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INDIAN EDUCATION IN RETROSPECT

A BRIEF SURVEY

Though today all the sign-posts point in one direction, it is pertinent, I believe, to consider in passing the directions in which Indian education has progressed in the past and on what lines the problem of education in India has been spelt out in recent times.

While it has *to* be conceded that our modern educational institutions owe precious little *to* the centres of learning in ancient India, we of modern India owe a great deal to the postulates of our ancient educationists in the development of rich traditions in the training of the intellect and the disciplining of the human spirit. It can be confidently asserted that the world famous Universities of Taksasila and Nalanda of ancient India owe their establishment to the tradition of learning fostered in the "Parishads" of Brahmans well-versed in the Vedas and Dharma Sutras, to which came seekers of knowledge like *Svetaketu* in the *Chandogya* Upanishad. It should be pointed out that education in ancient India aimed at the attainment of an integrated view of life and offered a diversified curriculum comprising not only the scriptures but also such subjects as agriculture and accountancy, astronomy and astrology, medicine and surgery, snake-charming (!) and archery, as at Taksasila, which flourished till about the fifth century A.D. The Buddhist University of Nalanda, which ceased to function by about the twelfth century A.D., resembled the Hindu centres of learning in its set-up and emphasized a close relationship of the teacher and the taught, with provision for individual instruction and public discussion of problems. Contemporaneous with Nalanda were the great centres of learning at Vallabhi in Kathiawar, Kanchi in the South, Vikramasila in Bihar and Nadia in Bengal, noted for its specialization in logic.

With the advent of Muslim rule in North India and the Deccan, there came to be established many " Madrasahs " with curricula comprising grammar, rhetoric, logic and law, geometry and astronomy, natural philosophy, metaphysics and theology, and with provision for specialization at Lahore, Delhi. Kanpur, Allahabad, Lucknow, Jaunpur, Ajmer and Bidar. While the medium of instruction was mainly Arabic at these institutions the courses offered corresponded to those obtaining in European institutions in those times.

With the establishment of British rule in India in the eighteenth century, the rulers' concern for the education of the natives led to the establishment of a Madrasah at Calcutta for Muslims and a college at Banaras for Hindus a few years later. During the House of Commons debate on the renewal of East India Company's Charter in 1792-93 Wilberforce's plea for the extension of educational facilities to Indians was stoutly opposed by one of its Directors on the ground that it might lead to their losing their Colonies in India as they did in America. It is unnecessary to trace here in detail the course of events that culminated in the introduction of English education and the study of European sciences in the earlier decades of the last century, but mention must be made of the eloquent advocates of the measures needed to impart instruction to Indians in English and modern science—Lord Minto, Lord Moira, Elphinstone and Rammohan Roy.

The growing demand for English education elicited the famous " Minute " on education from Lord Macaulay when the matter was referred to the Government by the Committee of Public Instruction in 1835. Discussing the Act of 1813 which provided for an annual expenditure of Rupees One Lakh on the revival and promotion of literature and instruction in modern sciences in India, he set forth the claims of English as against those of Sanskrit and Arabic

and strongly pleaded for the introduction of English as the medium of instruction in Indian institutions and for the imparting of instruction in European knowledge. Lord Macaulay's Minute was the basis of the educational policy enunciated by Lord Bentick's Government on March 7, 1835, declaring that " the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European Literature and Science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education " without attempting to disrupt the available facilities for indigenous education. /The popularity of English education as well as its want of practical bias ought to be attributed to Lord Harding's proclamation in 1844 that public offices should be filled in only by those having English education, which was mainly literary in character in those times.

The famous Despatch of Sir Gharles Wood to the Gourt of Directors in 1854 known as " the Magna Garta of English Education in India " was the outcome of an enquiry into the state of Indian education. It recommended the creation of a Department of Public Instruction in every Presidency and the establishment of Universities, and emphasized the need for imparting " useful and practical knowledge suited to every station of life " that had hitherto been neglected.

The appointment of a Committee in 1833 to report on medical education in Calcutta led to the establishment of the Calcutta Medical College; and four students of the college in charge of Dr. Goodeve left for England in 1844 to complete their education. The MacbSl's Medical College came into existence in 1842 when a Collegiate class was started in the Medical School, the establishment of which was sanctioned seven years earlier. The Medical College at Bombay, formally opened in 1845, views its foundation to the initiative of the then Governor of Bombay, Sir Robert Grant.

