CHAPTER II
EDUCATION AND NATION-BUILDING: A BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this Chapter, an attempt has been made to sketch a general picture of education in a broader perspective which will serve as background to the study undertaken. For proper appreciation of the problem we have tried to examine education in a brief historical context.¹ We are concerned mainly with the British and post-British periods in India with special reference to school education.²

(Before the beginning of the British rule in India, in Indian hierarchical traditional society where the division of labour was relatively simple, the role of education was not specialized. Its function was performed mainly by primary groups like family and caste. It was more religious-oriented and medieval in character where classical languages were used as medium of instruction.³ Religious institutions were

1. Durkheim points out that "education process, either at a given moment or over time, cannot be understood apart from its historical context." See, Emile Durkheim, Education and Sociology, New York: The Free Press, 1968, p.20.

2. The role of education can also be discussed in terms of Western capitalistic and Eastern Socialist models but this is not of our main concern. Therefore, we have limited our discussion in terms of pre and post-Independent India.

3. In terms of the character of indigenous system of education in pre-British India. See, for instance, Syed Nurullah and J.P. Naik, A Student's History of Education in India, Bombay: The Macmillan & Co., 1971, p.21.)
the chief sources of imparting knowledge and guiding forces of our traditional society where education was used as means of self-realization, the highest end of life. The content of education was mostly limited to the three R's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic). It was esoteric and ascriptive-oriented, and a preserve of those who were superior in caste and class position, the "twice-born" castes. In such an indigenous system, some of the important elements of nation-building process, such as, rationality, meritocracy, productivity, specialisation and secularism could not receive any important place in educational processes in order to reform and modernize the traditional society.

The reform of Indian traditional society can be traced


back to the beginning of British period in India, and more specifically, the formative period of educational reforms during the British rule starts from 1773, the time of Warren Hastings and extends to Woods' Dispatch of 1854. During this period when British rule was expanding, various schools of thought defined the aims of education. Firstly, they formulated that the representative form of government is not suited to India in order to strengthen the British rule. Secondly, they pointed out that the British rule requires trained Indians of only upper classes to man the lower positions in their politico-administrative organizations. Thirdly, they visualized that British culture is superior to Indian culture, and therefore, Indians have to be civilised.7 In accordance with these policies, the aims of education were worked out which continued to govern the educational system throughout the British rule, with minor changes. These aims were: (1) to civilize Indians through Western culture, (2) to train and inculcate in them the skills and values of the politico-economic system which they were establishing in India, (3) to train Indians to man their administrative machinery, and (4) to win the confidence of those who lost their political

influence and make them loyal to the British Government.\(^8\)

Keeping in view their policies and objectives of education, they wanted to implement first the idea of training a handful of Indians from upper classes for top subordinate position in the hierarchy of elite structure of the colonial social order. Macaulay who belonged to the Anglicists school supported the idea that for the consolidation of British rule, it is important to educate only influential Indians in such a way that they are "Indians by birth but English in taste, manners and outlook."\(^9\) This class of Indians was properly equipped with English-based education but a time came that it is this class of people who revolted against the British system. They started national freedom movement and after independence became the top echelons of the Indian elite structure. They were the first generation of English-based and class-based Indian leaders. It is through the independent efforts of this educated class of Indians that education was expected to reach the masses which was known as Downward Filtration Theory.

According to this theory, the British Government desired, on the analogy of the aristocratic classes in England,

\(^8\) Ibid., p.99.
\(^9\) Ibid., p. 99
to educate only the aristocratic class of Indians in order to create a governing class in India.10 This educational policy, had several dysfunctional consequences for the nation. Firstly, it widened the gap between the ruling elites and the ruled masses. Secondly, the English-knowing people became a class by themselves and lost the sympathy for those who did not know English language and literature. Therefore, it is because of their own political motivation of educating and imparting Western literature and Christian culture that education was highly loaded with English literature and language, European tradition and science.11 This type of education gave a new outlook to westernize Indian system of education but it was quite limited and until 1854, the Company did not accept any direct responsibility of educating the masses because they did not consider education as necessary to every Indian. It was considered as commodity to be purchased only by those who could afford it.

