

The Analysis of Historical Growth of Modern Education in India

Dr. S. Harish Kumar

*Associate Professor of History and Principal,
Government First Grade College,
Birur, Chikmagalur Dist.*

Abstract

The historical growth of modern education in India reflects a gradual transformation from traditional systems of learning to an organized, institutionalized, and inclusive educational framework. This study analyses the major developments in Indian education from the colonial period to the post-independence era, focusing on the factors that shaped the expansion of modern education. The introduction of Western education during British rule, the establishment of educational institutions, universities, and government education policies played an important role in changing the structure and objectives of education in India. Major developments associated with the Wood's Despatch of 1854, the Indian Universities Act, the Government of India's educational policies, and subsequent post-independence commissions contributed to the expansion of primary, secondary, higher, technical, and professional education. After independence, the Government of India emphasized universal access, literacy, social equality, women's education, and the development of higher education. The study also examines the growth of educational institutions, increasing enrolment, changes in curriculum, and the role of education in social and economic development. The analysis highlights how historical educational reforms contributed to the development of the modern Indian education system and identifies continuing challenges related to access, quality, equity, and regional disparities.

Keywords: Modern Education, Indian Education System, Historical Growth, Educational Development, Colonial Education, Educational Reforms, Higher Education, Women's Education, Educational Policy, India.

I. INTRODUCTION

Both Hindus and Muslims had their educational institutions when East India Company acquired territories in various parts of India. The Maulavis taught the Muslims in mosques and the pundits taught Sanskrit to the Hindus in the Pathshalas. However Warren Hastings established the Calcutta Madras "to qualify the sons of Mohammedan gentlemen for responsible and lucrative office in the state". The subjects taught were theology, logic, rhetoric, grammar, law, natural philosophy, astronomy, geometry and arithmetic. A few years later, John Owen, Chaplain to the Bengal presidency, requested the Government to establish schools for the purpose of teaching English, "to the natives of these provinces". Nobody cared for his request. However, after a few years, another educational institution was set up at Banaras "for the preservation and cultivation of the laws, literature, and religion of the nation, to accomplish the same purpose for the Hindu as the Madrasah of the Mohammedan and specially supply qualified Hindu Assistants to European Judges".

Resolution of Wilber Force

Wilber Force carried a resolution emphasizing the adoption of such steps that would lead to the advancement of useful knowledge of the people of India in 1792-93. He suggested the sending of school masters and missionaries to India. The move of Wilber force was opposed and it was maintained that the Hindus had "as good a system of faith and morals as most people". It was pointed out that it would be madness to give them any kind of learning other than what they possessed.

Proposal of Charles Grant

Some years later, Charles Grant, one of the directors of the Company, submitted a memorandum in which he lamented the low moral condition of the people of India. He asked the Company to improve their condition by imparting to them knowledge of the English language, which was to serve "as a key which will open to them a world of new ideas". As the Muslim rulers had taught Persian to the Indians, in the same way the Englishmen should teach English to the people of India. To quote him, "it would be extremely easy for Government to, establish at moderate expenses, in various parts of provinces, places of gratuitous instruction in reading and writing English, multitudes, especially, of the young, would flock to them, and time easy books used in teaching might at the same time convey obvious truths on different subjects. The Hindus would in time, become teachers of English themselves, and the employment of our language in public business, for which every political reason remains in full force, would in the course of another generation. There is nothing waiting to the success of this plan, but the hearty patronage of Government".

Proposal of Minto

In 1811, Lord Minto regretted the neglect of literature and science in India and suggested improvement in existing colleges in addition to the establishment of new ones. A clause was inserted in the Charter Act of 1813 stipulating that "a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the science among the inhabitants of the British territories in India".

