CHAPTER 8

IMPLICATIONS ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM:
In the indigenous system of education, there was no formal structure of education. Education was a private matter and the government had nothing to do with it. During the second half of the nineteenth century the formal structure of education was established. The government became the important agency of education. Departments were established for administration of education. Syllabuses were framed and formal system of examinations was introduced.

Though departments were established for promoting education, it was neglected because the alien government was not interested in its promotion. It is true that some officials did take interest in education but majority of them was not interested. Efficient officers were appointed in other departments while less efficient officers were appointed in the department of education. As Chaube says:

"Emoluments of the officers of this department were less than those of other departments. It was due to this that Englishmen of low calibre were appointed on these posts from whom no help in the progress of education could be expected".  


The work of educational department was neglected. Gayhew says:

"The experienced Secretary, after spending his morning on financial and judicial files, drafts with the sinking sun his educational resolution, in which educationalists are reminded that their task is the formation of character and the training of good and productive citizens, and that their methods must be effective within the limits prescribed by economy and public opinion".2

The aim of education was mainly politico-administrative. The educational system was government centred and so it did not think of social reconstruction.

As preparing the English knowing persons for subordinate posts in administrative machinery was one of the aims, greater emphasis was on secondary and higher education of literary type. It was argued that education imparted to higher strata of the society would filter down to the lower strata. But it remained a pious hope and mass education, therefore, was neglected. Because of this policy there was expansion of secondary and higher education of literary type but consequently primary education the backbone of mass education did not make much progress.

In the past indigenous education played important role in spreading education but at the end of the nineteenth century, the indigenous education disappeared from the country. The government showed negligence towards the indigenous education because it did not serve its purpose. The British, therefore, introduced western education for administrative convenience. The new education was not founded on the basis of indigenous education but everything was swept out and the new education was founded on new basis. During the early years of the second half of the nineteenth century, indigenous education though in a condition of decay was in existence. Because of this indigenous education at least higher caste students of the rural area could get education but with its disappearance from the rural area, illiteracy increased.

About the increase of illiteracy Mr. G.K. Gokhale said:

"According to the census of 1901, less than 6 per cent of the population could read and write, even in Russia, the most backward of European countries, the proportion of literates at the last census was about 25 per cent, while in many European countries as also the United States of America and Canada and Australia, almost the entire population is now able to read and write."

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Gokhale further said, "Seven children out of eight are yet allowed to grow up in ignorance and darkness, and four villages out of five are without school".  

The policy of neglecting mass education created a wide gulf between the educated class and the uneducated mass. This educated class was separated from the masses not by the mere difference between ignorance and education but by the differences between divergent cultures. Many of the educated people were the people divorced from the homes, their communities and their racial traditions:

"They were in a sense strangers in their own land. Many of them were so intoxicated with the new wine of the West that they were ashamed of their own past and in most cases were ignorant of things Indians".  

They could talk about Shakespeare and Milton but knew nothing about Kalidas of Tulsidas. They were indifferent to Indian culture.

Chirol says:

"The fundamental weakness of our Indian educational system is that the average Indian student cannot bring his education into any direct relation with


the world in which, outside the class or lecture-room, he continues to live. For that world is still the old Indian world of his forefathers, and it is as far removed as the poles asunder from the Western world which claims his education'.

National leaders also became aware of the evil effect of the Western education. In one of his speeches Bipin Chandra Pal said:

"And what is the sort of education that you have been receiving all these years? It has had precious little reference to your own life, to the activities of your own national history. Not even it has had any reference, — attempt is being made only recently, it has had very little reference, — to your physical surroundings. You would learn botany by British specimens and not by Indian specimens.... We have been taught to botanize the beech to the neglect of our own banyan, our mango grove, our champak tree, to the neglect of flora of our country".

Western education was a foreign product, divorced from the realities of the Indian life. It was not national in character and consequences. Western education enforced alien culture and this alien culture as Curzon put it, created a 'half denationalised type of humanity who has lost the


virtues of his own system, which only assimilating the vices of another. 8

All types of ideas and schemes that were evolved in England were imposed upon India without considering the Indian background. The ideas and schemes which were suitable for industrial and urban England were not suitable for agricultural and poor India. Because of the difference of socio-economic background England was not a suitable model for India. "In fact, one cannot help feeling that Indian education has all along been like a cinderella tied to the apron-strings of the Education system of England." 9

Commenting on the results of the Western education Lord Curzon said:

