetic. When the children had learnt the Arabic script, they were given the education in Persian language and script. The stories of Prophets and Muslim ‘Fakirs’ were also told to the children. Children were imparted the knowledge of art of writing letters and conversation.

ii. Madarsas – After completing the primary education, the children were sent to ‘madarsas’ to receive higher education. Here there were separate teachers for different subjects. Special emphasis was laid on the education of religious as well as secular subjects. The religious education included the study of ‘Quran’, Mohammad Saheb and his preachings, Islamic laws and Islamic history, etc. The secular education included the study of Arabic literature, Grammar, History, Philosophy, Mathematics, Geography, Politics, Economics, Greek Language, Astrology and Agriculture, etc.

During the Muslim period education received a great patronage of state. The Muslim rulers established many Maktabs, Madarsas, libraries, etc., and patronised many scholars. They also granted scholarships to many students. Education was made compulsory for boys. Although, the purdah system that has been part of the Muslim culture for a long time, was strictly observed in India during their rule. Girls were not allowed to go to a Madarsa for receiving higher education. However, they were allowed to go to a Maktab for primary education. The girls could learn only reading, writing and arithmetic. But even during the Muslim period there have been some very learned women who made unique contributions to the development of literature. The empress Nurijahan was a learned woman. She very well carried on state administration. Arrangements for education of princesses were made in the palace. Similarly, rich people used to arrange for education of their girls in their own homes. Music was taught to princess in the palace by carefully selected Ustads (teachers). Sultana Razia, Princess Gul Badan, daughter of Babur, Aurangzeb’s daughter Zebunnisa are examples of learned royal ladies. Gul Badan wrote the famous ‘Humayun Nama’. Zebunnisa was a scholar of Arabic and Persian. Sultana Suleema, Mumtaz Mahal, Jahan Ara were highly educated in art and literature. However, as only the royal princesses and ladies and
daughters of very rich people could receive education during the Muslim period, education of common Muslim women was completely ignored.

There were no institutions for education of girls during the Muslim period, but girls did receive religious education in the recitation of the Quran in their homes. However, the women of royal and aristocratic families received education of high quality and practical character. Notable among them are: Razia Begum, Gul Begham (Babar’s daughter), Noor Jahan, Muntaz Mahal, Jahanara Begham (daughter of Shah Jahan), and Zebunnissa Beghum (Aurangzeb’s daughter).

3.6 Rajasthan: From the Pages of History

3.6.1 Ancient Period up to 1200 AD
Rajput clans emerged and held their sway over different parts of Rajasthan from about 700 AD. Before that, Rajasthan was a part of several republics. It was a part of the Mauryan Empire. Other major republics that dominated this region include the Malavas, Arjunyas, Yaudhyas, Kushans, Saka Satraps, Guptas and Hunas. The Rajput clan’s ascendancy in Indian history was during the period from the eighth to the twelfth century AD. The Pratihars ruled Rajasthan and most of northern India during 750-1000 AD. Between 1000-1200 AD, Rajasthan witnessed the struggle for supremacy between Chalukyas, Parmars and Chauhans.

3.6.2 Medieval Period 1201 - 1707
Around 1200 AD a part of Rajasthan came under Muslim rulers. The principal centers of their powers were Nagaur and Ajmer. Ranthanbhor was also under their suzerainty. At the beginning of the 13th century AD, the most prominent and powerful state of Rajasthan was Mewar.

3.6.3 Modern Period 1707 - 1947
Rajasthan had never been united politically until its domination by Mughal Emperor Akbar who created a unified province of Rajasthan. Mughal power started to decline after 1707. The political disintegration of Rajasthan was caused by the dismemberment of the Mughal Empire. The Marathas penetrated Rajasthan upon the decline of the Mughal Empire. In 1755 they occupied Ajmer. The beginning of the 19th Century was marked by the onslaught of the Pindaris. In 1817-18 the British Government concluded treaties of alliance with almost all the states of Rajputana. Thus began the British rule over Rajasthan, and then called Rajputana.
3.6.4 Post Independence

The erstwhile Rajputana comprised 19 princely states and two chiefships of Lava and Kushalgarh and a British administered territory of Ajmer-Merwara. Rajasthan State was heterogeneous conglomeration of separate political entities with different administrative systems prevailing in different places. The present State of Rajasthan was formed after a long process of integration which began on March 17, 1948 and ended on November 1, 1956. Before integration it was called Rajputana; after integration it came to be known as Rajasthan. At present there are 32 districts (including the new district of Karauli), 105 sub-divisions, 241 tehsils, 37889 inhabited villages and 222 towns in the State.

3.7 Women Education among the Rajput Nobility

3.7.1 Introduction

Education of the royal women received considerable importance among the Rajput nobility, with a variation in its form according to specific circumstances. For the royal families of Rajasthan, the aim of giving education was to prepare an individual to read the religious text for the attainment of the best of life through character building, administrative skills to look after their own jagirs and staff, military training in the handling of weapons, arms and horseback riding, letter writing as a mode of communication and expression of thoughts and feelings. But education to the women of the ruling chiefs and nobles was imparted within the confines of their homes. Brahmin men and women were appointed to impart education to the women of affluent families. Teachers were given salaries and facilities, either in cash or in kind. Major J. P. Nixon has stated that, he was surprised to find that a good number of female children of the upper classes of the Hindus were able to read and write, though they had never been to a formal school. Education was more of religious in character and the subjects of study included the attainment of knowledge related to Dharamshastras, Puranas, Vedas, and other religious texts. The other subjects of study were the study of books related to the religious fasts (vrats and kathas). Other subjects included the study of grammar, Hindi, Sanskrit, painting, letter writing and even arithmetic.

It appears that the books chosen broadened their vision. Women were provided knowledge of the daily necessities of life; names of fruits and flowers, names of garments, ornaments and various cosmetic items; knowledge of shakun (omens) and jantra-mantra was also provided.
Knowledge was also provided about the consequences of the various omens, good and bad, and the measures to ward off the later. Similarly, dreams were also considered a medium by which early knowledge of some of the future events could be associated. A book named ‘Sapnawati’ contains such information. Lessons about minor ailments and their cure and first-aid were also provided.

Guidance and training about feudal etiquette also formed part of their curriculum. Girls were taught not to talk loudly, not to laugh in public, to walk slowly, to respect elders, not to sit and talk in front of the elders, how to properly use titles; words of respect while talking to elders, and other aspects of proper decorum. No deviation from these codes was allowed. Practical observation at home enabled them to learn more. Thus, oral guidance by the elder ladies and the personal tutors acquainted them with the established customs and traditions of the family.

Thus, the syllabus of study covered practically all aspects of life. The study of language and literature enabled them to read religious scriptures. General knowledge included the knowledge of all the daily necessities of life. At the same time, military training, essential for the Rajput princesses, boosted their self-confidence and enabled them to face any grave situation with courage.

The British officers contributed significantly to the cause of female education in Rajasthan. With the help of their power and influence, they convinced the rulers of the states to open educational institutions and schools. Consequently, efforts towards female education began in the later half of the 19th century. After the establishment of the first state school in Mewar in 1863, Major Nixon advised Maharana Shambhu Singh to establish a girls’ school on the same line. Being forced by the continued advice of Major Nixon, he conceded to the arrangement of conducting classes for the education of girls along with the state school in 1866. This was the first state girls’ school in the whole of Rajasthan. There were familial restrictions on girls and consequently, many upper class Rajput families did not consider it proper to send their girls to school.

What perhaps gave impetus to a desire for female education among the Rajput nobility was the growing awareness in the larger society itself. Many associations were established in Rajasthan for the purpose of social reforms, emphasising the need to educate girls. The English educated section of the society realised the importance of education not only for the male population but for females as well. And began focusing attention to such pursuit.
Moreover, their direct association with the British officers, their wives, and foreign visits brought a considerable change in their attitude towards women, liberalising their conservative mindset. The influence of women’s education in other communities also had a favourable impact on the Rajput society. Consequently, society’s attitude towards education of women underwent a gradual change, as evident from the efforts of the rulers, the jagirdars and the maharanis (backed by the maharajas) as well.

In 1943, Maharani Gayatri Devi Public School and a Maharani Intermediate College were established in Jaipur. This was due to the joint endeavours of the maharaja and maharani of Jaipur. Maharani Gayatri Devi planned to open a school for girls in an effort to initiate measures for the emancipation of women. Regarding the opening of the school, Maharani Gayatri Devi writes: “In the 1940s it presented endless problems and unexpected setbacks. I decided that the school should be primarily for the daughters of the noble families and the higher echelons of society, because it was their women folk who observed the rules of Purdah more strictly. Among the middle classes, girls were already being educated, but the nobility had quite different ideas and were far more hidebound in their lives. Many of them owned enormous estates and lived in palaces that were almost as princely as our own. Their women all lived in the Zenanas and most of their daughters received no education at all but simply waited to grow up and marry a suitable husband of their father’s choice. Many of them lived in the outlying parts of the state and might never come to the city, spending all their lives first in one Zenana and then in another. If they came in my school, I thought in ten years time we might see a breakthrough by them.” She also writes: “it was from these families that I hoped to draw my first pupils for the Maharani Gayatri Devi School, knowing that if I succeeded with them, the rest would follow. I managed to pursue a few of the nobles to enroll their daughters and then set about looking for a person to run what was still only a proposal for a school. Finally in 1943, the Maharani Gayatri Devi School was opened in Jaipur with 40 students.” Expressing her doubts about its success, she also writes: “there were many misgivings on the part of their families and many doubts and second thoughts on my part. I had little confidence that the school would run more than its first term. I remember in particular a gym lesson where it would be impossible for anyone to discipline this group of girls, all unsure of themselves, all unable to see the point of going through a series of exercises that must have seemed to them both uncomfortable and immodest. But with endless tact, patience, and perseverance, Miss Lutter guided the school through its first year and went on to build one of the finest institutions in India.”
All these educational institutions rendered a great service to the society, especially when the cause for education was taken over by the maharanis and the rulers. Their keen interest in education made it easy for other women of the royal families and the daughters of the nobility to emulate their example.

3.7.2 Attitudes of Various Generations towards Education

The first generation respondents did not receive formal schooling. They were provided domestic instruction, which was gradually confined to a few moral concept of duty and mythological legends of one’s faith and other aspects, as described earlier. The elder male members of the family, who were educated at Mayo, were keenly aware that without education and the knowledge of English, their children could not create a place for themselves in the emerging secular society. Knowledge of the vernacular was not enough; the importance of English was also felt.