For founding an institution where the Hindus were to receive instructions in European languages and science, Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded an association. The Hindu College was founded in 1817. In 1818, the Bishop of Calcutta opened an institution which was to serve the double purpose of training young Christians as preachers and of imparting knowledge of the English language to Hindus and Muslims. Raja Ram Mohan Roy opposed the establishment of a Sanskrit college at Calcutta. However, nobody bothered about this protest. The Court of Directors of the Company was happy at the prospect of having qualified Indians to help them in the administration. To quote, them, "As the means of bringing about this most desirable object, we rely chiefly on their becoming through a familiarity with the European literature and science, imbued with the ideas and feeling of civilized Europe, on the ample cultivation of their understanding and specifically on their instruction in the principles of moral and general jurisprudence".

Proposal of Elphinstone

Elphinstone in 1823, in a communication to the commissioners for Indian affairs, he wrote to impart higher degree of education to the upper class. Another important objective was to prepare natives for public employment. He proposed the establishment of a school at Bombay where English might be taught "classically" and where instruction might also be given in that language on history, geography, and science. In 1833, he set a similar school at Poona. In 1834 was started the Elphinstone college at Bombay. It was expected to train "a class of persons qualified by their intelligence and morality for high employment in the civil administration of India". There started a controversy as to whether instructions should be given through English or through Arabic or Persian. The Anglicists maintained that all instruction should be given through the oriental languages. To settle the controversy, the Government appointed a committee. Among the Orientalists were many distinguished officers of the government and their view prevailed for some time. When Lord Macaulay was appointed the Chairman of the Committee in 1835, the parties were so evenly balanced that things had come to a deadlock. Lord Macaulay wrote a minute which turned the scales against the Orientalists. He discussed the Charter Act of 1813 which provides a sum of money for the revival and promotion of the literature and for the introduction of the knowledge of

sciences among the inhabitants of India. His argument was that English was the language spoken by the ruling class. It was likely to become the language of commerce "throughout the seas of East". He came to the conclusion that the government was free to employ its funds on teaching what was better worth knowing than Sanskrit or Arabic. Lord Macaulay had expressed similar views in the House of Commerce before he came to India. To quote him "are we to keep 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 provide it with no legitimate vent? It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system until it has outgrown that system, that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for the better government that having become instructed in European knowledge, they may in some future age, demand European institution. Whether such a day will ever come I know not, whenever it comes it will be the proudest day in English history. The sceptre may pass away from us. Victory may be inconstant to our arms, but there are triumphs which are followed by no reverse. There is no empire exempt from all natural causes of decay. These triumphs are the pacific triumphs of reason over barbarism; the empire is the imperishable empire of our arts and our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws". Again, "the question before us is simply whether when it is in our power to teach this language, English, we shall teach languages in which by universal confession, there are no books on any subjects which deserved to be compared to our own: and whether, when we teach European science, we shall teach system which, by universal confession, wherever they differ from those of Europe, differ for the worse: and whether we patronize sound philosophy and true history we shall countenance, at the public expense, medical doctrines which would disgrace an English furrier astronomy which would move straighter in the girls at an English boarding school, history abounding with kings thirty feet high and regains thirty thousand years long, and geography made up seas of treacle and seas of butter".

Macaulay System of Education

Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General, approved the minute of Lord Macaulay. A resolution was passed on 7th March 1835 and the following points were emphasized in that resolution. That the great object of the British government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science amongst the native of India and that all found appropriated for the purposes of education would be best employed on English education alone.

"That while the colleges of oriental learning were not to be abolished, the practice of supporting their students during their period of education was to be discontinued".

The Government funds were not to be spent on the printing of oriental works. That all the funds at the disposal of the Government would be utilized for English literature and science". It was a systematic effort on the part of the British government to educate the upper classes of India through the English language. Macaulay put implicit faith on downward filtration theory. He believed that the English educated persons would act as a class of interpreters and in turn enrich vernacular languages and literatures. In the North West provinces Mr. James Thompson, Lieutenant-Governor during 1843-53 made an effort to develop elaborate system of village education. The Department of Education was organized for the development of indigenous schools. The main objective of Thompsonian plan to train people for employment in the newly set up revenue and P. WD of the province.