"There exists a powerful school of opinion which does not hide its conviction that the experiment (of English education in India) was a mistake, and that its result has been a disaster. They think that it has given birth to a tone of mind and to a type of character that is illregulated, averse from discipline, discontented and in some cases actually disloyal." 10

8. Ibid. p. 411.
The Peterson or the Johnson became more respectable than Shastris and Manlvis. As a result the Indian learning ceased to progress. New learning coming from the West became more important. British universities made researches and prepared books and these researches and books came to India. Researches were not encouraged in the Indian Universities. The new education did not throw light on the Indian problems: About the new education A.R. Desai says:

"It gave distorted account of India's past glory, glorified the British conquerors of India and portrayed the British as civilizers of India. It tended to weaken national pride and self respect". 11

The British could not create a national system of education in India. 'The imperialistic nature of the British power prevented it from visualising a self-respecting and independent India'. 12

The missionaries did educational work for the spread of Christianity and never thought of national education. The company regarded India as a field of profit for the company and did not care for national education. Under the Crown also national education was not thought of because it was believed that English culture was superior and that it was

the duty of Britishers to "civilize" India.

"All declarations of official policy were characterized by the same blind refusal to visualise India as a sovereign independent nation with her own unique and valuable contribution to make to universal culture. There is obviously no room for a national system of education within the four corners of such an imperialist political philosophy". 13

The British system did not bring even the synthesis of the East and the West. Missionaries regarded Christianity and Western culture as inseparable allies. They showed hatred towards Indian culture and tradition. Some of the British officials even exaggerated the glory of India's past; but they were in minority. Educational policies were mostly framed by that majority of officials who believed with Kipling that 'East is East and West is West; and never the twain shall meet'.

Because of this attitude of Britishers, nationalist Indians evolved a defiant and challenging attitude to Western culture during the second half of the nineteenth century. Revivalists looked towards India's glorious past and advocated education based on ancient Indian culture.

Revivalists could not make much progress in the field of education, firstly because they did not receive patronage from the state and secondly they themselves were not united and did not make united effort. Western education, therefore, made rapid progress.

Because of the policy of non-interference in religious matter, the Government introduced secular education. Secularism was introduced with a specific purpose, it did not develop as a product of industrialization and urbanization. Thus the authority of education was weakened. Till now religion played very important part in social order. The importance of the authority of the religion weakened but education did not bring the expected urban-secularism.

The Government defended the filtration theory but in reality it failed.

"It (the filtration theory) encouraged the separation of mass from class, town from country, western from eastern modes of thought and life, to which India, left to herself, has always been prone. It established the idea that education is a luxury, an investment perhaps also for the thrifty, but an investment in which privileged classes will receive most assistance from the study". 14

Education became a commodity which could be purchased by any one who could pay fees. As a result lower strata of the society i.e. lower caste people remained illiterate. The higher caste people whose economical condition was comparatively better, took the advantage of Western education. Moreover, western education was confined to urban area only. Villages were isolated and were not influenced by Western educational impact. People of the rural area, therefore, generally remained illiterate. Moreover, education was generally confined to male population only from middle and upper middle class. Modern knowledge was delimited and was confined to a few. Therefore, modern knowledge did not spread over the population and then modernize the people at large. Western education and modern education apparently seemed to be synonyms of each other but the rank and file of the people of India remained aloof.

The secondary and higher education expanded but there was no economic development proportionately. Industrial development was slow in India. There were various factors but the economic policy of the Government was the main factor which came in the way of industrial development. Had there been industrial development, there would have been increase in jobs and other avenues of income. As a result
of this disparity unemployment among educated class became a problem. Education and economic growth of the country were never bracketed together. What was bracketed together was Education and Government service. In any modern country education is always linked with Economic growth but this was not the objective of the British rulers.

The adoption of English as the medium led to another result. Before the introduction of Western education many Hindus used to learn Persian. Many Muslims also used to read and write Indian languages. After the adoption of English as the medium of instruction, it was difficult for Hindus to acquire the knowledge of Persian. Moreover as Persian ceased to be the court language, it was not necessary for Hindus to learn Persian. The lack of knowledge of each other's classical languages was one of the factors for the distance which began to separate both communities.

The new education emphasized memorizing rather than thinking, imitation rather than originality. It is true that Indian tradition of learning had been associated with memorizing but in new education, as Mackee says:

"the necessity for acquiring in a foreign tongue led to tremendous over-emphasis upon memorizing as a method".15

Classroom methods and examination emphasized memorized knowledge rather than reasoning, judgement and reconstruction of the pupil's experience. At the time of the examination the students used to cram informations in order to get through. They memorized page after page of material with little or no idea of its significance or its practical use. Even today Indian education has not become free from this defect.