The second generation respondents expressed a common view that education at their time was looked upon merely as an embellishment. Some of them received domestic instruction, and a few received formal schooling. The first and second generations viewed education as the need of the time, without which an individual could not make a place for himself.

The progressive outlook of the grandparents and parents fostered female education. The third and fourth generation respondents were sent to missionary or public schools, where they received formal education. The traditionally emphasized aspects, such as letter writing, military and administrative skills, and others, were given little importance in these schools. These schools churned out smart, well-rounded students. English as a medium of instruction was also emphasized for a brighter future.

The third generation respondents viewed formal education as a basic necessity, for it would provide self-reliance to the girls in case of unforeseen calamities or difficulty in marriage. It was felt that in such a competitive world – with soaring prices and an inclination on the part of the girls to derive some economic benefit, if they wanted – it was very much important that they be well-educated to walk hand-in-hand with the changing times. More than anyone else, educated parents realized the benefits and value of education for their children. They took care to impart the best available education to their daughters, realizing that it would instill in them a sense of confidence, so that they would not feel inferior to the girls of other communities who had received formal education.
3.7.3 Conclusion

Formal education was not considered necessary till the first quarter of the 20th century in Rajasthan. Generally, women received religion-based education, and they were expected to imbibe the qualities of traditional Hindu virtuous women-figures such as Sita, Sati, and Savitri. Men received formal education, but even among them, it was not pursued with real earnestness. Such lack of serious regard for education, and non-realization of formal education, affected their attitudes towards the women of the family. Consequently, no ideological change could be brought about regarding women’s education.

By the second quarter of the 20th century, the value of education was realized. A considerable number of men had received, or were receiving, education at the Mayo College. As the men were receiving schooling in India’s best institutions, they began to desire educated companions, too, and thus encouraged women pursue further studies. It was also felt that with some education, the women would be better equipped to cope with the changed situation arising out of the British influences and foreign tours. There was an emphasis on English education, as the present Rajmata Krishna Kumari of Jodhpur expressed, ‘My husband used to encourage me to learn Guajarati, to have English lessons and not to be so shy.’ The ladies and the girls were given English lessons so that they could speak English fluently and without any inhibition.

Many of the women accompanied their husbands and fathers abroad. They went from the orthodox atmosphere at home, to a relatively modern one abroad. In this way, they were introduced to the western way of life. In summers, they also visited and stayed at hill stations where most of the British ladies spent their summers.

These foreign-returned and English-educated ladies felt the difference between the two settings. It certainly brought a change of attitude in them. As Shobha Kanwar Baiji, the granddaughter of Maharaja Sir Pratap Singh of Jodhpur expresses, ‘I had an Italian governess, because of my younger brother’s health and we were in Switzerland for seven years, where I learnt French and Italian and a little German. I think can claim that I was the first girl in Rajasthan, of our family and status who had an education. The bitterest fight I had was when I found that even though I had an education, still I was being brought back to this, which was for me literally an imprisonment. I remember my thoughts in those days were – if
only I could lead suffragette movement over here. But the women would have been the last people to have followed me.’

This reflects the changing attitudes of the ladies who travelled abroad and realized the contrasts of the two civilizations – the open western outlook, and the limitations of the purdah culture back home. This section of the society was partially responsible for the change in the attitudes of the next generations, for they emphasized educations, a broad outlook, and secular traits.

‘With the growing section of the modern educated, particularly the foreign educated, a new breeze began to blow through this tradition-clad society. Lifestyles were changing and the re-oriented patterns of living generated their own compulsions. The initiative here as in other communities came at the start from men but soon was supported by women. Even some of the elder women, sensitive to the new stirring, began to have doubts on the finitely of their own existence. They desired to provide their daughters with the opportunities that had been denied to them, like formal education.

This highlights the process of attitudinal change. The rise in marriageable age provided time and opportunity to young girls to continue their study. Consequently, girls were able to pursue higher levels of education compared to the older generations. Education up to graduation has become a standard requirement for the settlement of matrimony. Also, English and convent school background was – and still is – largely desired by the boys and their families. Thus it has now become obligatory for the parents to provide education to their daughters up to graduation. Consequently, most of the third and younger-generation respondents are graduates. This provides a vivid illustration of the changing attitudes of the society.

3.8 Women Education during the British Raj (Modern Period)

3.8.1 Introduction

Though the Indian Education Structure can be traced back to Nalanda and Takshashila Institutions, still “The foundation for modern education was laid by the Britishers. They set up network of schools to impart western education in English medium (Perkin, 2006). First such college to impart western education was founded in 1818 at Serampore near Calcutta. Over the next forty years, many such schools and colleges were established in different parts
of the country like Agra, Bombay, Madras, Nagpur, Patna, Calcutta, etc. Its historical landmarks are McCauley’s Policy of 1835 to promote European learning through English, Sir Charles Woods’ Dispatch of 1854 which for the first time recognised the need for mass education with private and missionary help and gave up the policy of selective education known as the filtration theory and finally the first Indian Education Commission of 1882 which recommended the initiative of private agencies in the expansion of education”. The objective of the system of education conceived by the British Government for India was to produce a class of intermediaries between the ruler and the rules. Thus, “the main aim of starting the schools and colleges was to propagate Christianity, to have competent scholars in the Muslim and Hindu Law, and to train the British civilians in Indian languages, Indian law, and Indian History.” Out of ignorance about the great traditions of learning and education systems in India, Lord McCauley planted a system of education, which had its roots not in India but elsewhere. It was to this that Mahatma Gandhi referred to when talking about the education in an independent India, at Chatham House, London on October 20, 1931, he said; “I say without fear of my figures being challenged successfully, that today India is more literate than it was fifty or a hundred years ago, and so is Burma, because the British administrators, when they came to India instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out. They scratched the soil and began to look at the roots, and left the roots like that, and the beautiful tree perished”.

3.8.2 The Indigenous System

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the then government conducted educational surveys in all the Presidencies in order to assess the contemporary status of indigenous education in India. Sir Thomas Munro, the Governor of Madras, asked all the Collectors in the Madras Presidency (1822) to collect information about the working of the schools in their districts. The reports showed that in 1826 there were 12,498 schools, for a population of 12.85 million, providing instructions to 188,650 pupils. There was 1 school for every 1000 of the population, and 1 pupil for every 67 (Vakil and Natarajan, 1966, p.23). Based on these reports, Munro suggested certain educational reforms such as, appointment of a committee of Public Instruction, and improvement in curriculum and textbooks.

In Bombay, a similar inquiry was ordered by Mount-Stuart Elphinstone (1823), then Governor of Bombay, who was an advocate of promoting useful knowledge among the natives through the vernacular languages with the provision for learning of English. The earliest official statistics for the whole Province for the year 1829 states that the total number
of schools in the Province was 1705 with 35143 scholar while the population was stated to be 46, 81,735. These figures indicated that there was 1 school for every 2700 of the population, and that the progress of education in Bombay was only one-third as compared to Madras. There was no trace of female education as was the case in Madras. The government maintained only 25 schools enrolling 1315 students, and there were 1680 village schools with 33838 students.

William Adam (1835-38) conducted a similar survey of native education in Bengal and Bihar. Lord William Bentinck gave him this assignment at his own suggestion. Adam found that in 1835 there were 100000 village schools in Bengal and Bihar for a population of 40 million people, that is, 1 village school for every 400 of the population and for every 63 children of school going age. If girls were excluded, there would be 1 village school for every 31 or 32 boys. In his reports, Adam also revealed that in the areas of Bengal, which he surveyed, the adult male literacy percentage was 9.8, and in Bihar it was 4.9. These reports were later on rejected as a “myth” by Philip Hartog (1938) on the ground that Adam’s estimates of population and number of schools might not be based on reliable statistics. Adam also agreed that his calculations were based on uncertain premises and were only distant approximations to the truth.

The findings of these surveys indicate that indigenous education had strong roots till the end of the 18th century. Both, Hindus and Muslims had their own systems of religious education as well as they studied languages of each other. However, the indigenous system of education started decaying rapidly after it. The major reason for this decay was non-availability of adequate financial support from the traditional landlords and their rich people. The private agencies, along with some small amounts paid by students, constituted the most important source of educational finance those days. In this regard, Adam’s report said, “The means of the manufacturing classes have been of late years greatly diminished by the introduction of our own European manufacturers in lieu of the Indian cotton fabrics. The greater part of the middling and lower classes of the people are now unable to defray the expenses incident upon the education of their offspring, while their necessities require the assistance of their children as soon as their tender limbs are capable of the smallest labour”.

3.8.3 Anglicists-Orientalists Controversy

In 1816, Raja Ram Mohan Roy formed an association for setting up an institution, which would provide education in European languages and western science. Although, he was a
scholar of two oriental languages, Sanskrit and Persian, yet strongly opposed the establishment of a Sanskrit college at Calcutta. Gradually the government also realised the positive change in the minds of natives regarding English education. The young men and women developed a taste for English and demanded English education.

In the mean time, the Charter Act of the Company was renewed (1813) and the question of education in India figured in the discussions held in this regard in the British Parliament. The most important subject of discussion was the agency for the spread of education in India, and subsequently, a new provision was made in Article 43 of the Act. According to this provision, the company was directed “to accept the responsibility of the education of Indians and to spend not less than Rs. 100000 a year for this purpose”. The Charter Act of 1813 therefore, is a Magna Carta for Indian education because it ended the agitation carried out by Grant and Wilberforce, the education of Indians accepted as a duty by the Company, and missionaries were allowed to come to India for opening English schools, thereby laying the foundation of modern system of education.

In the mean time, inside the Bengal Committee of Public Instruction, a bitter struggle arose between the “Orientalists” who desired to give all higher teaching through the medium of the classical languages of India (Sanskrit for Hindus, and Arabic for Muslims), and the “Anglicists” who wished to give higher teaching through the medium of English. Mount-Stuart Elphinstone, then Governor of Bombay, who was an advocate of promoting useful knowledge among the natives through the vernacular languages with the provision for learning of English, issued his famous minute in 1823 in which he made very useful recommendations for the improvement of education. He expressed his ideas about the strategy for education in India before the Lord’s Committee in 1830. In a letter to the Secretary to the commissioner for India Affairs (1832), he wrote, “I conceive that it is more important to impart a high degree of education to the upper class than to diffuse a much lower sort of it among the common people. It will be much easier to make the lower orders desirous of learning to read, after a spirit of inquiry and improvement shall have been introduced among their superiors. The most important branch of education, in my opinion, is that designed to prepare natives for public employment”.