Woods Dispatch of 1854

But the most important landmark in the development of education in India was the Wood's Dispatch of 1857. In 1854 Sir Charles Wood, the president of the Board of Control, drafted a dispatch on the future scheme of education. This dispatch is considered as the Magna Carta of English education in India. In this despatch he emphasized that India was "a race of people slow to change, bound up by religious prejudices and antiquated customs". There are in fact many obstacles to rapid Progress.

The aim of the education system and policy of the British should be diffusion of the Art, Science and philosophy of Europe so that trust worthy men would be produced who could hold offices under the Company. Both English and English languages were to be used for the diffusion of European knowledge, and English as the medium of education should not be insisted upon at all stages. It should be used when sufficient knowledge of it had been gained by the people. The despatch favored that abandonment of Macaulay's filtration theory, which held that education should be imparted to upper classes only and it would automatically filter down to the masses. Instead, it recommended that indigenous school be made a foundation of the system. It favored the introduction of the system of grants-in-aid to encourage the private enterprises in the field of education. However, these grants were to be made available only to those institutions which employed qualified teachers and maintained upper standards of teaching. In making these grants, the principles of religious neutrality were emphasis on vocational instructions and emphasized the need of establishing technical instructions for training students in law, medicine, agriculture, methods of teaching on schools etc.

Special facilities and encouragement should be provided to female education.

It favored the establishment of Universities in India on the pattern of the London University. Each University was to have a chancellor, a vice-chancellor and

a senate, in addition to professors for various branches of learning such as law. These Universities were to be merely examining bodies. Initially such Universities were set up at Calcutta and Bombay, but an additional University would be established at Madras. At other places, where there were sufficient numbers of students for degree classes, such universities would be established. In pursuance of this provision, universities were set up at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay in 1887 respectively.

The despatch recommended the establishment of a separate department of public instruction in every province under the Director-General of Education. The Director-General was to be assisted by inspecting officers, who were to make periodical reports of the educational work in their province. These officers were designated as directors and were in officer of one of the five provinces each. Wood's Scheme of education has been criticized on the ground that it was a slavish imitation of the English modes and failed to provide any solid scheme for the administration of schools etc. The appointment of administrators as Directors of Public instructions has been severely criticized by Prof. Dowell. He says, the men in charge of the department were primarily administrators and consequently education tended to become a matter of routine administration.

The Hunter Commission 1882-83

The British so far had placed emphasis on the College and University education. The secretary of state for India, by a regulation in 1859, had made provision of grants-in-aid by the Government to Colleges and Universities alone. Therefore, the primary and high school education remained ignored. In 1870, the responsibility of education was transferred to provinces which had limited economic resources. That also handicapped the primary and high school education. Therefore, Lord Ripon felt the necessity of inquiring into the working of primary and high school education and appointed an Education Commission under W.W. Hunter in 1882 to review the progress of education in those fields since Wood's dispatch of 1883. Some of its primary recommendations were as follows.

Primary education should be given priority. The government need not wait for voluntary help in this field. It should hand over the management of primary education to District and Municipal Boards which were to be provided one-third of its expenditure on it by the government as grant-in-aid.

Two types of high school should be established, one for providing literary education leading up to entrance examination of the University and the other preparing the students for vocation education.

The Government as far as could be possible should withdraw itself from the School and College education and every effort should be made to encourage private enterprise in these fields by a system of liberal grants-in aid.

Female Education which was most inadequate outside the Presidency towns should be emphasized. The government accepted most of the recommendations of the Commission and education developed with a marked speed after it. But more than the Government a number of Indian philanthropic and religious association participated in its growth. It resulted not only in the development of western education but also in Oriental Studies. So, teaching-cum-examining Universities were also established in the coming years, i.e. the Punjab University in 1885 and the Allahabad University in 1887. But the primary education still remained neglected. Besides, female education also remained eligible. According to public census in 1901, only fifteen percent among children went to the primary school and only seven families among one thousand could read and write.

