

# **PAPER 1 DSE-A-1 SEM -5: HISTORY OF BENGAL(c.1757-1905)**

## **IV. CULTURAL CHANGES AND SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS REFORM MOVEMENT**

### **(B). EDUCATION:INDIGENOUS AND WESTERN**

In 1757CE after the Battle of Plassey when the English East India company started with its political career in India there was no education system that was organised and supported by the State. Both the Hindus and the Muslims had their own systems of Education, each deeply rooted with a great tradition of learning and scholarship behind them. The English East India company decided to have little interference as possible in the matters of indigenous Indian instructions and practices and to support the indigenous system of education.

In 1781 CE the Calcutta Madrasa was founded by Warren Hastings for the study and teaching of Muslim law and related subjects. In 1792 CE Jonathan Duncan established the Sanskrit College at Varanasi for the study of Hindu law and philosophy. Both the institutions were designed to provide a regular supply of qualified Indians to help the administration of law in the courts of the Company. But there were some men among the English officials who were also inspired by the genuine admiration of India's cultural heritage. This was the decade of the oriental scholarship of Sir William Jones and the formation of the Royal Asiatic Society. The Asiatic Society was founded on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1784 by Sir William Jones and thirty other members who had responded to his call for pursuing various branches of Asiatic studies. Membership was voluntary but until 1829 no Indians were admitted. The first volume of its publication Asiatic Reaserches were brought out in 1789.

It had been no part of the East India Company's original policy to impose a westernised system of education on its Indian subjects. Its lack of interest is not surprising since its primary motive was trade and it did not in any way wished to tamper with the social and religious institutions. But the strong pressure exerted on the Company by the Christian missionaries and many humanitarians, including some Indians as well to encourage and promote modern education in India resulted in the Charter Act of 1813. The English missionary activist, such as Charles Grant and William Wilberforce compelled the English East India

Company to give up its policy of non-intervention in education. For the first time the British Parliament included in the 1813 Charter Act, a clause under which the Governor-General in Council was bound to keep a sum of not less than one lakh rupees for education. The greatest importance of the Charter Act of 1813 was that the Company for the first time acknowledged the state responsibility for promotion of education in India.

There was however no clear directive as to how this one lakh of rupees had to be spent. The Company continued to encourage the study of Arabic and Sanskrit as a part of improving and promoting Indian language and literature. Till 1823 it did little for education as it was more interested in wars, treatise and settlement of debts than in establishing school. Rich citizens of Calcutta and Bombay had in the meanwhile come forward to set up English schools and had been active together with the official and non-official Englishmen, in organising the native school and book societies of Calcutta and Madras.

Rammohun Roy was the earliest propagator of modern education which he looked upon a major instrument for the spread of modern ideas in the country. In 1817, David Hare, who had come out to India in the 1800 as watchmaker but spend his entire life in the propagation of modern education in the country, founded the famous Hindu College. Rammohun Roy gave most enthusiastic support to Hare in this and his other educational projects. He maintained at his own cost an English school in Calcutta from 1817 in which among other subjects mechanic and philosophy of Voltaire were taught. In 1825 he established a Vedanta College in which courses both in Indian learning and in western social physical sciences were offered. Rammohun Roy was equally keen in making Bengali the vehicle of intellectual intercourse in Bengal. He compiled a Bengali grammar. Through his translations, pamphlets and journals he helped evolve a modern and elegant prose style for the language.

In 1823, the Government appointed a General Committee of Public Instructions and for the next decade the debate continued, both within the Committee and outside as to whether the Company should encourage western or oriental learning, whether the medium of instruction should be English, a classical Indian language or the vernacular and whether the aim should be mass education or school for the elite. The General Committee of Public Instructions was divided into two groups-the Orientalist, who advocated in favour of oriental education and the Anglist who advocated in favour of western education and English as the medium of imparting education. Macaulay the

President of the General Committee of Public Instructions as well as a law member in the Governor General's Council defended the views of the Anglicists. Lord Macaulay wrote his famous minute on Educational Policy in 1835, which favoured the viewpoint of the Anglicists. On the basis of 'Macaulay's Minute' Bentinck ruled that all the fund appropriated for education would be best employed on English education only. Consequently a resolution based on Macaulay's Minute and accepted by William Bentinck's Government on March 7, 1835 proclaimed English as India's official language. Under the Macaulian system of education Persian was abolished as the court language and was substituted by English.

In 1844, Lord Hardinge decided to give government employment to Indians Educated in English schools. The success of English education was thus assured and it made good progress in the three presidencies of Bengal, Bihar, Madras where a number of schools and colleges were opened in between 1813 and 1853. Establishment of medical, engineering and law colleges marked a beginning of professional education

Under the leadership of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio , an young Anglo-Indian teacher who taught in the Hindu College a radical trend arose among the Bengali intellectuals in the 1820s and 1830s was known as the Young Bengal Movement. The Derozians as they were called attacked the old and decadent customs rites and traditions. They were passionate advocates of women's rights and demanded education for them.

The Bethune School founded in Calcutta in 1849 was the first fruit of the powerful movement for women's education that arose in the 1840s and 1850s. While the education of women was not unknown in India a great deal of prejudice against it existed. Iswar Chandra Vidhyasagar, the great scholar and reformer and also the secretary of the Bethune College was one of the pioneers of the higher education of women.

In 1854 Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control prepared a despatch on an educational system for India. The Wood's Despatch is considered as the Magna Carta of English education in India and was the first comprehensive plan for the spread of Education in India. It asked the Government of India to assume responsibility for education of the masses. The Despatch systematized the hierarchy from Vernacular primary schools in villages at bottom followed by Anglo-Vernacular High Schools and at affiliated college at district level and

affiliating universities in the Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, An education Department was to be set up in every province as a part of this Despatch. Moreover as a part of this Despatch the Government had to give aid to the affiliated private schools and it recommended English as medium of Instruction in higher studies and vernacular in primary schools. The Wood's Despatch also laid stress on women's education and vocational education.

The ideals and methods of Wood's Despatch dominated the field for five decades and saw rapid Westernisation of education system in India. In 1857, universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were set up.

The India Education Commission of 1882 CE famously known as Hunter Commission, since the Commission was appointed under the Chairmanship of Sir William Wilson Hunter, was appointed by Lord Ripon to enquire into the manners in which effects has been given to the principles of the Despatch of 1854 and to make the necessary recommendations with regard to the primary education. The Commission recommended transfer of control of primary education to the newly set up District and Municipal boards; setting up schools for training of teachers of primary school; it recommended two-fold division of secondary education-one fold being literary and leading up to students pursuing further education in universities and the other fold being vocational education leading up to commercial careers; this Commission also brought forth the lack of attention toward education of women outside the presidency towns. The next two decades saw rapid expansion of education at the secondary and collegiate levels and it is also important to note that this growth and expansion of education witnessed active participation of the Indians.

Lord Curzon convened the first conference of the Directors of Public Instructions in 1901 and initiated an era of educational reforms based on its decisions. He appointed an Universities Commission under Thomas Raleigh in 1902 , and based on its recommendation Indian Universities Act of 1904 was passed.

The Indian Universities Act of 1904 was formulated to propose the ways and means of improving the education facilities and infrastructures in the country. The Act enabled the universities to assume teaching functions, constituted syndicate for speedier transaction of business and provided for strict conditions for affiliation and periodic inspection of different institutions. All these

provisions led to substantial measure of qualitative improvement in higher education.

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## REFERENCE

Basu Aparna, Essays in the History of Indian Education, 1982