

# A Short Historical Sketch of Senior Secondary English in India

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**Abstract:** *Teaching English in India always have been a topic of much debate and controversy. The history of English in India goes back to pre- independence days when this country was ruled over- by the Britishers. At that time, this language enjoyed a royal place, as it was the official language of courts and administration, the medium of instruction in colleges and was a compulsory subject. After Independence drastic changes came regarding the place of English in India. In present scenario, keeping in view the importance of English, a deserving place has been assigned to this language in our school curriculum. Now, in India English is taught both as a second and as a foreign language. Various committees and commissions were made to investigate and to make suggestions in regard to the improvement and problems of teaching English in our school curriculum. The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) was one of them that shed light on the position and importance of English .This paper put a glance on the development and its role in secondary education in India after independence to till present.*

**Key words:** Foreign Language,, Second Language, RTE, ASER, Secondary Education Commission

Whenever a discourse on the development of India on all counts is carried on, the knowledgeable people do not miss to refer its remarkable success in the field of education after a little more than six and a half decades of its independence from the foreign rule. The British let the Indian masses lying low, because they were used as bonded labourers in the British companies both in India and the countries which had been under the British rule. India , however , has not been able to come up to the mark in imparting education to all the citizens despite all the best it could do after ushering in a new era of democratic rule .

Those who have governed the country after Independence have realized this fact and keeping this in view, the 86<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the Indian Constitution was made in 2002. Our country also stepped further in this direction when the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 was enforced from April 1, 2010. This Act put an end to the decades- long struggle for universalizing the elementary education. But the implementation of the RTE Act has not borne fruits the way it should have done as well as could not fulfill the parameters in which it has failed to make a mark.

According to the Ninth Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), the school

enrolment has improved impressively, as 96 percent of children in the age group 6-14 had got enrolled in 2013. While 52.9 percent children of class V could read a textbook of II in 2009, only 47 percent could do so in 2013. The decline in reading abilities is even more pronounced in government schools. 50.3 percent children of V could read a II class textbook in 2009, down to 41.1 percent 2013. The situations of the States like Rajasthan is not much different to the national picture. Due to the territorial vastness of the state, 82 percent of the total schools here are in rural areas. Let's put a glance on the academic situation of the state in special reference to the Senior Secondary English in India.

### 3.1 Role of Secondary Education

Secondary Education has a vital role in any programme of education for the community. It provides teachers for both elementary and adult education. It also prepares pupils for the universities and other institutions of higher education. Besides, it is the stage which in all countries marks the completion of education for the vast majority. Even the minority which goes for higher education cannot take full advantage of the under opportunities offered by the universities unless they have received their grounding in a system of secondary education.

#### 3.1.1 Establishment of Secondary Schools

–Secondary schools are the gift of modern education. The chief purpose of the establishment of secondary schools in India is to teach English to Indians.

#### 3.1.2 Secondary Education After Independence

– Several committees and Commissions have been appointed in the post-independence era to enhance the quality of secondary Education. The prominent among them are being described below:

- I. **Tara Chand Committee 1948:** One of the important suggestions of the Committee was that secondary schools should be multi-lateral but keeping in view the local conditions and circumstances, the ill lateral schools should also be encouraged. This committee also recommended that a commission should be appointed in order to investigate the problems of secondary education.
- II. **University Education Commission, 1948-49:** The chief aim of this commission was to investigate and make suggestion in regard to university education. But it also considered different aspects of the secondary education and made many important suggestions. Long ago in 1940, University Education Commission has observed: "English, however, must continue to be studied. It is a language which is rich in literature –humanistic, scientific and technical. If under sentimental urges we should give up English, we should cut ourselves off from the living stream of over growing knowledge."<sup>1</sup> In the opinion of the University Education Commission, the secondary education was the weakest link in the whole structure of education. The commission recommended that students should be admitted in the university only after completing 12 years of study in school or intermediate college.
- III. **Secondary Education Commission, 1952-53:** As a result of the suggestions of Tara Chand

Committee and Central Education Advisory Board, Secondary Education Commission was appointed to study in detail the different aspects of secondary education and to make different suggestions to reform it.