The Indian Universities Act, 1904

In September 1904, Curzon summoned the highest educational officer of the Government throughout India and representatives of universities at a round table conference at Simla. The conference opened with a speech by the Viceroy in which he surveyed the whole field of education in India. "We have not here, he said, "to devise a brand-new plan of educational reforms which is to spring fully armed from the head of the Home Department and to be imposed *Nolens Volens* upon the Indian public". Later developments were to prove the hypocrisy behind this assertion. The conference adapted 150 resolutions which touched almost every conceivable branch of education. This was followed by the appointment of a Commission under the presidency of Sir Thomas Raleigh on 27 January 1902 to enquire in to the condition and prospects of improving their constitution and working efficiently. Commission was precluded from reporting on primary or secondary education as a result of the report of the recommendations of the Commission. The Indian Universities Act was passed in 1904. The main changes proposed were as-

The Universities were desired to make provision for promotion of study and research, to appoint University professors and lecturers, set up University laboratories and libraries and undertake direct instruction of students.

The Act lay down that the number of fellows of a University shall not be less than fifty or more than a hundred. A fellow should normally hold office for a period of six years instead of for life.

Most of the fellows of a university were to be nominated by the government. The elective element of Universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay was to be twenty each and in case of other Universities fifteen only.

The Government control over the Universities was further increased by vesting the Government with power to vote the regulations passed by the senate of a university. The government could also make conditions or alterations in the

regulations formed by the Senate and even frame regulating itself over and above the head of the Senate.

The Act increased University control over private colleges by laying down stricter conditions of affiliation and periodical inspection by the syndicate. The private colleges were required to keep a proper standard of efficiency. The government approval was necessary for grant of affiliation or disaffiliation of colleges.

The Governor-General in Council was empowered to define the territorial limits of a university or decide the affiliation of colleges to universities. The Universities Act of 1904 met with severe condemnation at the hands of Indian leaders. According to Chirol, "As was to be expected under a Viceroy who was a great autocrat with an overwhelming faith in the efficiency of the government machinery. The chief purpose of the Act of 1904, was tighten the hold of the government on the University, and in the first place on their senates, which were still retained as the ruling bodies. It is alleged that Curzon sought to reduce the Universities to the position of departments of states and sabotage-development of private enterprise in the field of education. According to Frozer, "the greatest blunder of Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty which produced bitterness among the leader's opinion and which was responsible for making the viceroy the most unpopular with the educated class in India was the Act of 1904. The Sadler Commission of 1917 also observed that the Act of 1904 made "the India Universities among the most completely governmental universities in the world".

Resolution of 21st February 1913

The Indian national leaders were pressing the government of India to assume the responsibility of providing compulsory primary education in India. The Government cleared its policy by a resolution on 21st February 1913. It did not assume the responsibility of compulsory primary education. Instead, it accepted its adherence to a policy of the removal of illiteracy in India. It urged the principal government to take early measures towards this direction. It also emphasized the need to encourage private voluntary efforts in this direction. It emphasized on improvement of the High School education and stressed the need of taking the responsibility of teaching by the Universities.

The Sadler University Commission 1917-19

In 1917 the Government of India appointed a Commission to study and report on the problems of Calcutta University. Dr M.E Sadler, Vice-chancellor of the University of Leeds, was appointed as its chairman. The Commission included two Indian members, Sir Ashutosh Mukherji and Dr. Zia-ud-din Ahmad, while the Hunter Commission had reported on problems of secondary education and the University Commission of 1902 mainly on the different aspects of university

education, the Sadler Commission reviewed the entire field from school education to university education. The Sadler commissions held the view that the improvement of secondary education was a necessary condition for the improvement of university education.

The commission reported that an effective synthesis between college and University was still undiscovered when the reforms of 1904 had not been worked out to conclusion that the foundation of a sound university organization had not been laid down. Further, it reported that "the problems of high school training and organization were unresolved". Although the commission reported on the conditions of Calcutta University, its recommendations and remarks were more or less applicable to other Indian Universities also. The following were the main recommendations:

A twelvths-year school course was recommended. After passing the intermediate examination rather than the matriculation, the students were to enter a university. The government was urged to create new type of institutions called Intermediate colleges. These colleges could either be run as independent institutions or might be attached to selected high schools. For the administration and control of secondary education, the Commission recommended the setting up of a Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education.