It is after 1854 that gradual attempts were made to popularise education among the masses. From 1882 to 1902, considerable expansion of secondary education took place in order to spread education and increase literacy among the Indian people. The number of Secondary schools in the year

1882 was 3,916 which increased to 5,124 in 1902 with an increase in number of students from 214,077 to 590,129. This shows that there was rapid expansion of secondary education and the number of students under instructions was more than double, but education continued to be Western-oriented and neglected the indigenous schools which almost completely disappeared by 1902. The expansion of education led to various educational developments. The principal among them were: (1) organisation of the Education Department, (2) development of the system of grants-in-aid, and (3) Indianization of various agencies to spread education among the people. The agencies entrusted in the field of education were: (1) Educational institutions conducted by the Education Department under the Government, (2) Missionary educational enterprise, (3) Local bodies, like municipalities and local boards, (4) Private indigenous educational institutions, like Ramakrishna Mission, Arya Samaj, Prathana Samaj, Khalsa, and others.

These agencies provided different educational conditions and facilities in different institutions in terms of salary.


promotions, recruitment of teaching staff, standard and cost of education, etc., although the content of education remained more or less uniform. Such differences had significant consequences for the nation. Firstly, these differences strengthened stratification in educational institutions because those who belonged to richer section had access to better education. Secondly, education increased quickly among particular caste and social groups because of their growing interest in education as a result of competition for better job opportunities. This led to the development of institutions which were run and financed by traditional institutions like castes, religious bodies, individual families, etc., which provided education to those who belonged to the same groups. Thirdly, in such institutions it was difficult for students or teachers to project freely their feelings which could contradict the ideology of organisation or individual who run the institution. Fourthly, education as a commodity supplied by various agencies was not easily available to all, partly because it was consumed by those who could afford it, and partly because of financial problems. Therefore, it is after 1919 that education was gradually made provincial subject in order to make education available to all. 14

This issue was given much more impetus by the Swadeshi Movement when political awakening had drawn the attention of the people to demand education for the masses. At this time, the average literacy of India was only 6% and out of the total number of children of school-going age, only 23.8% male and 2.7% female children attended schools. In 1910, Sri Gopal Krishna Gokhale put forth the idea of free and compulsory primary education before the Government but his idea was opposed by Government officials and landlords who wanted to prove their allegiance to their white masters. After Gokhale, other Indian reformers also propounded their educational ideals in order to reform Indian system of education. Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore deserve importance because of their main concern with school education. Tagore (1861-1941) was an idealist and naturalist who gave more emphasis on non-material aspects of societal progress. Therefore, he condemned the view that education should give primary emphasis on economic development.

Tagore does not advocate the idea of vocationalization of education where students are trained and subjected to "the necessary specialization into the narrow bounds of social and professional conventionalism" which ignores the nobler

aspects of life, that is, love and freedom. He suggests that the school should not be based on the conventions of society. It should be life-inspired, natural and joyous adventure of intellectual exploration and free individual development. He conceives of societal prosperity in terms of harmonious and spontaneous development of individual personality which he defines in relation to social, moral, spiritual and physical aspects of growth. For this purpose, the content of education should encompass social, moral, spiritual and recreational aspects of learning, free from artificial stimulations. These ideas were experimented at his schools, Shanti-niketan and Sri-niketan but could not spread and become as successful as that of Mahatma Gandhi's epoch-making national scheme of Basic Education which was rooted both in the material and moral needs of the country and had much economic significance.

This scheme of Basic Education was introduced in 1937 when Provincial Autonomy was achieved in eleven Provinces of British India. Almost complete control over education was

16. Quoted in S.P. Chaube, Recent Educational Philosophies in India, Agra: Ram Prasad and Sons., 1967, p.149.

given to Indian Ministers. Most distinctive contributions of the Congress Ministries after the Government of India Act, 1935 were: (1) development in all stages of education and vocational education to inculcate relevant technical knowledge (2) beginning of Basic Education and Adult Education, (3) abolition of untouchability and education of Harijans. The concept of Basic Education grew out of certain existential economic conditions. Gokhale's idea of universal, compulsory and free education was given more importance. It was an expensive task but legitimate educational demand of the people. Gandhi's scheme was not very expensive to meet this demand. The most important contribution of this scheme to the process of nation-building was to liquidate illiteracy and increase national consciousness among the people by making education self-supporting and profit-yielding. Mahatma Gandhi anticipated a kind of social order where there is self-sufficiency, self-reliance, social equality, absence of mutually exclusive class divisions, truth, non-violence and cooperation rather than competition.


These characteristics of society as anticipated by Gandhi and mentioned above, were also the cornerstones of his Basic scheme. In order to achieve them he made his scheme project-oriented. The project serves as a basis for integrated learning where there is self-sufficiency and self-reliance because knowledge is economically remunerative, oriented to useful manual productive work. There is also equality and cooperation free from exploitation and violence because students from different socio-economic background sit and work together on a single project where they can have shared experiences and associated living. Thus, Gandhi introduced a dynamic and pragmatic idea of mass-oriented education by making education profit-making and utilizing limited natural resources of the nation effectively. In this way, his scheme has both economic and political dimensions of nation-building process. On the one hand, he tried to link education with economic return, so that, education can easily reach the masses with minimum expenditure and, on the other, he tried to relate education with political responsiveness, so that, people can realise the implication of their franchise.