Elphinstone had realised that Indians, both Hindus and Muslims were very sensitive to their religion, and any attempt to tamper with their religious beliefs through education might be counter-productive. He was of the view that conversion of the natives into Christianity could not be expected through English education, and no direct attempt should be made to achieve
this end. Regarding missionary activities, he wrote, “To the mixture of religion, even in the slightest degree, with our plans of education, I must strongly object. I am convinced that the conversion of natives must infallibly result from the diffusion of knowledge among them. Fortunately, they are not aware of the connections, or all attacks on their ignorance would be as vigorously resisted as if they were on their religion. The only effect of introducing Christianity into our schools would be to sound the alarm, and warn the Brahmins of the approaching danger. The result of educating natives, both in English and in their own language, must be favourable to the progress of Christianity”.

Elphinstone favoured the education of Indian natives through both English and vernacular languages. He also favoured the involvement of natives in administration and governing bodies. He started engineering and medical classes at Bombay for both Indians and Europeans. Regarding employment of natives in offices of the Company, he wrote to Sir Thomas Munro (1822), “Besides the necessity for having good native advisors in governing natives, it is necessary that we should have the way for the introduction of the natives to some share in the government of their own country. It will not be possible to confine them to sub-ordinate employment; and if we have not previously opened vents for their ambitions and ability, we may expect an explosion which will overturn our government”.

The people of Bombay raised a fund of over two lakhs of rupees (1827), and asked the government (1831) not to appoint any native, after a time, into a government office, unless he could read, write and speak English. The said fund raised by the public was used to establish the Elphinstone College at Bombay (1834) in the memory of the services of Mount-Stuart Elphinstone to the Bombay Presidency. In the mean time the Charter Act of the Company was renewed again in 1833.

The above discussion brings out the fact that the period between 1813 and 1833 has been a period of discussions, controversies and experiments in the field of education in India. The main objectives of education, as defined in the Act of 1813 included the revival and improvement of literature, the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and the introduction and promotion of knowledge of sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories of India. But, no indication was given in the Act regarding the methods to be followed for achieving these objectives. This resulted in controversies among the Europeans who were concerned with the affairs of India. These controversies gave rise to three different schools of thought (Nurullah and Naik, 1943, p.68):
i. The first school endorsed the ideas of Warren Hastings and Minto, and advocated the encouragement of Sanskrit and Arabic studies and suggested that Western science and knowledge should be spread in India through the medium of these languages.

ii. The second group consisted of men like Elphinstone and Munro who believed in encouraging education through the medium of modern Indian languages, and argued that this was the only way to take the Western knowledge to the mass of Indian people.

iii. The third school of thought included those who endorsed Grant’s ideas of spreading the Western knowledge through the medium of English. This group consisted of the missionaries and the younger civilians in the employment of the Company.

The enlightened Indians joined these groups also according to the bent of their thinking, though their opinion in these issues mattered little. For example, Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal favoured the ideas of the third group. In fact, the Court of Directors of the Company was the final authority as far as long-term policy on education was concerned. But, it remained indifferent to these matters and allowed the provincial governments to follow their own programmes. It is for this reason that this period is known as the period of experiments. However, the experiments carried out in different provinces led to certain significant developments in education.

Influenced by different viewpoints, the General Committee of Public Instruction was divided into two groups on the question of its education policy particularly regarding the medium of instruction. Out of ten members of the Committee five favoured policy of encouraging the study of Oriental literature and were termed as ‘Orientalists’. This group was headed by H.T. Princep who was then the Secretary of Government of Bengal in the Education Department, and consisted mainly of older members of the Company’s service. The other group of five members who supported the adoption of English as a medium of instruction was termed as ‘Anglicists’. This group consisted mainly of younger servants of the Company and had no definite leader, but looked forward to the supporter of Macaulay who was the President of the General Committee of Public Instruction. The first group was of the view that the British policy of education in India should encourage the oriental/classical literature along with study of western science through vernacular languages. They argued that Indians has a prejudice against the European knowledge and science and would not accept it unless presented through their own classical language. The second group, on the other hand, pleaded for
providing western knowledge by teaching science through the medium of English. The Orientalists were extremely keen on preserving the existing institutions of Oriental Learning, while the Anglicists proposed to abolish them. Being aware of the weakness of their case the Orientalists were ready to accept a compromise formula under which the students might be given option to choose between English and the Oriental education.

The period between 1813 and 1835 was, therefore, a period of controversy between the two groups over the issues related to educational policy including the medium of instructions.

3.8.4 Macaulay and his Minute (1835)

Thomas Babington Macaulay, a member of the British Parliament, who had studied the problems of British education in India in sufficient details, made an important statement before the House of Commons. He said, “Are we to keep the people of India ignorant in order that we may keep them submissive? Or do we think that we can give knowledge without awakening ambition? Or do we mean to awaken ambition and to provide no legitimate vent? Who will answer any of these questions in affirmative? The destinies of our Indian empire are covered with thick darkness. It may be that 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. But, whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English History.”

Macaulay was a profound scholar. He came to India in 1834 as legal member of the Governor’s Executive Council. The saying that he was the father of modern Indian education is not an exaggeration. His study of the psychology of Indian society and problems of British education in India was remarkable. He also supported the theory of ‘downward filtration’ advocated for by Elphinstone and stated, “In one point, I fully agree with the gentleman whose general views I am opposed to. I feel with them that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect”.

This statement of Macaulay was pregnant with meaning, and reflected the purpose of British education in India. The purpose was not to promote socio-economic or cultural development
of the people of India, rather, to produce low cost man-power to run the British factories in India and Britain, and to help the rulers govern the natives of this land. He was a vigorous advocate of providing instruction through the medium of English, and of superiority of western science and literature. He had stated once, “We have to educate the people who cannot be present by means of their own mother tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher classes of natives at the seats of government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East the natives are desirous to be taught English and are not desirous to be taught Sanskrit and Arabic. That it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good in English scholar and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed.”

In 1835, Macaulay suggested the government a detailed plan, popularly known a Macaulay’s Minute, of British education in India. Through his famous minute, he urged the government to undertake a formal western type of education imparting knowledge of western literature and science through English as a medium of instruction. He also proposed to utilise total educational grant to achieve that goal, and to use the existing educational institutions of oriental learning for the promotion of western education. He addressed the issues involved in the controversy between the Orientalists and Anglicists and Section 43 of the Charter Act 1913 in his own way. The following statement of Nurullah and Naik (1951) is worth mentioning, “Macaulay argued that the word ‘literature’ occurring in this section could be interpreted to mean English Literature, and the epithet of a ‘learned native India’ could also be applied to a person versed in philosophy of Locke or the poetry of Milton, and the object of promoting a knowledge of sciences could only be accomplished by the adoption of English as the medium of instruction. If this interpretation was not accepted, Macaulay was willing to propose an Act rescinding Section 43 of the Charter.......referring to the question of the alleged prejudices of the Indian people against English education, Macaulay argued that it was the duty of England to teach Indians what was good for their health, and not what was palatable to their taste. Even assuming that the taste of the people should be consulted, Macaulay argued that Indians had given sufficient evidence of their love for English.”

In this way, the Anglicists emerged triumphant in their fight for supremacy over the Orientalists. Macaulay’s Minute became a major guideline for future education in India under the British rule. The plan proposed by him was not only endorsed by the government, but also widely accepted by enlightened Indians. Therefore, it is considered as an important landmark
in the history of Indian education. English language and western science started receiving increased importance in every sphere of life. It made the affluent classes realise that material progress was more important that preservation of traditional cultural values. Macaulay was very confident of obtaining the desired results. He wrote to his father (1836), “Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully. We find it difficult to provide instructions to all that want it. The effect of this education on the Hindus is prodigious. No Hindu, who has received English education, ever remains sincerely attached to his religion and some embrace Christianity. It is my firm belief, if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respected classes in Bengal 30 years hence. And this will be affected without any efforts to proselytize. I heartily rejoice in this prospect”.

The controversy between the two groups was decisively settled by Macaulay’s Minute. In perfect agreement with the views expressed by Macaulay, Lord William Bentinck, the then Governor General of India, issued a resolution (1835) saying that the great object of the British government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education should be best employed on English education.

The decision of Lord William Bentinck was re-affirmed by Lord Auckland (1839), the next Governor General, and subsequently, by the Despatch of the Court of Directors (1841) on the subject. His document was perhaps the clearest in its emphasis on what is popularly known as ‘downward filtration’, because he believed that the way to reach the masses was through the educated classes.

These developments led to the pacification of the Anglicists-Orientalists controversy with the position of the Orientalists considerably weakened. The schools for Oriental learning were maintained, but translation into Arabic and Sanskrit were discontinued. The system of “English Education” was adopted and encouraged by the Government, and developed alongside the vernacular schools.

However, in some quarters, the British policy of giving education in English and western sciences was looked at with suspicion. It was taken as a conspiracy of the then government to undermine the religious and cultural traditions of India and directed to convert the natives to Christianity. Those few who rushed for English education were isolated from the common people. This resulted in an unfortunate division of Indian people into two classes-English and Non-English knowing. The English knowing educated class developed a superiority complex,
and did not mix up with the rest of the people. This phenomenon proved to be just opposite of the one contemplated in the “downward filtration theory”. This disappointed the then government a little.

### 3.8.5 Hardinge’s Resolution (1844)

After the adoption of Macaulay’s Minute as a Policy of British education in India, the Government announced its policy of giving every encouragement to educated Indians by employing them in the Government service. In order to reinforce the favourable results of the implementation of the provisions of Macaulay’s Minute, Lord Hardinge issued a proclamation in 1844, which stated that in every possible case a preference would be given, in the selection of candidates for public employment, to those who had been educated in the institutions established for English education, and especially to those who distinguished themselves therein by a more than ordinary degree of merit and attainment. The proclamation stated, “The Governor General having taken into his consideration the existing state of education in Bengal, and being of the opinion that it is highly desirable to afford it every reasonable encouragement by holding out those who have taken advantage of the opportunity of instruction afforded to them, a fair prospect of employment in the public services, and thereby not only to reward individual merit, but also to enable the state to profit as largely and as early as possible, by the result of the measure adopted of late years for the instruction of the people as well by the government as by private individuals and societies, has resolved that in every possible case a preference shall be given to those who have been educated in the institutions thus established, and especially to those who have distinguished themselves therein by a more than ordinary degree of merit and attainment.”