The idea behind these recommendations was on the one hand, to prepare students for the universities, and to relieve the latter of a large number of students quite below any university standard and, on the other hand, to offer a sound collegiate education to students who did not propose, and should not be encouraged, to proceed to universities.

The duration of the degree of course after the intermediate stage should be limited to three years. For the needs of abler students, provisions were to be made for Honors courses as distinct from the Pass Courses. The Commission recommended less rigidity in framing the regulations of the universities.

The old type of Indian University, with its large number of affiliated and widely scattered colleges should be replaced by centralized unitary residential teaching autonomous bodies. A unitary teaching University was recommended for Dacca to lessen the rush of numbers at the colleges of Calcutta University. Further, colleges in the mofussil should be so developed as to make it possible to encourage the growth of new university centers, few concentrations of resources for higher education at a few points. It stressed the need for extension of facilities for female education and recommended the establishment of a special Board of Women Education in the Calcutta University.

The necessity of providing substantial facilities for training of teachers was emphasized and desirability of setting up the departments of education at the Universities of Calcutta and Dacca.

The University was desired to provide courses in applied science and technology and also to recognize their systematic and practical study by award of degrees and diplomas.

The Universities were also to provide facilities for the training of personnel for Professional and Vocational Colleges. Seven new Universities came into existence during 1916-21, namely, Mysore, Patna, Banaras, Aligarh, Dacca, Lucknow and Osmania. In 1920 the Government of India recommended the Sadler report to provincial governments.

The Hartog Committee, 1929

By the Act of 1919, education was transformed to the provinces and the Central Government discontinued its grant for the purpose of education. The provincial government could do nothing much concerning the education, yet the number of schools and colleges continued multiplying because of private initiative. It led to the deterioration of education standards. Therefore, a committee headed by Sir Philip Hartog was appointed in 1929 by Indian Statutory Commission to report on the progress of education achieved by them. The main findings of this committee were as follows: -

Primary education needed more attention though it was not necessary to make it compulsory.

Only deserving students should be allowed to go in for high school and intermediate education. Average students should be diverted to vocational courses just after the middle stage, i.e. after Class VIII.

The Universities should improve their standards of education and for that it was necessary that admissions to the university should be restricted.

By the Act of 1935, Provincial Autonomy was introduced in the provinces and popular ministries started functioning in 1937. The Congress formed its government in seven provinces. Mahatma Gandhi proposed a scheme of education which is popularly known as Wardha Scheme of Basic Education. The Zakir Hussain Committee worked out the details of this scheme and suggested a seven-year course of education which involved manual productive work as well. But the scheme could not be introduced because the ministries resigned in 1939 due to the outbreak of the World War.

Wardha Scheme of Basic Education

The Congress Ministries formed in seven provinces under the Government of India Act 1935 also devoted attention to the improvement of educational system. In 1937 Mahatma Gandhi proposed a scheme of basic education, popularly known as the Wardha Scheme of Basic Education. This scheme was evolved as a result of the deliberation of various educationalists that assembled at Wardha under the chairmanship of Mahatma Gandhi. The Scheme laid emphasis on manual productive work and was to be financially self-sufficient. The Wardha scheme of Basic education had four basic features:

- I. Education was to be free for all the children between the age of 7 and 14 years.
- II. Education was to be imparted through the mother-tongue of the child.
- III. It was to centre round certain basic crafts selected with due regard to the surrounding.
- IV. It was to be self –sufficient and not to cause any financial strain on the government.

Sergeant Plan of Education

In 1944 the Central Advisory Board of Education drew up a scheme, As Sir John Sergeant was the educational advisor of the Government of India at that time, it is known as the Sergeant Plan. It envisaged the establishment of junior and senior basic schools and compulsory education for children between six to eleven years of age. Over senior basic schools were high schools which were to be of two categories- academic and technical or vocational which were to provide education for six years. The plan suggested the abolition of intermediate schools. But it recommended that one year was to be added to school education and one year to the degree course in the universities. The plan suggested reconstruction of education in the next forty years. The period, however, was reduced to sixteen years by the Kher Committee.