### 3.1.3 Secondary Education Commission (1952-53)

- Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) was appointed with Dr. Lakshnan Swami Mudaliar as the chairman of the commission. Therefore, this commission is known as 'Mudalair Commission'. Kothari Commission expressed its views about Secondary Education Commission that "The commission mightily underlined the need of providing higher secondary education to children according to their individual abilities, aptitudes and interest"<sup>2</sup>

The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) sheds light on the importance of English in this way, "Our youth should acquire knowledge from all sources and contribute their share to its expansion and development. In the attainment of this objective, study of English is bound to play an important part....."<sup>3</sup>

#### 3.1.3.1 Aims and Terms of References:

- I. To inquire into and report on the present position of secondary education in India, in all its aspects.
- II. To suggest measures for its re-organization and improvement with particular reference to:
  - 1) the aims, organization and content of secondary education,
  - 2) its relationship to primary task and higher education,

- 3) the inter-relation of secondary schools of different types, and
- 4) other allied problems so that a sound and reasonable uniform system of secondary education suited to our needs and resources may be provided for the whole country.

### 3.1.4 Development of secondary Education

- The development of secondary education has received an impetus after the attainment of independence. At present secondary Education is free in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh and Lakshadweep and in Gov. institutions in Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Pondicherry. It is free for girls for in Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Orissa, Rajasthan and Tripura.

#### 3.1.4.1. Reorganization

- I. Age -Limit- The period of secondary education should be 7 years. It may start at the age of 11 and finish 17 or 18 years.
- II. Division of the Periods.
- III. The Middle or Junior Secondary or Senior Basic Stage: It should cover a period of four years.
- IV. The Higher Secondary Stage: This should cover a period of four years.
- V. Abolition of Intermediate Classes: The Commission has suggested the abolition of the present intermediate classes. The senior Intermediate or 12th class should be attached to the university and the Junior Intermediate class should be added to the High School. Thus, it has pleaded for a

three years' degree course with one year of pre-university course for the students who pursue higher education.

VI. Study of Three Languages: The Commission has recommended that the following groups of languages should be taken into consideration while taking up the question of teaching of the languages:

- 1) Mother –tongue.
- 2) Regional language when it is not the mother –tongue.
- 3) Official or Federal Language.
- 4) Classical language, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Latin, etc.
- 5) English as an international language.

VII. Medium of Instruction: The medium of instruction at the secondary stage of education should be either the mother – tongue or the regional language. At middle schools every student must be taught at least two languages Hindi and English. While teaching these languages, it should be kept in view that the teaching of both these languages should not start in the same year. At the higher secondary stages of education, the student must be taught at least two languages, one of them should be the mother-tongue and other one regional language.

VIII. Place of Hindi and English : The study of Hindi should be compulsory in schools and the Commission suggested revision of English, as a subject of study at the Secondary stage of education as follows:

- a. English is widely known among the educated classes of the country.
- b. Much of the national unity in political and other spheres of activity in India has been brought about through the study of English.
- c. The present position of India in the internal sphere is particularly due to the command that educated Indians have acquired over English.
- d. If, guided by national sentiments, English is removed from the curriculum of Secondary Schools. Its effects will be harmful for India.

**3.1.5 Curriculum:** The Commission has pointed out the following defects in curriculum:

- I. The present curriculum is narrow.
- II. It is bookish and theoretical; it is overcrowded and does not provide rich and significant contents.
- III. There is no adequate provision for practical and other kinds of activities that should find place in any curriculum at this stage of education. Hence, the curriculum is not able to bring about the education of the whole personality of the child.
- IV. It does not cater to the various needs and capacities of the adolescents.
- V. Technical and vocational subjects are very much needed for Indian today, but the

curriculum does not find room for these subjects.

### 3.1.6 Suggested Scheme of Curriculum-

- I. Middle Class and Senior Basic Schools and
- II. High and Higher Secondary Schools.