Hardinge’s resolution gave a big boost to the English education in India. Thereafter, the study of English became a kind “vocational education” because it guaranteed jobs in the government offices. There was a great rush of Indian youth from upper and upper-middle classes to English schools, which also mushroomed as a result of the government proclamation. Hardinge’s proclamation was another important landmark in the history of Indian education.

The foregoing discussion indicates that the period of 1833-53 was a period of controversies rather than of achievements. The Company was busy in trade and commerce, conquest and consolidation, and did not devote much attention or money to the cause of education. The
discussion regarding the aims of educations, the agencies to be employed and the medium of instruction consumed most their time.

**3.8.6 Wood’s Education Dispatch (1854)**

Company’s Charter came up for revision in 1853. Up to this time; the Company’s policies regarding education had neither a definite direction nor a clear-cut planning. There was hardly any system of government funding or administration of education. The revised Charter led to definite acceptance of the education of Indians as the responsibility of the government, and consequently, to the issuance of an education dispatch by Sir Charles Wood, the then President of the Board of Control of the Company. Wood’s Dispatch (1854) covered the entire field of education – primary, secondary, and university, and gave a definite direction for its development. It was issued by the Court of Directors of the Company on 19th July, 1854 and is considered to be a document of great historical significance. It provided, in fact, a very comprehensive scheme of British education in India. At that time, there were no universities or institutions of higher learning. There were about 25 colleges in the whole country and total enrolment in schools and colleges was about 40,000. Through this dispatch, the Court of Directors reiterated of less high order, but such a character as might be practically useful to the people in different spheres of life. The Dispatch proposed:

i. That English language will be taught wherever it was demanded, and vernacular languages would be used as media of instruction for the great mass of people. It was, in fact a compromise formula to settle the controversy of the orientalists and Anglicists groups on the issue of language and the medium of instruction.

ii. That the Departments of Public Instruction would be created in each province to streamline educational administration and management, which would function under the administrative control of a Director of Public Instruction (DPI) appointed by the government. The DPI would be required to submit to the government an annual report on the progress of education in his province.

iii. That, universities would be established at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras (or at any other place) on the model of London University to conduct examination and award degrees in literature, arts, and science for students receiving education in colleges affiliated to them. The senates of these universities were to consist of a Chancellor, a Vice Chancellor, and Fellows – all nominated by the government.
iv. That the government would take active measures to provide the great mass of the people useful and practical knowledge suited to every station of life, by establishing a network of graded schools in every district and by encouraging indigenous schools. This meant that the government would set up a large number of high schools which gave instruction through English or through a modern Indian language, and indigenous primary schools to provide instruction through vernacular languages. The government, by this time, had realized that the ‘downward filtration’ theory, which was adopted earlier had not paid dividends and a more egalitarian approach to education policy was needed.

v. That the local bodies under the effective control of the government, would be encouraged to establish and manage educational institutions, and a system of grant-in-aid would be introduced. This was done under the government’s plan to encourage indigenous system of education at lower level. This policy pre supposed that the schools opened by local bodies would impart secular education, possess a good management and levy a fee, however small, from the pupils.

vi. That a system of training of school teachers would be introduced through specially set up normal schools on the pattern of similar schools being run in Britain.

vii. That educated persons would be preferred to uneducated ones for government jobs and candidates for employment on such jobs would be selected through selection tests wherever feasible.

viii. That the government would encourage establishment of institutions of professional education (engineering, medicine, etc.) in areas where they did exist, and support them where they existed.

ix. That public education would be entirely secular without any provision of religious instruction in the institutions aided by the government, but the education of Muslim minority and girls, however, would be supported.

The Dispatch of 1854 laid the foundation on which the future Indian education was to be built. Some people have described it as the ‘Magna Carta’ of Indian education. Mr. H.R. James described the Despatch as ‘the climax in the history of Indian education: what goes before leads to it: what follows flows from it’. With this Dispatch, all the controversies regarding aims of British education, medium of instruction, oriental learning, and religious education came to an end. The proposals of the Dispatch had three important features – the rejection of the ‘downward filtration theory’, the adoption of the modern Indian languages as
media of instruction at the secondary stage, and the inclusion of indigenous schools as the very foundation of a nation system of education. Sir Philip Hartog (1939) summarized the provisions of the Dispatch in the following words, “It imposed on the government of India the duty of creating a properly articulated system of education, from the primary school to the university; and perhaps its most notable feature was the emphasis, which it laid on primary education, and therefore its implicit repudiation of the more extreme form of the “Filtration Theory”. The Dispatch laid great stress on the importance of encouraging the study of vernaculars as the only possible media for mass education, and recommended the institution of a comprehensive system of scholarships to connect all grades of the educational system. It further expressed sympathy for the causes of the female education and Muhammadan education; it advocated the opening of schools and colleges for technical instruction; and it insisted on a policy of perfect neutrality. It should be added that the Dispatch looked forward to the advancement of the system of grant-in-aid, and when the management, especially of higher institutions, might be handed over to local bodies under the control of, or aided by, the state.”

As a follow-up of the Dispatch, during the period of Lord Dalhousie, the departments of Public Instruction under the Directors were created (1855); universities were established at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras (1857) as examining bodies with powers to affiliate college, on the model first adopted by the University of London; and the system of grant-in-aid was introduced. Later on, it was felt by the government that the system of grant-in-aid had failed to achieve its objective of producing a system of primary schools. In this connection a Bengal officer, Henry Woodrow, made the following observation, “the poorest classes do not want schools at all, because they are too poor to pay schooling fees and subscriptions, and the labour of the children is required to enable them to live. The middle and upper classes will make no sort of sacrifice for the establishment of any but English schools.”

However, there were certain other issues to which no attention was paid while drafting the Dispatch. For instance, the Dispatch did not even refer to the ideal of universal literacy, though it proposed to spread education, provision of education for leadership, and preparation of natives for self-governance. Therefore, the net achievements were significant (Nurullah and Naik, 1943, p.178) as compared with the vastness of the population and the backwardness of it education. Even as late as 1855, the total number of educational institutions managed, aided, or inspected by the Company was as small as 1474 with only
67,569 pupils, and the total expenditure on education was not even one per cent of the total revenue.

3.8.7 Indian Education Commission (1882)

After the First War of Independence (1857), the government of India was transferred from the Company to the Crown, and the Department of Education was transferred to the Provincial Governments (1871). By a government resolution, education of the masses was claimed to be the greatest duty of the state. After the Dispatch of 1854 there were hectic activities in the field of education. In order to review the progress of education during the period since 1854, Lord Ripon appointed the Indian Education Commission in 1882, with Sir William Hunter as its Chairman. The Commission was required to ‘inquire particularly into the manner in which effect had been given to the principles of the Dispatch of 1854 and to suggest such measures as it might think desirable, with a view to the further carrying out of the policy therein laid down’ with special reference to primary education and grant-in-aid system, which had produced results far more rapidly in secondary than in primary education. By 1882, there were in Bengal alone 156 high schools under Indian management of which 96 received grant-in-aid. The Commission undertook a comprehensive review of the progress of education since the advent of the British rule and submitted its report in 1884. The major recommendations of the Commission included:

i. Encouragement and support to indigenous schools for extending elementary education by declaring elementary education of the masses as the most important priority – area in education to which strenuous government efforts should be directed;

ii. Allocation of a large part of government funds, meant for education sector, to elementary education for its rapid and healthy growth;

iii. Revision of standards of primary education in order to introduce practical subjects such as arithmetic, accounts, mensuration, natural and physical sciences, and their applications to agriculture, health and industry;

iv. Freedom to the management committees for choosing vernacular language as a medium of instruction depending on the local needs;

v. Establishment of secondary schools by the state, for instruction in English based on the system of grant-in-aid, and setting up of primary schools with the support of local people;
vi. Gradual transfer of all government secondary schools to local native management committees with due consideration of maintenance of standards and quality of education;

vii. Bifurcation of secondary education into two streams – one leading to the entrance to the examination of the universities and the other of a more practical character preparing the students for commercial jobs;

viii. Institution of an examination in the principles and practice of teaching, success in which to be made a condition for a permanent employment as a teacher in any secondary school;

ix. More preferential employment of the Indian graduates, especially those who graduated in European universities, than they had hitherto been, in the government colleges.

This Commission had some distinguished Indian representatives who said that while every branch of education could justify claim the fostering care of the government it was desirable in the contemporary circumstances of the country to declare the elementary education of the masses, its provision, extension, and improvement, to be that part of the educational system to which strenuous efforts of the state should have been directed in a still larger measure than thereto. They also suggested that primary education should be regarded as having an almost exclusive claim on local funds set apart for education, and a large claim on provincial revenues and proposed that aid to primary schools should be regulated to a large extent according to the results of examination, except in the backward areas (Hartog, 1939).

### 3.8.8 Indian Universities Commission (1902)

In pursuance of the recommendation of Indian Education Commission (1882-84), the government considered seriously the ways and means to develop primary education, and technical education at high school stage. The progress of education during the period from 1882-84 to 1901-02 was reviewed during the period of Lord Curzon (1902), then Viceroy of India. Specifically, in order to review the contemporary conditions of the universities, Lord Curzon appointed the Indian Universities Commission in 1902. On the basis of the recommendations of this commission and the conference of Provincial Directors of Public Instruction (1901), Indian Universities Bill was introduced in the Vice regal Council (1903), and consequently, the Government of India Resolution on Indian Educational Policy was
issued in March 1904. This resolution expressed a grave concern at the defects of education, as it existed, such as pursuing higher education for entering government jobs exclusively, dominance of examination on teaching, too much emphasis on memory training, neglect of the vernaculars and too much emphasis on literary aspects of the curriculum. Special attention was paid to primary education as mass education, it was proposed that it should be expanded and should attract more funds from the government revenue. The progress on this front was unsatisfactory since only 22.2 per cent of boys and 2.5 percent girls of school-going age attended school, and 10 percent of male population and only 0.7 percent of female population were literate. The resolution proposed to strengthen secondary education by laying down certain conditions for recognition, funding, and affiliation to the examining universities. The introduction of diversified courses to meet the demands of industrial development was also proposed. Regarding learning of languages and medium of instruction at school level, the solution said, “As a general rule, a child should not be allowed to learn English language until he has made some progress in the primary stage of education and has received a thorough grounding in his mother tongue. It is equally important that when the teaching of English has begun, it should not be prematurely employed as the medium of instruction in other subjects. The line of division between the use of vernaculars and of English as the medium of instruction should, broadly speaking, be drawn at a minimum age of 13.”