Another feature was the unplanned growth of educational structure, guided more by considerations of cost than of quality. The Government was unwilling to bear more than the minimum responsibility for education and as a result the expansion of educational facilities were undertaken by private agencies. Educational institutions sprang up without any planning. More and more students rushed to these institutions and as a consequence the quality of education deteriorated.

The use of a foreign language as a medium of instruction in secondary and higher education put undue strain on students and the study of English became more important than the acquisition of knowledge.

Because of the dominance of English modern Indian languages could not make progress. The educated Indians neglected their own mother tongue for a long time. It is
true that the literature of power appeared in some quantity in all the languages but the literature of information — science, philosophy, history etc. was not cultivated.

If Western education brought many evils, it also brought some good results.

Under the indigenous system of education higher learning was restricted to upper class of the society. Even if a son of an artisan was exceptionally bright, he was not admitted in the institute of higher learning. It was believed that because of his Karma of the former birth, he was born in a particular caste and therefore, had no right of getting higher knowledge. The new education was open to all who could pay fees. Generally, the advantage of higher education was taken by the higher caste people but there was a small number of low-caste people who took the advantage of education and to that extent new education disturbed the social order. It was not necessary for the son of a washer-man to become a washerman. He could become a clerk in a Government office.

Britishers adopted the filtration theory and neglected mass education. However, from another point of view filtration theory gave good result:
"If instead of educating a small class well and providing thereby the proper leadership in a national movement, the educational system had been more broad-based from the start, it is doubtful whether Western ideas could have permeated Indian thought so successfully and political consciousness been raised so quickly."

Because of the impact of Western education the middle class became nationally awakened. In 1885, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, describing the impact of Western rule and Western education, wrote:

"We are at present gradually being inspired by the spirit of patriotism. The birth of patriotism among us is due to English rule and English education. English education has imparted to us knowledge of ancient and modern history; it has enabled us to know what were the fruits of patriotism among the ancient Greeks and Romans. We have also learned from their histories how, when they lost their patriotism, they were subjected to foreign domination and became ignorant and superstitious. English rule has made us realize the necessity of cultivating patriotism in our national concerns.... The spirit of patriotism has not yet permeated all class. It is only those who have come under the influence of English education and begun to realise

the defects of British administration that have been inspired by that spirit. Patriotism is not our national quality. It is the product of the influences to which we have been subjected after the introduction of British rule”.17

On the other hand the political henchmen of the British also came from the educated class. The Government also wanted this type of people, so it awarded honours. However, it does not mean that all who cooperated with the government were quislings.

The teaching of English history was stressed and this led the people to the idea of the inevitability of the popular rule and the decline of autocratic authority in the modern age. As Panikkar says:

"The contrast between an England governed by a parliament based on popular sovereignty and an India governed under the authority of the same parliament, by an alien bureaucracy which denied the right of the people and restricted their liberties, was glaring".18

Western education brought about change in the outlook of the educated people. Especially their outlook towards religion was changed and this brought about social reforms.


Many of the social evils disappeared at the end of the nineteenth century. The India of the last decade of the nineteenth century was quite different from the pre-mutiny India. The condition of women was improved considerably and the authority of the religion weakened.

As English became the medium of instruction at the secondary and higher level and as the teaching of English was emphasized the cause of Indian languages received a setback. However, English became an instrument of unity. It became the vehicle of inter-communication among the educated Indians.

As has been stated earlier the Indian languages were neglected by the educated people in the earlier stage. However, afterwards there was a remarkable revival of vernacular literature notably in Bombay and Bengal. It is to be noted that there was a remarkable growth of Indian literature where English education made much progress 'Let it be put to the credit, too, of the same education, that it produced Bankim Chaterji, the Bengali Walter Scott'.\(^{19}\) However this result was not direct one. 'English has produced this result indirectly and perversely by arousing a national feeling and reaction against exotic culture'.\(^ {20}\)

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20. Ibid. p. 86.
Opinions differ about the consequences of the educational system. Some nationalists look only one side and believe that the system brought all evils and did nothing good. As a matter of fact it brought some evil effects but at the same time it also brought some good features.

If it created a gulf between the class and the mass, it also brought awakening. If it was divorced from Indian life, it also brought the ideas of democracy and equality. If English language became a hurdle in the progress of Indian languages, it also created unity among educated Indians. If English language put undue strain on studies, it also brought first hand knowledge from the West.