
Western Education & It's Impact on Indian Society

Poonam

Assistant Professor (Department of History)

Tikaram P.G. College, Sonapat (Haryana)

Abstract: In this topic, I gave the introduction of Western Education, its successor steps which, is taken by Christian missionaries, by Personal Endeavour, and by Government. Then I give the reason, why English Education was adopted in India. I also explained the social reformers work, who were inspired by Western Education System. Then I enplaned positive aspect English System on India and at the end conclude the topic.

Keywords: Britishers, Education, Social Reformers, Missionaries, Nationalism.

Introduction: In Pre-British days, Hindus and Muslim were educated through Pathsala and Madrassa, Respectively. Britishers showed no interest in advancement of learning in the first stage of their rule in India. Some of Britishers in Personal endeavor and for political gain, showed same interest in spreading education. Warren Hastings, Governor-General of Bengal, showed keen interest in spreading oriental education. At that time of Lord Wellesley, Fort William College was established. Here the British civilian were taught Indian language, laws, customs, religion, geography etc.

Lord Bentick introduced western education in 1835 in India. in 1835, on the recommendations of Lord Macaulay, Western Education was introduced in India. So Lord Macaulay recommended, but did not introduce, and then introduce by Bentick, he is also responsible for large numbers of social reforms like abolition of Sati, infanticide and child marriage.

Successor of Western Education:-

1. **Endeavour of the Christian Missionaries:-** British Colonial ruler did not show any interest in education. The Christian Missionaries were the first to come forward. The Baptist Missionary William Carey came to India in the year of 1793 A.D. by their enthusiasm many Primary Schools came up in nearby places.
2. **Personal Endeavor:-** At that time, by the attempt of few liberal Indians and foreigners non-government schools were founded to spread English education. Out of them most memorable were Raja Rammohan Rai. By his own Endeavour, he established Anglo Hindu School in 1815 A.D. by Personal Endeavour, two English Schools were founded in Chinsurah and Bhawanipur.
3. **Endeavour of the Government:-** In the Charter Act of 1813, Rupees 1 lakhs per year was sanctioned for advancement of education in India. Now there was a debate about the line of Expenditure of this amount. Some said that it should go for oriental education, the others said that the sum was to be spent for English Education. Roy was in favour of spending the money in western education, but spends the money on oriental studies. In 1823 A.D. , the decision was taken to establish a Sanskrit College at Calcutta. Roy opposed this decision. William Bentick changes the education Policy. He appointed Thomas Macaulay, people like him were the supporters of European Education. It was successfully applied in India and start a new era of education.
4. **Reason to Adopt English Education:-** British took a keen interest in introducing the English language in India. they had many reasons for doing so:- Educating Indians in the English language was a part of their strategy. The Indian would be ready to work as clerks on low wages, while for the same work, the British would demand much higher wages. This would reduce the expenditure on administration. It was also expected to create a class of Indian, who were loyal to the British and were not able to relate to other Indians. In addition, they would also help to increase the market for British goods.

They wanted to use education as a means to strengthen their policy and their political authority in the country. They assumed that a few educated Indian would spread English culture to the masses and that they would be able to rule through this class of educated Indians. The British gave jobs to only these Indians, who knew English thereby compelling many Indians to go for English education. Education soon became a monopoly of the rich and the city dwellers.

Reform of India:- Though the British followed a half-hearted education policy in India, English language and western ideas also had some positive impact on the society. many reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Sir Syad Ahmad Khan and Swami Vivekanand observed western ideas of liberalism and democracy and used it to reform some of the non-humanitarian social and religious practices of the time.

CONTRIBUTION OF SOME SOCIAL REFORMERS, WHICH INFLUENCED BY WESTERN EDUCATION

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833):- Father of Indian renaissance, Raja Ram Mohan Roy is remembered for his remarkable reforms against child –Marriage, Polygamy and Untouchability during the 18th century. He continuously endeavored to establish the practice of Sati-Pratha. He founded the Atmiya Sabha and the Brama Samaj in 1825, to fight against the much orthodox Hindu Society.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891):- He is remembered as one of the Pillar of “Bengal Renaissance”. This Bengal Polymath fought for the upliftment and betterment of the status of the Indian women. He also laid heavy weight on the concept of widow re-marriage and helped alleviate apathy of the Indian widow.