Because of the economic and political relevance of the

scheme, it had far-reaching impact on the existing conditions. When the scheme was launched, the first institution which was opened in 1938, was Vidya Mandir Training School at Wardha. After this, gradual steps were taken to introduce Basic Education on an experimental basis in several states. In 1938-39, there were 10 training centres, 7 Refresher Training Centres and a few Basic schools. In 1939-42, the number of schools increased to about five hundreds which were engaged in imparting experimental courses in Basic education.21 A few non-Government institutions were also started. For instance, Jamia-Millia Islamia controlled two Basic schools, Tilak Maharashtra Vidya-pith conducted one Basic school at Poon and Hindustan Talimi Sangh conducted one Basic school and Basic training school at Sevanagar.22 From 1942-45 was a period when the progress of work in Basic Education was slackened because of national movement but after 1946, it was considered as integral part of rural reconstruction and received a new impetus in the Five Year Plans. In 1951, the total number of institutions was 1,875 (including junior and senior Basic schools and Teacher-training institutions) which increased to 12,936 in 1956 with a total number of 185,000 pupils in 1951 and 1,100,000 in 1956.23 Upto the third five year plan, the progress

23. Thomas, op.cit., p. 132.
of Basic education was satisfactory but it was very low, and gradually it lost its significance because of its manual and mechanical nature of work, lack of trained teachers, inadequate administration, absence of well-planned programmes and because of a renewed interest in industrial development of free India.

The nation-building process began after the achievement of Independence from the yoke of imperial rule where education was politically motivated. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru while addressing the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1948 said that great changes have taken place in the socio-economic and political structure of our country and the system of education must also be changed accordingly, with new thinking and new direction. But it should not be uprooted because it is a living organic process and can affect the whole national activity. 24

After the formulation of national objectives as enshrined in our Constitution, the nation committed itself to increase productivity and industrialization based on modern science and technology, to develop human potentialities and efficient technical know-how, to establish socialistic pattern of economy, and economic self-sufficiency, to accelerate the process of socio-cultural renaissance and strengthen democratic way of life with an increased political consciousness and participation.

These are some of the core dimensions of nation-building process. In this process, which aims at modernizing our society, education has been viewed as one of the potential means of achieving them. For the re-examination of the role of education, a series of measures were recommended by various conferences, committees and commissions in order to make education more functional in the process of national reconstruction. Different commissions, such as, Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49), Mudaliar Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) and Chatterji Commission (1956-57) have focused attention on different aspects of education but they do not cover the entire system of education in order to give it a national orientation. Kothari Education Commission (1964-66) is the last and the most comprehensive report covering all stages of education.

All these Commissions, especially the last Education Commission, has considered education as a source of increasing productivity by developing human potentialities and imparting training for developing technical know-how. Education has


also been considered as an instrument of inculcating modern values, such as, equality, rationalism, secularism, social, justice, etc., and of raising the level of political awareness, consciousness and participation in order to modernize the system of polity.\footnote{27 For the acceleration of the transformation of the existing social system in the light of the dimensions of nation-building, Kothari Commission (1964-66) recommended educational revolution through internal transformation of the system of education, so as, to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the nation. It recommends qualitative improvements, crucial for national development in order to make Indian education internationally comparable. Another aspect of the recommendation is the expansion of educational facilities in order to equalize educational opportunities, explore human potentialities and increase efficient manpower resources.\footnote{28 In accordance with these recommendations, national curriculum is expected to encompass a wide variety of modern learning in order to make education fit to play a broader role.}}


in national life than its limited role of spiritualism and
self-realization of our traditional educational system and of
preparing a class of clerks, bureaucrats and collaborators
as conceived by the British Government. The Commission
strongly recommends radical reforms in the structure of
education necessary to achieve the dimensions of nation-
building as mentioned earlier. In this context, secondary
education has been considered as the foundation stage for
fuller achievement of national objectives. For this purpose,
vocationalization of secondary education is given major
emphasis. Besides this, school education is also supposed to
discover unity in diversity, to make students aware of their
fundamental rights which represent the conscience of the
nation, to develop in them a higher level of national
consciousness, and to make them active and participant member
of our democratic social order. These are some of the
important components for the survival of a democratic nation.