In spite of Earl of Dalhousie's suggestion, made in 1848, that there should be an Engineering College in each of the three Presidencies, an Engineering College came into being at Calcutta only in 1856 and another at Madras in 1858. In Bombay a school for the improvement of Arts and Manufactures was started in 1856, while, on the initiative of the then Lt. Governor, Mr. Thomson, a full-fledged Engineering College was opened as early as 1847 at Roorkee in the N.W. Provinces (the present U.P.) for the purpose of training the engineers needed for the construction of the Ganges Canal.

Lord Macaulay's reference to the teaching of law in his Minute was responsible for the creation of a permanent Professorship of Law in 1855 at the Hindu College, founded by Rammohan Roy at Calcutta in 1817, and two other Professorships at the Madras Institution and Elphinstone College of Bombay respectively.

The establishment of the three Universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras respectively in 1857 on the model of the London University was an event of far-reaching importance to Indian Education; and each of these Universities started with the Faculties of Arts, Law, Medicine and Engineering, to which the Faculty of Science was added later. With regard to the growth of education in the years that followed the establishment of the Universities, a noteworthy point is that the University became the Chief arbiter in educational matters and even supplanted the Department of Education, when the organisers of the High Schools asserted their independence of the Department and aimed solely at preparing their students for the Entrance Examination of the University. Yet another point of note is that while London University on which the Indian Universities were modelled discontinued "affiliation," ironically enough, its Indian counterparts refused to shed their character and develop into a "federal type" or provide for inter-collegiate education.

Despite the demand for the establishment of Universities in the Punjab and N.W. (U.P.) provinces no new University was founded till 1882 when the Punjab University came into being, to be followed by Allahabad in 1887. The need " to enquire into the manner in which effect had been given to the principles of Despatch (Wood's Despatch) of 1854 " was met by the appointment of an Education Commission by the Government of India in 1882, which " advocated the gradual withdrawal of the State from the direct support and management of institutions of higher education." As a consequence of the Government's acceptance of the main recommendations of the Education Commission of 1882 there sprang up in various parts of the country a large number of new institutions sponsored by private societies like the Deccan Education Society of Poona, the Arya Samaj in Punjab and the National Council of Education in Bengal and inspired by educationists like Ishwar Chandra Vidya-sagar and Pachayappa Mudaliar, not to speak of the Christian Missions whose contribution to the spread of education in India was of astounding magnitude. The Universities Act of 1904, based on the recommendations of the Universities Commission of 1902, did not find favour with Indian opinion because it provided for the reconstitution of the University Bodies with few seats in the Senate thrown open to election, ostensibly to create a majority for Europeans, and for measures calculated to restrict the recognition of new colleges. The comprehensive report of the Calcutta University Commission which considered almost all problems of Secondary and University Education did not make any difference to the state of education because of the breaking out of controversies between the University and the Government as regards financial assistance essential to the implementation of its recommendations. The second and the third decades of the present century were marked by the rise of new Universities—Banaras (developed out of the Central Hindu College, founded by Annie Besant) and

Mysore with its two centres of teaching activity (Bangalore and Mysore) in 1916, Patna in 1917, Osmania, unique in its adoption of Urdu as the medium of instruction in 1918, Aligarh (developed out of the M.A.O. College, founded by Sir Syed Ahmed in 1875) and Lucknow in 1920, Delhi in 1922, Nagpur in 1923, Andhra in 1926, Agra in 1927, and Annamalai in 1929. Travancore, Utkal and Saugor founded in 1937, 1943 and 1946 respectively, were the other Universities, that came into being before the attainment of Independence, which, as expected, ushered in an era of unprecedented expansion of education in India. It is but natural that with the rapid increase in the number of Universities in India, a Conference of Indian Universities held in 1924 decided to establish an Inter-University Board to co-ordinate their activities. The University Education Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and the Secondary Education Commission headed by Dr. A. Lakshmanswami Mudaliar, appointed in 1948 and 1952 respectively, have been the two Commissions appointed by the Indian Government in Independent India prior to the appointment of the Education Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. D. S. Kothari, which is unique in that it has been charged with the task of preparing a blue-print for all aspects of Indian Education.

It is hoped that the Kothari Commission will furnish a comprehensive plan for the development of "a national system of education rooted in its basic values and the cherished traditions of the Indian nation and suited to the needs and aspirations of a modern society."