The resolution indicated far-reaching decisions of the government regarding university education. It proposed to reconstitute Senates and Syndicates of universities by limiting the number of ex-officio fellows and by reducing the maximum number of senators. In addition to examination function, the universities would arrange for teaching work. The colleges seeking affiliation to the universities would be required to fulfil certain minimum requirements as prescribed by the concerned university. Affiliation would be granted only when the colleges had a regular governing body, qualified teachers, adequate building and equipment, staff quarters, sufficient financial resources and a rational fee policy. Affiliation once granted not be permanent and might be reviewed through a proper inspection.

Important proposals were also made to improve technical, vocational, and commercial education so as to make it more practical and relevant to the local needs of the people of India. Agricultural education was also proposed to be expanded. The need for training of secondary school teachers was emphasised in order to make school teaching more efficient and non-mechanical.
3.8.9 Gokhale’s Bill (1910-12)

Gopal Krishna Gokhale, made primary education compulsory in India and thus moved a resolution for compulsory education (1910), which was withdrawn by the British Government on the assurance that it would be examined carefully. Again in 1911, Gokhale introduced a private bill in the Imperial Legislative Council which, was debated for two days and turned down by clear official majority mainly because of opposition from the Indian States. Gokhale had stated, “My lord, I know that my Bill will be thrown out before the day closes, I make no complaints. I shall not even feel depressed. I know too well the story of the preliminary efforts that were required in England, before the Act of 1870 was passed. Moreover, I have always felt and often said that we, of the present generation in India, can only hope to serve our country by our failures. The men and women who will be privileged to serve her by their successes will come later. We must be content to accept cheerfully the place that has been allotted to us in our onward march. The Bill thrown out today will come again and again, tell on the stepping-stones of its dead selves, a measure ultimately rises which will spread the light throughout the land.”

The efforts made by Gokhale gave positive results shortly. The government Resolution on Educational Policy (1913) provided for sufficient expansion of lower primary schools with a simultaneous opening of upper primary schools. It proposed to streamline inspection and supervision, appoint trained teachers, subsidise Maktabs and Pathshalas, improve school facilities, and encourage girl’s education.

3.8.10 Calcutta University Commission (1917-19)

Calcutta University Commission was appointed by the Government of India in 1917 to inquire into the condition and prospects of Calcutta University with Dr. Michael Sadler as Chairman. Those days, the Matriculation Examination, which marked the end of school stage and constituted an entrance examination to the universities, was conducted by the universities. After two years, another public examination was held (also by the universities) which was called Intermediate Examination. This was followed by the First Degree Examination. The problem was studied by the commission in depth and the following conclusions were drawn (Hasan, 1975):

i. That the Intermediate stage was really a part of the school course and that the students at this stage could be more effectively taught by school methods than by college methods; and
ii. That the standard of under-graduate education in the university was so poor that the first degree in the advanced countries.

The Commission, therefore, recommended that:

i. The dividing line between the university and the secondary courses is more appropriately drawn at the Intermediate Examination than at the matriculation;

ii. The duration of under-graduate courses for the first degree should be increased to three years with a provision of Honors courses;

iii. A Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education should be established for the purpose of reorganizing High School and Intermediate education on the lines recommended by it and for holding the matriculation and Intermediate examinations;

iv. The universities should, thus, be left to their proper sphere, namely, the provision of under-graduate and post-graduate education and holding of examination for the first, second and research degrees;

v. A teaching and residential university be established at Dacca to reduce the examination burden of Calcutta University;

vi. The internal administration of the university should be improved by setting up a representative Court and Executive Council to replace Senate and Syndicate respectively. An Academic Council and Board of Studies be set up to make academic decisions in different faculties to be created;

vii. A full time salaried vice-chancellor be appointed. A special selection committee, including external experts, be constituted to appoint Professors and Readers;

viii. The universities should have Departments of Education with provision of teaching “Education” as a subject at B.A. level. Calcutta university was empowered to have a special Board of Women Education; and

ix. An Inter-University Board (IUB) be established to coordinate the work of different Indian universities.

3.8.11 Education and the Freedom Movement

The rise of National Freedom Movement gave birth to the concept of National System of Education, which implied;

i. Indian control of education.
ii. Inculcation of patriotism.

iii. Disregard of western education.

Coupled with non-cooperation movement, the concept of “national system of education” led to the establishment of several institutions on national lines. The notable among them were: Banaras Hindu University (1916), Aligarh Muslim University (1920), Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Kashi Vidyapeeth, Jamia Millia Islamia and Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth.

In 1919, the government of India Act was introduced which, in effect, developed considerable responsibility to the provinces. The Act created “Diarchy” or “Rule of Two” leading to greater representation of elected members. In 1912, the Department of Education was transferred to an Indian Minister responsible to Legislature. Being unable to receive sufficient funds from the government, these ministries could not provide the expected results. The continuous pressure for educational improvement resulted in the appointment of Hartog Committee (1928), which made wide-ranging proposals for development of both, general and professional education.

3.8.12 Wardha Conference (1937)

Mahatma Gandhi published his radical proposals about education in “Harijan” as a series of articles in 1937. These, in turn, led to the First Congress of National Education at Wardha in October 1937 (Steele and Taylor, 1995). Gandhi’s basic idea was for education to become self-supporting through craft, agriculture, and other productive work, thereby by-passing potentially the need for government funding support. The scheme called “Basic Education” was outlined at Wardha Conference (1937) as follows;

i. There should be free and compulsory education for seven years for all children on a national scale.

ii. The medium of instruction should be the mother tongue.

iii. The education should centre on a manual and productive work and all other abilities to be taught should be related to the central handicraft.

iv. The education should be self-financing through the production of some necessary material item like khadi, which could pay the cost of the teacher and the material.

This conference appointed a committee of educationists headed by Dr. Zakir Hussain to work out the details of the curriculum. The report of this committee received in 1938 was placed
before Indian National Congress the same year and was readily accepted. The first “Basic School” was established at Sevagram near Wardha in 1938 under Gandhiji’s personal supervision. As stated by Steele and Taylor (1995), Basic Education was opposed by Congress leaders (under Nehru) and the industrialists (whom Congress Party represented), who showed a great reluctance in moving from existing colonially derived system to Basic Education. They objected to the emphasis on vocation condemning it as “child labour” and offered instead a broad-based curriculum for elementary education and expansion of facilities for technical education.

3.8.13 Post-War Plan of Educational Development (1944)

After the end of Second World War, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) in India published a detailed report on the “post-war educational development” in the country. This was the first systematic and national level attempt (Aggarwal, 1984) at taking the problems of education as a whole. It is also known as Sargent Plan after John Sargent, the then Educational Advisor to the Government of India. It is worth mentioning here that this plan was proposed by the British Government in order to counter the attempts made by leaders of the freedom movement to evolve a National System of Education (such as Wardha Scheme). The Sargent Plan to provide for;

i. Free and compulsory universal primary education for all children of the age group 6-14 years divided into two stages – junior basic and senior basic, and proceeded by pre-primary education for 3-6 age groups.

ii. Selective admission to secondary education both in academic and technical based on merit and ability.

iii. Selective admission to 3 year degree courses on the basis of merit in general and professional education.

iv. Full-time and part-time courses in technical, professional, and commercial education available on merit.

v. Facilities of liquidation of illiteracy through adult education with special provision for the education of the handicapped.

vi. Adequate provision for training of teachers and improvement of their socio-economic and service conditions.
vii. Adequate support services such as employment bureaus, health services, recreational facilities, mid-day meals, and milk supply and guidance the requirements of the colonial rule. Hardly attempt was made toward mass services.

Sargent plan was one of the most comprehensive schemes of education ever proposed by the British Government after the Dispatch of 1854. Through this, the government had proposed a detailed outline of the educational program to be undertaken by the government during the following 40 years from 1944 to 1984. As the freedom movement was at its full swing those days, this plan could not be implemented because of political turmoil in the country. With India achieving freedom in 1947, this Plan became only a matter of historical significance.

3.8.14 Women/Girls Education

Under the British rule, the East India Company was not ready to take up girls’ education for a long time, due to the doctrine of religious neutrality, which was adopted by the government so as not to offend the natives even on social customs that had nothing to do with religion. However, missionaries did some pioneering work in this direction. The American Missionary Society opened its first girls’ school in Bombay (1824). Similarly, the Church Missionary Society opened 5 schools for girls belonging to the upper class of Hindus in 1826 somewhere near Poona. Missionaries in Madras and Bengal also took some other similar initiatives. The year 1850 is characterized by the historical event of recognition of the claim of girls’ education, officially, by the then government. The government informed the Bengal Council of Education that it was to consider superintendence of girls’ education as one of its functions. The standing instructions were issued to the Council to encourage and consider the plans of Indians to set up schools for girls, as their duty. In the meantime some Indians, such as followers of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal, also came forward to spread female education. The efforts made by Mahatma Jyotiba Phule need special mention. He set up a school for girls in Poona as early as 1851.

The 19th century Industrial Revolution in Europe had its impact on Indian society also. Because of economic reasons, women had to work in factories along with men, which in turn generated and strengthened the need of educating women. When Wood’s Education Dispatch (1854) was received, there were 288 girls’ schools with 6869 pupils in Bengal, 65 girls’
schools with 3500 pupils in Bombay, and 256 girls’ schools with 8000 pupils in Madras (Nurullah and Naik, 1943).

The Indian education Commission (1882) took a serious note of the status and education of women and rated it to be extremely backward and recommended measures for improvement. But, because of certain socio-political reasons, no noticeable progress could be observed. During the Freedom Struggle, the All India Conference on Women’s Education (1927) proposed to encourage women to participate actively in educational, political and social activities and help bring about reforms in these fields. In 1944, three years before the independence, the Central Advisory Board of Education submitted its report (commonly known as Sargent Report) on post-war Plan of educational Development. This visualized, among other things, free and compulsory education for all boys and girls between the ages of 6 to 14 years.

After independence, the University Education Commission (1948-49) of Indian Government emphasised on women education and their specific needs. On the significance of women’s education, the commission quoted Arthur Mayhew (1926), “If the government, by the initial exclusion of the masses accentuated segregation of the masses from the privileged few by their initial restriction of their educational efforts to the male population, they brought a line of division where it had never existed before, within the household.” The commission further stated, “The educated, conscientious mother who lives and works with her children in the home is the best teacher in the world of both character and intelligence. There cannot be an educated people without educated women. If general education had not to be limited to men then opportunity should be given to women, for then it would most surely be passed to the next generation”.