This aspect of nation-building process is the main concern of
our study. In this context, the cultivation of discipline,
cooperation, social sensitiveness, tolerance, patriotism,
rationalism, and leadership qualities are also important elements
of effective citizenship and nation-building.

29. S.H. Rudolph and L.I. Rudolph, Education and Politics
in India, Oxford University Press, 1972, p.3.
30. The Indian Constitution, p. 50.
School system in India has to contribute to the process of national reconstruction but the system is creating conflict and lop-sided development of the country because the inherited structure of the British time is still perpetuating a class-oriented society. Britishers founded public school system modelled on public school system in England but the latter was never exclusive in character while the former is more exclusive and inaccessible for the masses. This has very strong impact on the nation-building process in India. The schools established during the British period were meant for the aristocratic class of the society. For instance, the Sadul Public School, established in 1893, known as "nobles school", was meant for the sons and relations of the nobles of Bikaner state. The Rajkumar College, established in 1894, was meant for the rulers (zamindars) of Chattisgarh. The Scindia School founded in 1897, was meant for the education of the royal family of Maharaja of Gwalior. Such institutions were kept exclusive of the ordinary citizens.  

The present system of public school is inherited from the British time and closely related to existing social classes. These schools are still not rooted in Indian culture and tradition. It is this type of class-oriented education
which is English-based and Western-oriented, catering to the needs of the upper class, produced the first generation of most of our nation-builders. The masses have always been deprived of this expensive education which has prevented to achieve the "essential unity of India" and to bridge the gap between the masses and the elite. A similar example we find in Japan during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868), where education was closely associated with various social classes like the Warrior, the artisan, the peasant and the merchant. Those who are financially well-off went to private schools for scholarly professions. Many such institutions, even in the later half of the Meiji period, maintained the same scholar-ruler-tradition and remained the preserve of politically minded intellectuals. They are alienated forming the nucleus of political opposition.

Such English-medium privately managed schools in India are contributing to the process of nation-building but they are training only a handful of students whose parents can afford this education. These schools, as well as, other privileged institutions of higher learning and professions are preparing


students for new professions but they are mostly dominated by the better-off sections of our country. Thus, such institutions are helping in perpetuation of more or less the same class-oriented society prevailing during the British period. Therefore, a particular section of our society having better education and economic background is cumulatively benefitted while the rest of the masses remain deprived of better opportunities who may be more productive if properly trained and educated.

As against privately managed and run public schools, we have mass-based government and government aided schools in India. Students of these schools belong to poor socio-economic background who reflect lower level of occupational aspiration. They generally aspire for semi-skilled and subordinate position in the hierarchical existing structure. They are facing acute socio-economic problems. Therefore, a time may come that the schools attended by these students may become nucleus of political opposition in India. We find such example in Japan. The Terakoya schools fulfilled the needs of lower classes but towards the end of Tokugawa Era,


they played important role as nucleus of opposition and generated a higher degree of political awakening in students.39

Such stratified system of school in India or anywhere else are serving as powerful instruments of not only perpetuating and sharpening inequalities but also widening the gap between the classes, and thus, creating problems for the achievement of national objectives. This type of system in India may not be very productive for the nation-building process. It is really undemocratic and needs drastic changes. Medium of instruction, education as state subject, financial problems and pressure from various interest groups have been responsible for the development of such stratified system of school education in India. The medium of instruction, for example, has contributed to the development of two classes. Firstly, there are those who receive English and Western type of education. They are generally well-off people. Secondly, there are those who get education through vernaculars rooted in Indian culture and tradition. They are poor and deprived people. This has strengthened the gap between those who are privileged, rich and English-knowing people and those who are deprived, poor and Indian language-knowing people.40 Similarly,


education as state subject and financial problems have also been responsible for educational disparities, social deprivation, prevention of a uniform system of education and the unfulfilment of the compulsory and free education upto the age of 14.

However, our objectives of nation-building as mentioned earlier, are our ideals on which a democratic structure can be built and raised higher but to achieve this, the existing system of education has to be re-structured first. Our inherited constraints are creating conflict in the process of nation-building. Various interest groups want to retain the same structure of education which can serve their interest. Education cannot effectively play its constructive role unless individual interest is merged into collective interest and the entire system of education is radicalized as suggested by the Education Commission (1964-66). The destiny of India cannot be shaped in her classroom unless a drastic change is brought about in the classroom structure in order that it becomes more uniform, purposive and productive to the process of reconstruction. Uniformity (a system of Common school) in educational structure, in a democratic system like India, is very important in order to promote an undifferentiated process of politicization of the younger generation on whom depends the future unity of the country. In the subsequent chapters we shall examine how far our system of school education is relevant to the process of nation-building.