The present Intermediate stages should be replaced by the Higher Secondary Stage which would be of four years duration. One year of the present Intermediate should be included in it while the second year should be included in the degree course of the university. The Commission has laid down following different curriculum for these two stages in the secondary stages of education.

The commission has recommended the inclusion of the following subjects in middle schools:

- i. English
- ii. Social Studies
- iii. General Science
- iv. Mathematics
- v. Art and Music
- vi. Craft
- vii. Physical Education

The Curriculum for High and Higher Secondary Schools: For this stage of education the Commission has suggested that there should be a diversified course. The subjects of the curriculum have been divided in to two parts:

- A. Compulsory subjects or main subjects; and
- B. Optional subjects.

A. Compulsory subjects shall include the following:

- 1) Mother –Tongue or regional language or composite course of the mother – tongue and a classical language.

- 2) One other language to be chosen from among the following :

- a. Hindi for those whose mother tongue is not Hindi?
- b. Elementary English for those who have not studied English in the middle stage.
- c. Advanced English for those who have studied English at the earlier stage.
- d. A modern Indian language, other than Hindi.
- e. A modern foreign language, other than English.
- f. (a) Social Studies. General course for the first two years only.

(b) General science, including mathematics, general course for the first two years only.

- 3) One craft to be chosen.

B. Optional Subjects: The optional subjects have been divided into three groups. They have been diversified and the Commission has left option to the students to offer three subjects from any of the group:

Group I –deals with Humanities.

Group II- deals with science.

Group III -deals with Technical subjects.

Group IV- includes Commercial subjects.

Group V- consists of Agricultural subjects.

Group VI- includes Fine Art.

Group VII- is Home Sciences, which is specially meant for girls.

**3.1.7 Selection of Text Books:** In case of languages, definite text-books should be prescribed for each class, to ensure proper gradation. Single text-book should not be prescribed or any subject of study.



Reasonable number of books should be recommended, which satisfy the standards laid down, the choice should be left to the schools concerned. Frequent changes should be discouraged in text-books and book described for study.

### 3.1.8 Methods of Teaching:

- 1) The method of teaching should not merely aim in imparting knowledge in a thorough manner. It should also aim inculcating desirable values and aim, attitude and habit of work in the student.
- 2) The method should provide opportunities for students of learn activity and apply mechanically the knowledge acquired in the classroom.
- 3) Clear thinking and expression, both in writing and speech, should be stressed upon in all subjects. It should aim more on teaching the students in the method of acquiring knowledge through personal effort.

**3.1.9 Examination System:** In the opinion of the commission, "The subject of examination and evaluation occupies an important place in the field of education .It is necessary for parents and teachers to know from time to time how the public are progressing and what their attainments are at any particular stage ."4 The commission has made the following recommendations:

**Conclusion:** No doubt in present educational system, secondary education is a mile stone to link the early education to the higher education. Several committees and Commissions have been appointed in the post-independence era to enhance the quality of secondary Education. In this arena, Secondary Education Commission is not only important to provide the basic curriculum in

the school education but also it is more prominent for its suggestions and schemes, how to teach English in School Education as a compulsory or as an optional subject. It recommended that English, however, must continue to be studied as it is rich in literature –humanistic, scientific and technical. The commission discussed the three language formula along with what the medium should be of instruction at this stage. In this way the paper tries to give information on the role of Secondary Education Commission in teaching of English in India. Several other efforts are also being done in this ground to sound the knowledge of English in our students. Despite it ,still we are far from the aim of developing language skills in our students .

### Notes and References

- [1] Abha Rani Bhist, Teaching English in India (Shrivinod Pustak Mandir, Agra-2, 2011)3.
- [2] Secondary Education Commission, Pg. -92.
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- [5] Educational Reforms at the Secondary Stage (Journal: The Education Quarterly). 344.
- [6] Educational Reforms at the Secondary Stage (Journal: The Education Quarterly). 345.
- [7] Ibid.
- [8] Only one student in merit list after spending 14 million on education. Times of India, June 8, 2014).9