However, rejecting the idea of separate curriculum for girls at school stage, the Secondary education Commission (1952-53) recommended diversification of courses at secondary and higher secondary stages with special facilities for teaching Home Science to girls. On the recommendation of the Educational Panel of the Planning Commission (1957), and a subsequent approval of the State education Ministers’ Conference, the National Committee on Women’s education (1958-59) headed by Mrs. Durgabai Deshmukh, was appointed to examine the problems of education of girls in depth. The Committee studied the whole issue in detail and made the following recommendations:
i. The education of girls should be regarded as a major and special problem of education for a good many years to some, and that a bold and determined effort should be made to bridge the wide gap existing between educational levels of male and female populations.

ii. This committee surveyed the historical development of women’s education till 1959 and expressed grave dissatisfaction over the dismal situation as it was. The committee also suggested that a National Council for the Education of Girls and Women should be set up, and a separate unit for women’s education under an Educational Advisor should be set up at the Center.

iii. In each state, woman should be appointed as Joint Director and be placed in-charge of girls’ education, and lady teachers should be appointed in all schools where there are no women.

iv. There should be identical curricula for boys and girls at the primary stage, and differentiation may be made at the secondary stage. Arrangement should be made for vocational training of girls by adjusting the timings to suit their convenience.

v. Educational facilities of shorter duration should be created for adult women so as to prepare them for different formal examinations such as Middle School Examination and High School Examination.

vi. Part-time employment of women teachers should be encouraged as largely as possible in order to enable women to manage their responsibilities at home as well as do some teaching work and cooperation of voluntary organizations and local bodies should be sought in this connection.

Regarding the deterioration in the status of women over the years the Committee observed, “Unfortunately, this high level of culture as well as the status, which our women enjoyed at this dawn of Indian history, was brought low by the social, economic, and political changes of the later years. Women gradually lost their right to education; while the age of marriage was lowered until even the practice of marrying infants became fairly common. In course of time, a social code in which women had hardly any rights in property, marriage and divorce came into existence. Customs like enforced widowhood, and sati were also evolved through the religious concepts then prevailing. Purdah and seclusion of women came a little later and became generalized during the Muslim period. By the end of the 18th century, restricted to her home and her social status was one of the subjecttion with a few exceptions”.
These days, a large majority of Indian women is confined inside the narrow walls of their home. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS), in its second round of investigation which interviewed 90,000 women in the age group of 15-49, reported that 58 to 65 per cent women had been beaten by their husbands, fathers, brothers or sons for reasons ranging from neglecting the home, being ‘disrespectful’ to their in-laws and going out without their husbands. A survey of 10,000 Muslim and Hindu women, conducted by Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon, reported (The Hindustan Times, Jan. 2001) that 85-90 percent women accepted to have experienced physical abuse at the hands of their husbands. Even more shocking, women over 55, probably widowed, simply move from one male destination to the next. In the absence of husbands, sons step in to continue the mistreatment. The NFHS reports that wife beating cuts across the religious barriers. These data indicate the current status of Indian women. However, there are bright spots in this dark picture. There are highly educated and respected women holding high position in public life and government.

3.9 Social Reformer’s Contribution towards Women Education

Indian Society what we see in 2012 was quite different in the first half of the 19th Century. Two major causes which prevented social progress were – lack of education and subordination of women. Some rigid social practices being followed by many sections of the society were not in keeping with the human values. Some of these which hampered the growth of women on account of which women community could not progress in the area of education have already been discussed in Chapter 1.

3.9.1 Lack of Education

Worldwide education was confined to a very limited section of the society and same was the case in India where the upper castes were the custodian of education. As such majority of people in those days were illiterate and especially women. Vedas were written in Sanskrit and this language was known only to Brahmins and as such they only had an access to the knowledge in them. Religious texts were also under their control and they interpreted them in a way only beneficial to them. Nobody could question them because what is written in scriptures was not known to anybody. These rituals were mandatory to be performed in a belief of a better life after death. Rules were more strict and rigid for women because men were the custodian of this community.
In Europe, Bible being written in Latin, was the language of Church and their priests interpreted the religious texts as they desired resulting in a reaction and the Europe saw Renaissance and the Reformation Movement. Ideas like liberty, equality, freedom and Human Rights were to be introduced both in Europe and India through various revolutions and reform movements by the social reformers.

3.9.2 Position of Women

Women have better opportunities today for their development. They have freedom to study and work out of their home. In 19th Century life for majority of women was much harder. As discussed in the first chapter, social practices like female infanticide, child marriages, polygamy, purdah pratha, sati pratha etc. were prevalent in many sections of the Indian Society. Killing of a girl child (infanticide) was a very common practice. Polygamy was an accepted practice among many castes and religions. Sati Pratha, in which a widowed woman was compelled to burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband, was in practice in many parts of the country. Woman who escape were made to live a very miserable life. Woman had no access to education. Women had no right to property. Thus in general women had a subordinate position in the society. Fear of invader and loss of family honour, dowry, sharing of family's ancestral property further deteriorated their status. Thus certain practices and superstitions were preventing Indian society from progressing and reforms were needed to bring change in the social and religious life of the people.

3.9.3 Socio-Religious Awakening

Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Jyotiba Phule, Pandita Ramabai, Swami Vivekananda understood that ignorance and backwardness in the society was responsible for hindering its progress and development. This realisation was reinforced when they came in contact with the Europeans and found that life was very different in other parts of the world. When the British missionaries started spreading Christianity, they criticised and questioned many of our social and religious practises. Many of their ideas were accepted by our reformers. The desire to reform the society was so strong that these reformers were now ready to face challenges as well as resistance from the orthodox Indians. They started several movements to bring desirable
changes in the society. These were made possible by enlightened people like Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Raja Ram Mohan Roy. They studied the religious scriptures and criticized the prevalent religious and social practices. According to them, society should be based on the concepts of liberty and equality both for men and women and this was possible only by the spread of modern and scientific education especially among women. These movements came to be called socio-religious movements because reformers felt that no change is possible in a society without reforming the religion.

3.9.4 The Caste System

Since ancient times, Indian society had a caste system which was originally occupation based. Over a period of time, interpretation of religious texts by the upper caste and lack of access to religious scriptures by the lower caste led to several superstitious practices in the name of religion. This also resulted in power being concentrated in the hands of men of upper caste and exploitation of the women and the lower caste. Caste system was hereditary and was very rigid. This created inequality in the society and exploitation of the lower castes. Caste system became a major hindrance in the development of a democratic, healthy and progressive society. As such many social and religious reformers and reform organisations came forward to fight against such social practices. To name a few - Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramkrishna Mission, Prarthana Samaj etc. Some reformers like Jyotiba Phule, Pandita Ramabai, Periyar, Vivekanand, Mahatma Gandhi and many others raised their voice against the rigid caste system and protested against the exploitation of lower caste and especially women. These reformers considered the prevalent caste system as irrational, unscientific and against the spirit of the Vedas and other scriptures. They felt it against the basic rules of humanity. Relentless and untiring efforts of these reformers helped people become more tolerant towards each other.

3.9.5 The Prevalent Religious Practices

Since most of the social practices are done in the name of religion, social reforms had no meaning without religious reforms. Our social reformers had sound knowledge of scriptures, were deeply rooted in Indian traditions and philosophy and were in a position to blend Indian values with Western ideas and principles of democracy and equality on the basis of which they challenged the rigidity and superstitious practices in religion by citing scriptures to show
that the practices prevalent in 19th Century had no sanction in them. Some of the reformers who were enlightened and rationalistic questioned the religion full of superstitions and was being exploited by corrupt priests. They believed in the principle of human dignity and social equality of man and woman and wanted the society to accept only rational and scientific approach.

3.9.6 The Educational Scenario

In 19th Century education was being imparted in traditional Pathshalas, Madarsas, Mosques, Gurukuls. Religious education was imparted along with other subjects like Sanskrit, Grammar, and Arithmetic etc. But science and technology had no place in the curriculum. Many children especially girls were not sent to schools. Many superstitious beliefs like educated women would soon become widows after marriage, existed. The root cause of backwardness in many Indian societies was lack of education. Therefore, promotion and spread of modern education was believed to be an important tool to awaken and modernize our society and was aimed at by all socio religious reformers be it Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Parsis.

3.9.7 Swami Vivekananda

“There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing.”

-Swami Vivekananda

According to Swami Vivekananda; education is that which prepares an individual for struggle for existence, develops his character, inculcates in him a sense of social service and fills him with the spirit and courage of a lion. Obtaining a degree is not an education. Education must be viewed on the basis of character, development of mental power, intelligence, self-confidence and self reliance in an individual. He emphasized that all knowledge we get from the world and from spirituality is covered with a veil of darkness and ignorance. Education should remove darkness and ignorance and that is why he stressed the importance of Women Education. Swami Vivekananda did not preach two different kinds of schemes for educating men and women. His teaching was exactly the same without any discrimination. Nevertheless, his views on women call for a separate treatment, just as his plea not to
monopolise all education for the benefit of a handful of people. Swami Vivekananda realized that if right type of education is given women of our country will be able to solve their own problems in their own way. According to him the main objective of women education should be to make them strong, fear-less and conscious of their chastity and dignity. He believed that although men and women are equally competent in academic matters, women have a special aptitude and competence towards studies relating to home and family and therefore he recommended for introduction of subjects like sewing, nursing, domestic science, culinary art etc. Accordingly to Vivekananda, women education is not in the hands of others, power for education lies in the women themselves. He believed women to be incarnation of power and asked men to respect them everywhere. Unless women in India secure a respectable place, the nation cannot progress. According to him female education should aim at making them strong, fear-less and conscious of their dignity and chastity. He insists that men and women should have equal companionship in the home and family. He being a keen observer could differentiate in the perception about the status of women in the West and in India and stated, in India ideal women is the mother, the mother first and the mother last. The word woman in Hindu mind calls up ‘Motherhood’ and God is called the ‘Mother’ (Pani, S. P. and Pattanaik, S. K., 2006).

Vivekananda emphasized on Education for all, he said, a country’s development depends upon mass literacy and not on class literacy. His clarion calls, ‘Education for All’. He says, “No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses of India are once more well educated, well fed and well cared for”. Thus, mass education would be a panacea for many socio-economic ills and political backwardness. National System of Education: He was not in favour of British system of education which was not based on our culture, tradition, values, etc. No country can be prosperous and can have high identity unless it has got its own system of education based on national ideals and identity. Vivekananda told to us (Indians), “it is a man making religion that we want. It is man making theories we want. It is man making principles we want. It is man making education all round we want”.

