

# The role of Britishers in evolution of modern education system in India

Rupesh Kumar

UGC NET, History Student, IGNOU, Department of social sciences, New Delhi (India)

---

## ARTICLE DETAILS

### Article History

Published Online: 07 August 2018

### Keywords

British, Bengal, Madarasas, Pathshalas

---

---

## ABSTRACT

Although the British had captured Bengal in 1757, yet the responsibilities to impart education remained in the hand of Indians. The study of religious books continued in Pathshalas and Madarasas.. In 1781, Calcutta Madarasas for the study and teaching of Muslim law was set up in Bengal province by then Governor General Warren Hastings. This was the first education institution supported by the government. After that in 1791, Jonathan Duncan started a Sanskrit College at Varanasi. Both these institutions provided, qualified Indians to help the administration of law in the courts of the Company. While the many educated Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, believed that modern education could be the best remedy for the social, economic and political ills of the country, the missionaries believed that modern education would destroy the faith of the people in their own religions and lead them to adopt Christianity. Therefore, they pressurized the government to promote the modern education system in western line. As a result, the Charter Act 1813 directed the Company to spend the sum of one lakh of rupees for spread of modern education in India. This proved to be the beginning of steps taken by the British Government and followed by Macaulay minutes, Wood Despatch to University act 1904 and so on. The Britishers were the most successful in the growth of modern education in India.

---

## 1. Introduction

In India the education system has various aspects and it has evolved since ancient time. The unique things about Indian education system are diversity in fundamentals like language, culture and dialect etc. In ancient times, India had the Gurukula System of education where the teacher and the pupils used to live together in a distant place and were taught philosophy, arts, science administration and military techniques. In vedic period women were equally educated to their counter parts. Women like Gargi, Gayatri and Maitrayi were highly educated personas who participated in educational debates. However the biggest demerit of the Vedic education was that the lower varna like Sudra were not allowed to take education. In the later vedic period condition of women deteriorated and they were denied education. During medieval period Vedic schools and Madrasas were dominant, however the condition of education system was not good enough when the British colonial intruded.

## 2. Growth of modern education during British era

When the company rule began after the palasi, there was a network of elementary schools, Pathshalas and Makhtabs as well as Tols and Madarasas for higher education throughout the country. In these institutions at elementary levels pupils were taught some passages from the religious books and simple arithmetic. Higher education was mostly availed of by upper class Hindus and Muslims. In the first 50 years of its dominion in India the East India Company—a trading, profit-making concern—took little interest in the education of its subjects. In this period, Christian missionaries started few schools giving instructions in English language in Madras, Bengal and Bombay regions.

In 1781, Calcutta Madrassa for the study and teaching of Muslim law was set up in Bengal province by then Governor General Warren Hastings. This was the first education

institution supported by the government. After that in 1791, Jonathan Duncan started a Sanskrit College at Varanasi. Both these institutions provided, qualified Indians to help the administration of law in the courts of the Company.

The first step taken by the Britishers in modernising the education system, in real sense was, the Charter Act 1813, which directed the Company to spend the sum of one lakh of rupees for spread of modern education in India. But even this petty amount was not made available by the Company authorities till 1823.

## 3. Macaulay Minutes

Lord Macaulay wrote a minute on February 1835, where he stressed the implementation of the English language as a medium of instruction. He opined that this would enable the emergence of a class of people in the Indian society, who would be well versed in English language, Western ideology, taste and opinion. It may educate the people into a capacity for better governance. In the minute, Macaulay wrote, —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, though Indian in blood and colour of their skin, would be English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellects. Thus, Macaulay anglicized the education in India.

Macaulay opined that English should be made language for learning because it is a language of the ruling class and higher class Indians are also demanding the same, as it was attached with employment given by East India company. In the minute, he advocated education of the classes in India and made a vigorous plea for spreading Western learning through the medium of English. His minute was accepted by William Bentick and it opened a new chapter in the educational history of India. English made the official language

#### 4. Wood's Education Despatch

The British Parliament constitutes a Selection Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Charles Wood to enquire into the Progress of education in India. Therefore this report known as the Wood's Despatch released on July 19, 1854. This Despatch became the basis of the education policy of East India company's government in India since 1854. Often described as the 'Magna Carta of modern education in India', formed a landmark in the history of modern education in India. It was indeed presented a comprehensive plan for the later development of the educational system in the subcontinent. This despatch rejected the 'Filtration theory' and laid stress on mass education, female education and favoured secularization of education from the bottom level. In 1857 three Universities were established at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay as per this report.