Positive Aspect of British Educational System in India:- Time and circumstances are the best judges of everything. The evolution of British system of education through the conditions prevailing in India at that time, and through the clashes and conflicts between the old and the new, orientalism and Occidentalism and between traditional and progressivism proved a boon of India.

More Good than Harm:- It would be improper to imprecate British education wholesale merely on the score that it did not conduce to individual or national development, because inspite of these defects the system had also same qualities and merits which proved very beneficial for the country both directly and indirectly, but this is not the truth. The British government always remained indifferent towards the proper planning of education in India so much, so that Hastings, Minto, Princep and others opposed the introduction of English education in India, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy worked with heart and soul for its establishment in the country. The efforts which Macaulay and Bentick made for English Education in India appear to have had their goodwill for the country.

English Education Brought Out a Reawakening and a Desire to Recapture Our Ancient Glory: The introduction of English as the medium of instruction did adversely affect our mother tongues, but nevertheless, it was this very factor, which indirectly induced us to develop our languages. Several languages were prevalent at the time of the introduction of English education, but apart from Sanskrit and Persian no other language was so developed as to be fit for being adopted as the medium of instruction.

Development of Nationalism Through English Education:- Besides acquainting the Indians with the knowledge of the west and the glory of ancient India, along with its literature and culture, English education also rekindled in the people the spirit of nationalism. It was due to this education that the pearls of ancient Indian thought and feeling were wreathed together and it was again due to universality of the English language that we could acquaint the world with ancient wisdom of our country. There appears to be no need for holding the brief for English educational system because it is due to this very system that English ethics, arts and crafts, laws and rules, literature, science and administration system are still prevalent in India are useful also.

Growth of Middle Class:-

- The introduction of Western Education helped the emergence of a new social class that came to be called the “Middle Class”.
- And this Indian Middle Class played a decisive role in the growth of Indian nationalism.
- The western-education middle class intelligentsia was deeply imbued with nationalist feeling after they had come to know about the heroic feats of the leaders of Italy, Germany, France, and other European Countries.
- Being influenced by the ideals and method of the political work of these leaders some of the English educated middle class integrated the Indian people into a modern nation.
- Again, it was from his middle class there emerged some national leaders who came to lead the Indian people in their struggle for independence.

Views of Gandhi & Tagore on Western Education:- These were mixed views on the western education in India. However, Mahatma Gandhi was entirely against western education. According to him, western education created a sense of inferiority amongst Indians and eroded their faith in the richness of their own culture. He felt it was ineffective as it stressed on reading and writing rather than practical knowledge and experiments.

He envisioned as national education system that would help Indians to realize their self-worth and dignity. For this reason, he wanted education to be imparted in local languages rather than English. Rabinderanath Tagore also disapproved of Western education. Tagore believed the rigid education system of British schools killed the natural creativity in a child. Tagore setup an institution called Santi Niketan in 1901, where children could be free to explore and learn about 100 Kilometers away from Calcutta.

However, there were some differences in Gandhiji’s and Tagore’s views. While Gandhiji was absolutely against western education and culture, Tagore wanted to combine the best elements of western and Indian education and culture. Therefore, along with art, dance and music, subject like science and technology were also taught art Santiniketan.

Conclusion:- Indian socio-cultural and religious thoughts underwent a transformation as a result of the western contact. The Newly-emerged English educated middle class, being influenced by the scientific & rational outlook of the west, now-began to examine the Indian socio-religious institutions and sought to find a justification on the basis of reason. The spirit of enquire gave birth to irresistible forces of socio-cultural and religious reforms in the first half of the nineteenth century.

References:-

- Riddick, J.F. (2006). The History of British India: A Chronolg, westfort – presages publisher.
- Seth, S. (2007). The western Education of Calonial India, New York: Duke University Press.
- Welch. A (2011). Higher Education in Southeast Asia. New York: Routledge.
- Panday Raman Shakal (2005) – Indian Education System – New Delhi- Adhyayan Publisher & Distributors