There have been many changes in the field of education since Swami Vivekananda passed away one hundred years ago, but not as many changes as in other areas of society. One such noticeable change in education is that it is now engaged in preparing human beings for a new type of society, and it is trying to create a new type of human being for it. Interestingly, Swami Vivekananda had envisioned a society with a new type of human being in whom knowledge, action, work and concentration were harmoniously blended, and he proposed a
new type of education for achieving this. The right to education for everyone, guaranteed by the Constitution of India, was Vivekananda’s dream, but it is still a far cry from its goal. His idea of continual, or lifelong, education, however, has been adopted in many countries already. Moreover, because of the adoption of continuous education in these countries already, our idea of what constitutes success and failure has altered, raising new hope for the weak, underprivileged section of these societies – the very people who for various reasons cannot complete their education when they are young. Vivekananda’s cry for uplift of the downtrodden masses, particularly of the long-neglected women, has evoked a favourable response from different quarters, but societies tailor education to meet their own needs, thereby often robbing the weak of their freedom to determine their own destiny. Unless radical changes are made in all societies the poor will never be able to raise them. This was a major concern of Swamiji.

It is remarkable the extent to which there are similarities between Vivekananda’s thoughts and actions taking place one century ago and the present concerns of UNESCO.

- His commitment towards universal values and tolerance, his active identification with humanity as a whole.
- The struggle in favor of the poor and destitute, to reduce poverty and to eliminate discrimination against women – reaching the unreached.
- His vision of education, science and culture as the essential instruments of human development.
- That education should be a lifelong process.
- And the need to move away from rote learning.

Himself a visionary and an original thinker, Vivekananda pointed out in his first public lecture in Asia, on 15th January 1897, “But education has yet to be in the world, and civilization – civilization has begun nowhere yet. This is true. If we consider civilization to be a manifestation of the divine in human beings, as Vivekananda conceived it to be, no society has made much progress so far. This is why we find that mildness, gentleness, forbearance, tolerance, sympathy and so forth – the signs of a healthy civilization – have not taken root in any society on an appreciable scale, although we permanently boast of a global village. The lack of basic necessities among the underprivileged all over the world is no less striking than the lack of morality among the educated privileged ones. To squarely meet this great challenge, Vivekananda prescribed ‘man-making and character-building education’.
For this reason, if not for anything else, Vivekananda’s thoughts on education ought to be seriously re-examined today”.

3.9.8 Raja Ram Mohan Roy

He was a religious, social and educational reformer and challenged traditional Hindu culture. He indicated the lines of progress for Indian society under British Rule and as such was called the father of Modern India. During Bengal Renaissance he founded an influential Indian Socio-Religious Reform Movement. He was influential in the fields of politics, public administration, education and even in religion. His efforts towards abolition of the Sati Pratha, in which the widow immolated herself on her husband’s funeral pyre, are well known.

As early as 1820, Raja Ram Mohan Roy argued that despite being, “in general inferior to men in bodily strength and energy, women were in no way intellectually inferior to them; in fact....... as to their inferiority in point of understanding, when did you ever afford them a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity?..... Women were generally kept devoid of education and acquirements.”

As Raja Ram Mohan Roy points out, “Although a woman is recognised as being half of her husband after her marriage, she is in fact treated as worse than inferior animals, and is made to do work of a slave in the house. She has to get up early in the morning and has to scour the dishes, to wash the floor, to cook night and day and then serve the same to her husband, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law and friends and connections and at the end of all this she is humiliated for the slightest shortcoming. After all the men have eaten the women content themselves with what may be left, whether sufficient in quantity or not.”

3.9.9 Pandita Ramabai Saraswati

Ramabai was born in 1885. Her father, Anantha Shastri, was a traditional Brahmin of Maharashtra. However, he began teaching his wife Sanskrit. There was so much opposition to this move that Anantha Shastri had to leave his village. He went with his family to a forest where they built a hut to live in. It was here that Ramabai was born. Anantha Shastri also taught his daughter Sanskrit. He taught her the Shastras and the Puranas. When Ramabai was 16 years old, both her parents died. Orphaned, Ramabai and her brother wandered from place to place, but no one offered them shelter. Not only did people avoid them but, in fact, they blamed the educated girl for her misfortune, as if she had committed a grave sin or crime. After wandering around for some time, Ramabai reached Calcutta. She found a great
welcome awaiting her in the city. Many people in Calcutta were influenced by Ram Mohan Roy, Vidyasagar and others. So they held new ideas about women and welcomed Ramabai. She delivered many lectures in Sanskrit, discussing the importance of improving the condition of women. The people of Calcutta conferred upon her the titles of ‘Pandita’ and ‘Saraswati’. She came to be known as Pandita Ramabai Saraswati. Ramabai later adopted the Christian faith. She remained unmarried till the age of 22, when she married a man of her own choice. In those days, it was unheard for a woman to remain unmarried till the age of 22 and to marry a man of her own choice.

Ramabai devoted her whole life to helping women. She continued doing this work even after she was widowed. She travelled alone to England and America to learn about the women’s organisations there. On her return to India she started an ashram and school known as Sharada Sadan to educate widows. Women were taught many kinds of skills and vocations at this school so that they could stand on their feet. Ramabai felt it was very important for women to stand on their own feet. She often said that women bear everything silently because they have to depend on men. “Men behave with us women like they behave towards animals. When we make efforts to improve our situation it is said that we are revolting against men and that it is a sin. In fact, the biggest sin is to endure the ill deeds of men and not oppose them,” she said. Her complaint was that just as no one lends an ear to Indians in England, no one lends an ear to women in Indian society.

3.9.10 Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Swami Dayananda was a sanyasi. He said the culture of the Aryans in the Vedic age was free of ills we see in our culture today. For instance, in the Vedic period, customs like idol worship, child marriage, untouchability, restrictions on widow remarriages, etc. did not exist. All these ills crept in at later stages in the society and were then written in scriptures like the Puranas. So he launched a campaign for the adoption of the Vedic culture of the Aryans. He formed an organisation known as the Arya Samaj to pursue this objective. This organisation became very popular in Punjab. It also had an influence in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. The Arya Samaj prepared a book titled Sanskar Vidhi. The book explained in detail how the rituals for birth, marriage, death etc. should be conducted according to the Vedic method. Branches of the Arya Samaj were opened in many places-big and small towns-and members were enrolled.
The Arya Samaj tried to help people to understand the Vedic practices themselves and adopt the rites in their own lives. Slowly, a large number of people began supporting the Arya Samaj. Naturally, the orthodox Brahmins strongly opposed the Arya Samaj. They actively protected the orthodox Hindu religion, which they called sanatana dharma. They began forming organisations called Sanatana Dharma Sabhas. While the Arya Samaj continued to face a lot of opposition regarding religious rituals, another of its programmes met with great success. This was the opening of Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College and School in Lahore. Its objective was to educate children in modern English knowledge and Science while also providing them with a good education in Sanskrit and the Vedas. This fulfilled both the desires of people—that their children should get an education and acquire new knowledge that would help them get jobs, and at the same time, they should learn about their own religion.

3.9.11 Jyotiba Phule

Jyotiba Phule belonged to the mali (gardener) caste and sold vegetables and fruits. He received a few years of education in a Christian school. When he grew up, he and his wife wanted to open a school for girls of the Mahar and Maang castes. His father was angered and threw them out of his house. Jyotiba had a deep understanding of the problems of castes that were considered low. He wrote many plays and books about these problems. In his writings he showed how Brahmins secretly told people of the Mali and Kunbi castes not to send their children to school, and how the Patels treated people of these castes badly. He wrote about how Brahmin teachers beat the children belonging to the castes considered as Shudras, so that they would flee the school and never return. He also told Brahmin priests forced the poor to pay absurd and unnecessary expenses, and how the officials in government offices and municipalities, who were Brahmins, troubled the needy farmers of other castes in many ways. Jyotiba Phule founded an organisation called Satyashodhak Samaj to build a new society based on truth. The samaj undertook the following main tasks:

- Demanding and setting up schools, colleges and hostels for the children of castes considered low so that the children of these castes could acquire an education and rise in society. The teachers and instructors in these institutions would also belong to the so called low castes.
- Organizing essay, debate and public speaking competitions for students belonging to the castes thought of as low, so that their hesitation and shyness might be broken and
they may be enabled to put forth their views in front of others as strongly as people from the so-called high castes.

- Encouraging and helping those belonging to the castes considered low to conduct all their religious ceremonies without the Brahmins. People could perform the rites themselves or keep a priest belonging to their own caste and give him the dakshina.

This campaign was quite successful. For example, a news item published in 1873 says that 700 people of Mali, Kunbi, Kumhar, Badhai and other castes launched a campaign to free themselves from the Brahmins and they began conducting the ‘Shraddha’ ceremonies for their ancestors without the Brahmins. In 1884, a newspaper printed the news that the Shudras of 40 villages in Junnar conducted 300 marriage ceremonies without the Brahmins. So frustrated were some Brahmins by this protest that they actually went to court to claim their right of dakshina. But they lost their case.

3.9.12 Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation, has specific perspectives in every aspect of life such as socio-economic, political and educational scenario. His educational thought is holistic in nature. It leads to the development of all aspects of human personality. In his own words, “by education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man, body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning. It is only the means by which man and woman can be educated. I would therefore begin the child’s education by teaching it a useful handicraft enabling it to produce from the moment begins its training. Thus every school can be made self-supporting; the condition being the state takes over the manufactures of their schools”.