#### 5. Hunter Commission 1882

After the 1857 revolt the responsibility of Indian education shifted from the company to the British Parliament. In Britain, Council Act of 1880 for reforming primary education had been passed in England and education in India was to be reformed on similar lines. When Lord Ripon was appointed the viceroy of India, the General Council of Education requested him to institute an enquiry into Indian Education. There were complaints that the Wood's Dispatch of 1854 had not been properly followed. For this purpose on February 3, 1882 Lord Ripon appointed the Indian Education Commission under the chairmanship of William Hunter, a member of the executive council of viceroy. The commission recommended that the newly founded local bodies should be entrusted with the management of primary schools.

#### 6. The University Commission 1902

Lord Curzon pointed out that no improvement happened in university education because they failed to follow the guidelines of London University. Hence, the top priority given to university reform. He appointed the Indian University Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Raleigh in 1902. Indian members were also associated with the commissions in June of the same year. The commission's recommendations of university education have been regarded merely rehabilitation and strengthening the existing system. Based on this recommendations the University Act of 1904 was passed.

#### 7. Development in Education During 1921-1937-

The period (1921-37) is remarkable as education system officially came under Indian control after Montford Act 1919. In 1935 all the subjects came under the control of provincial ministers and legislatures. They did their best to expand education to the utmost. Laws, which governed universal primary education, were passed. Teaching and residential universities saw the light of the day. Wood and Abbot Committee on vocational education (1936-37) drew the attention of the public towards the inefficiency of literary education. This period was of great educational thinking in the field of primary education and secondary education. Intermediate education became linked with school education. In the field of higher education quantitative as well as qualitative

improvement was exceptional. Five new universities were created at Delhi (1922), Nagpur (1923), Andhra (1926), and Agra (1927); Travancore (1937). The older six universities were reorganized and reformed. The medium of instructions continued to be in English. Hostel library and other facilities could not be expanded due to shortage of funds.

#### 8. The Hartog Committee

The Hartog committee was appointed by the Simon Commission in 1928 to enquire the organisation of various aspects of education in India and to give its suggestions for its overall improvement and further progress. In the words of the Committee, "They were required to report on the organisation of education, on almost every point that organisation needs reconsideration and strengthening, and the resolutions of the bodies responsible for the organisation of education need readjustment."

#### 9. The Wardha Scheme Of Education

The Wardha Scheme of Education is also known as Nai Talim/Basic Education, put forward by Ghandiji in a series of articles in his weekly Harijan. A conference was convened at Wardha, which appointed a committee under the presidentship of Dr. Zakir Hussain to prepare the syllabus. Wardha scheme of Education 1937 recommended that it was considered desirable to give preference to local trained persons in appointment as teachers.

#### 10. Abbott Wood Report 1937

Abbott Wood Report 1937 recommended the establishment of a single polytechnic school where training in many vocations should be given, instead of special individual schools for the training in individually different vocations

#### 11. The Sargent Report on Education(1944)

As the British became hopeful of its victory in the Second World War, it directed its attention to do something for the Indian people in the field of education. So it advised Sir John Sargent, the Educational Advisor to the Government of India, to prepare a comprehensive scheme of education for educational reform in India.

#### 12. Conclusion

Analyzing the consequences of modern education introduced by Britishers, Mahatma Gandhi wrote in 1921 'YOUNG INDIA', "The foreign medium has caused brain fag, put an undue strain upon the nerves of our children, made them crammers and imitators, unfitted them for original work and thought, and disabled them for fittering their learning to the family or the masses." The colonial legacy still dominates the education policy. Education in India, from the beginning has been catering to the needs of the selected group of the community. The common people, their needs and aspirations were never considered. Revolutionary changes have to be made by the government like providing affordable and quality education for all, raising the investment in education sector to at least 6% of GDP as a priority, to expand the capacity of existing institutions, Skill-development and vocational education are the

few suggestions which can add a new feather to the modern system of education.

**References:**

1. Rajiv Ahir: Modern India,spectrum,p.291-302
2. NCERT Class XII By Satish Chandra Mittal,p.78-80
3. Bipin Chandra,Indias struggle for independence,Penguin books,
4. NCERT VIII, 2003 old, p.147-149
5. SK Pandey: Aadhunik Bharat, Prayag Academy, P.257-265.
6. [www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/summary-on-the-history-of-modern-education-during-british-india](http://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/summary-on-the-history-of-modern-education-during-british-india).
7. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_education\\_in\\_the\\_Indian\\_subcontinent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_education_in_the_Indian_subcontinent)