Radhakrishna Commission (1949)

After the independence of India, the Government of India appointed in 1948, a University Commission under the chairmanship of Sri S. Radhakrishna. The terms of reference of the commission were to consider and make recommendations on the following subject: -

The aims and objectives of university education and research in India.

The change considered necessary and desirable in the constitution, control, functions and jurisdiction of Universities in India and their relations with the Government of India and the Provincial Government.

The Finance of Universities

- The maintenance of the highest standard of teaching and examinations in the universities and colleges under their control.
- The courses of studies in the university and their duration.
- The standards of admission to university courses of study with reference to the desirability of an independent university entrance examination and the avoidance of unfair discrimination which militate against the fundamental right contained in Article 23 (2).
- The medium of instruction in the universities.
- The provision for advanced study in Indian culture, history literature, languages, philosophy and finance.
- The need for more universities on a regional or other basis.
- The organization of advanced research in all branches of knowledge in the universities and institutes of higher research in a well-coordinated fashion avoiding waste of efforts and resources.

Religious instruction in the Universities

The special problems of Delhi University, Aligarh University and Banaras Hindu University. The qualifications, conditions of service, salaries, privileges, and functions of teachers and the encouragement of original research by teachers. The discipline of students, hostels and the organization of tutorial work and any other matter which is germane and essential to a complete and comprehensive enquiry into all aspects of university education and advanced research in India. After touring the whole of the country interviewing people and receiving and considering the memorandum from various quarters, the Commission made the following recommendations in 1949. The Commission recommended the establishment of rural universities with Shantiniketan and Jamia Millia as their model. The report criticized the allocation of small funds for education. They were not to be more than five per cent of the total revenue. The Commission stressed the necessity of increasing considerably the grant for scholarships and stipends so that the poor might not suffer. The colleges were not allowed to admit more than one thousand students. Where the mother-tongue was not the same as the federal language, the federal language was to be the medium of instruction. If the mother tongue and the federal language were identical, the students were required to take any other Indian classical or modern language. There should be no attempt at hasty replacement of English as a medium of instruction for academic standards. The Commission did not prescribe any time limit. There were to be no denominational or sectarian

religious considerations. As regards co-education it would be adopted in the secondary stage and then again in the college stage. The Commission laid considerable stress on improving the standards of the teaching profession. There were to be four classes of teachers: professors, readers, lecturers, and instructors. Promotions from one category to another were to be solely on the basis of merit.

University Grants Commission

In 1965, the Indian Parliament passed the University Grants Commission Act. This provides for the appointment of University Grants Commission by the Central Government. The nine members of the Commission are appointed by the Central Government. Every member holds office for a period of six years. The chairman of the Commission is appointed by the Central Government and his job is a whole time job carrying a salary. The Commission meets at different times at different places.

II.CONCLUSION

The historical growth of modern education in India represents a significant transformation from traditional systems of learning to a structured and diversified educational framework. The introduction of modern education during the colonial period led to the establishment of schools, colleges, universities, and new forms of curriculum and teaching methods. After independence, the Government of India gave greater importance to education as a means of promoting social development, economic progress, equality, and national integration. The expansion of primary, secondary, higher, technical, and professional education increased educational opportunities for different sections of society. The growth of women's education also contributed significantly to social empowerment and gender equality. Various educational policies and reforms further strengthened the institutional development of education in the country. However, challenges such as unequal access, regional disparities, quality of education, and socioeconomic differences continue to affect educational development. Recent reforms have focused on technology, skill development, multidisciplinary learning, and inclusive education. Thus, the development of modern education has played a crucial role in transforming Indian society and strengthening human resource development. Overall, the historical journey of education in India demonstrates its continuing importance in achieving social, economic, and intellectual progress.

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