Gandhiji thinks that education in India should have its priority in bringing about a sense of awareness among villagers. The rural people should be given the opportunities to exercise their physical, mental, and spiritual power in the course of basic education propagated by Gandhiji. Gandhiji was in favour of women education. He believed in the principle that where a woman is respected there lies God. He believed that condition of women can be reformed through education only. Education will make them self-confidant and they will be able to help themselves. Religious education is a necessary part of women education. He wanted the Indian women to become like Sita and Gargi and not to become a specimen of western women.
3.9.13 Impact of the Reformers and their Reform Movements on Indian Society

During 19th century reform movements were able to create socio religious consciousness among the Indian societies. These movements encouraged scientific and humanitarian outlook and laid stress on rational understanding of social and religious ideas. All reform movements worked towards improvement of the status of women, criticised caste system and practice of untouchability. Importance was given to education and especially women education. As a result Indians were guided by modern education and their approach towards life changed and it became scientific and rational. These movements aimed at social unity, liberty, equality, fraternity. Introduction of certain legal measures helped in raising the status of women – like Sati Pratha and female infanticide were declared illegal, remarriage of widow was made possible by a law passed in 1856 which improved the condition of widows, inter-caste and inter-communal marriages allowed through a law passed in 1872 and the marriageable age of girls was raised to 10 by a law enacted in 1860. Sharda Act passed in 1929 prevented child marriage according to which a girl below 14 and a boy below 18 were not allowed to be married. The impact of these reform efforts were evident in the National Movement in which a large number of women came forward to take part in the freedom struggle. Women freedom fighters like Capt. Laxmi Sehgal of Indian National Army, Sarojini Naidu, Dr. Annie Besant, Aruna Asaf Ali and many others were found to be extremely important in freedom movements. Women came out of homes and started taking up jobs.

However, these reform movements had certain limitations like a very small percentage of population was affected. Reforms were mostly limited upto educated class and could not reach masses and specially upto rural and urban poor who continued to live in the same conditions without any difference.

3.10 Impetus to Female Education by the Royalty of Rajasthan

Many associations were established in Rajasthan for the purpose of social reforms, emphasizing the need to educate girls. For instance, the National Social Conference was established with the primary aim of promoting social reform, including the education of women. Kayastha Conference was established in 1888. Vaish Conference, Jain Sabha, Agrawal Sabha and Adi Gaur Brahman Sabha had started in Ajmer by 1891.
The leading bankers were responsible for the establishment of the Lady Elgin Girls at Bikaner. The institution made good progress. F.L. Reid reported that the education imparted to the students of the higher classes was of a solid and practical nature. By 1926-27, this was the only secondary girls' school in the state of Bikaner. An attempt to extend the benefits of education to those who observed strict purdah was made by sanctioning an itinerant mistress who could teach the elderly ladies inside their own homes. After eight years, a mistress was appointed who was teaching twenty grown-up girls inside their own homes in 1926-27, and another twenty-three women in 1927-28.

In Jodhpur, Hewson Girls School was opened in 1886-87. In 1912, the upper-middle-class families felt the need for the introduction of English at the school level. Shri Sumer Girls School was opened in 1915. The state granted aid to it in 1926, and the number of girls in the school was sixty at that time. Jain, Maheshwari and Puskarna communities also opened schools for girls. By 1930, the state had a total of twenty seven institutions for girls, including a college and four schools for the high-school level. In Jaipur, zenana work was started by Presbyterian Mission with Guillaumet, for giving lessons to girls from Kayastha families, and Miss Miller used to visit nearly one hundred families for this purpose. The Roman Catholic Church also started St Angela’s Sophia School for the girls.

The establishment of Mayo College for the sons of the rulers and the nobility also had its own role to play in the promotion of education for girls. This college was established in 1875, and by the second decade of the 20th Century, a considerable number of people had received education from there. This English-educated section of society realized the importance of education not only for the male population but for the females as well, and began focusing attention to such pursuit. Moreover, their district association with the British officers, their wives, and the foreign visits brought a considerable change in their attitude towards the women, liberalizing their conservative mindset. The influence of women’s education in other communities also had a favorable impact on the Rajput society. Consequently, society’s attitudes towards the education of women underwent a gradual change, as evident from the efforts of the rulers, the jagirdars, and the maharanis (backed by the maharajas) as well.

In 1913, the Maharani girls school was opened in Banswara with thirty six girls enrolled. It was closed in 1914 because of lack of capable teachers, and did not open for four years. The efforts of Maharao Bhawani Singh of Jhalawar were highly praised by the Indian Ladies’ Magazine in 1916, for his contribution towards women’s education. His efforts led to a
gradual increase in the female-literacy rate, which went up from 1.90 percent to 5.60 percent. To provide encouragement to female education in Jodhpur, a camel-carriage for the conveyance of girls was arranged, and a notification was issued that any purdah-observing girl appearing for vernacular lower middle examination would be provided with the facility of purdah during the examination hours.

In Jodhpur, the Rajput Nobles Girls Purdah School was started on 1 January 1918 through the earnest efforts of Mrs. Windham, and with the approval of Jodhpur Maharaja. About the opening of the school, Mrs. Windham wrote, “Lady Chelmsfors spoke to me of her earnest desire to see purdah schools for girls of good family established all over India. She impressed me as being very solicitous for the good upbringing of women folk of India. I am therefore with the Highness’s approval trying to start a school in Jodhpur. It is to be hoped that Jodhpur will not take a lag behind other parts of Rajputana in this important matter but will take a lead and set an example for the other states.” She appealed to the nobles, “I look to you to kindly help me in the establishment of such a school, more especially by sending your girls to it. I know that there is a demand for such an institution among an appreciable number of nobility in Marwar.”

The school started its first term with five pupils, and later has eight, but the plague proved a string barrier to the progress of the school. Consequently, it was closed on 13 February 1918. Besides this, the non-completion of school walls was another obstacle to the progress of the school, as the grown-up pupils – who observed purdah ‘could not possibly join the school in the circumstances when the school in the absence of walls had not been provided with Kanatas.’ Upon the reopening of the school, the number of pupils fell to two, although it was expected that should the walls be completed, the number of pupils may yet rise. At first, the school was looked after by Mrs. Heritz Smith, and later by Mrs. D. Jenkyns as head mistress. Prabati Devi was the second head mistress of the school. This highlights the effect of purdah in the spread of education among the upper-class rajput women.

Even jagirdars, at their level, made their own efforts to promote education for girls. In 1923, Raja Amar Singh of Banera opened a girls’ school in Banera, named Kanya Pathshala. This was the girls’ school opened in a jagir by a jagirdar. In 1925, Chandra Kanya Pathshala was established in Asind Jagir. It was founded in memory of the daughter of the jagirdar of Asind. In Jahazpur, Chandra Kanya Pathshala was established for the education of girls. In these schools, it was only the rajput girls who enrolled, but also those who belonged to other high
classes. Hence, the first separate girls’ school for the education of the girls of the nobility was Chandra Kanya Vidyalaya, established in Asind in 1925.

In Bikaner, The Maharani Nobles Girls School was established for the education of the daughters of the chiefs and the nobles of the state of Bikaner, under strict purdah agreement in the fort of Bikaner. It was a unique institution in Rajasthan. It was under the personal care and direction of the Maharani Jai Saheb. It was an upper-primary school, and also prepared girls for the examinations conducted by the Prayag Mahila Vidyalaya. In 1928-29, the school had forty students. For the purpose of providing an incentive, brilliant students were given a stipend of Rs.50 per year. In 1930, English was introduced in this school. Shortly thereafter, the results were excellent. For the first time, four daughters of nobles and chiefs appeared at the pravishika (entrance) examination of Prayag Mahila Vidyapeeth, and passed out successfully.

To transport students to the school under strict purdah arrangement, the state provided covered raths (carriages). As the school made good progress, the raths were replaced by a bus, so that a larger number of girls could be accommodated. In 1934-35, the school began teaching up to the Anglo vernacular Middle Standard examination conducted by the U.P. Government. In 1936, the school maintained three Lorries for the conveyance of girls. In memory of Prince Chand kanwar, an orphanage was opened in Bikaner in 1936, with a starting amount of Rs.70000. Arrangements were made to teach stitching, knitting and general studies to poor women. Elgin school was converted to a high school in 1940, and in 1946, it was given the status of an intermediate institution and renamed Maharani Sudarshana College.

In Kota, a school for the daughters of the ruling families was established by the maharani of Umaid Singh II of Kota, in 1933. It was named Shri Maharani Saheba Anglo Vernacular Girls School, and it taught English. Mr. Johnson was appointed to instruct girls in English for Rs.166.80 per month. Ten girls from this school appeared for Anglo Vernacular Middle School Exam, of which nine were successful. Kota state provided scholarship to girls pursuing further studies. Teachers were encouraged and rewarded for good results. Shri Maharani Saheba Girls School was the only Anglo Vernacular institution raised to Anglo Vernacular Middle School level, in July 1936. In 1939-40, it was raised to high-school standard. The maharao of Kota also made land grants at Chajwa and village Piploida to Mr Blever to meet the needs of the expanding mission activities.
In 1943, Maharani Gayatri Devi Public School and a Maharani Intermediate College were established in Jaipur. This was due to the joint endeavors of the maharaja and maharani of Jaipur. Maharani Gayatri Devi planned to open a school for girls in an effort to initiate measures for the emancipation of women.

### 3.11 Conclusion

Admission of girls to schools for education and their retention there is interwoven with the perception of women and their role. Position of women in the community and society has considerably deteriorated from the Vedic period which was the Golden Era. Since then it started sliding down and we are struggling even today to fill up the gap. Although several steps were taken during the British period as well as after independence for promoting women’s education, the enrolment of girls for education is poorer than boys almost everywhere. For bringing more and more girls to schools and ensuring that they stay for an essential minimum period backing of the community and a host of support services is required.

In its 14th report tabled in Parliament in August 2003, the Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women has expressed that:

- 35 million girls were still out of schools,
- There is need for superior achievement for girls as compared to boys as future of girl child rests squarely on educational achievement and economic independence.
- India will not only miss the Dakar goal of gender parity in enrolment for education of boys and girls by 2005 it will in all likelihood not reach there even after a decade later. This dismal forecast is stated in the UNESCO’s Global Monitoring Report for EFA released in Nov. 2003.

The Education Despatch of 1854, women’s education was given greater importance by starting schools for girls wherever possible. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, D.k. Karve and Rabindranath Tagore among others, were greater advocates of women’s education. In 1882, the Indian Education Commission, also known as the Hunter Commission, advocated zenana education for women with the home in sex aggregated societies. It had emphasised the need to have a different curriculum for girls in tune with the role they were expected to fulfil.
The women’s Education Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education, had, in 1936, favoured co-education at the primary stage, but where the numbers were large, separate schools were desirable. It wanted some women teachers to be appointed. It is pointed out that wastage at primary level was greater for girls than for boys, probably because of the perception that education was really not necessary for girls, or that there were not enough suitable teachers and conveniences in schools, or perhaps because the lessons seemed boring and useless. Though the position is much improved, these perceptions still stand in the way of letting girls go to school and reach at least the matriculation stage.

The early years of 20th century saw remarkable activity on the women’s education front when women missionaries came to India and gave boost to women’s education.