

EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN INDIA : A HISTORICAL REVIEW

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A SYNOPSIS

RADICAL changes in Indian Education have been too few and too slow to come about. In fact, the whole history of Indian Education in the modern period falls into two stages :

1800 —1900 : During this period, one radical change in education was carried out, *viz.*, the traditional system of Indian education was replaced by the colonial system.

1900 —1978 : During this period, we decided to bring about another radical change in education, *viz.*, to replace the colonial system by the national system of education. We are still trying to reach this goal, and it would be an achievement even if we do so by the end of the century.

In 1800, the traditional system of education based on religion and shared only by a small minority of the people held the field. It took the British administration nearly 100 years to replace it by the colonial system whose principal object was to educate a class of intermediaries and interpreters between them and the people. The principal landmarks were four : (1) the decision of Bentinck (1835) to use English as the medium of instruction; (2) the decision of Hardinge (1844) to employ educated people under government; (3) the Despatch of 1854; and (4) the Indian Education Commission (1882). This revolutionary reform was possible because of several factors such as full and enthusiastic support by the Government who found it politically and administratively useful; State patronage to educated persons; and support by the ruling classes in the Indian society itself who were its main beneficiaries and who found the change of great use to rehabilitate themselves in the new social, economic and political order created by the British Rule.

Between 1900 and 1947, we were mainly engaged in trying to get control of the education system. We finally succeeded in this and the principal landmarks were : (1) Association of local bodies with primary education (1884) ; (2) Dyarchy in the Provinces (1921) ; (3) Provincial Autonomy (1937); and (4) Independence (1947).

We also used this period to plan out the concept and programmes of national education and to establish a few experimental institutions.

After the attainment of independence, the Central and the State Governments were expected to give the highest priority to education and create a national system of education as early as possible. This has not been done and all that has happened is that the same old colonial system has been expanded immensely with a few changes here and there. It is therefore necessary to review the entire position and to make an intensive effort to create a national system of education as early as possible and at any rate by the end of the century. This will involve

- a fresh and hard look at all our concepts of national education, some of which have become out of date;
- launching a simultaneous programme of complementary and mutually supporting educational and social reforms;
- initiating a reform movement, both *within* the system and *without*;
- co-operation between educational and socio-political workers; and
- organization of a large-scale nation-wide movement to create the necessary social ethos.

Even when such major tasks are facing us, it is a pity that we waste our time and resources in 'playing' with education and in carrying out small, peripheral changes which often cancel out one another. This futile and even harmful effort should be given up and we should mobilize all resources, human and material, to build up a well-planned, nation-wide, vigorous and sustained effort to create a national system of education suited to the life, needs and aspirations of the people.