

COLONIAL EDUCATION

Introduction

This module discusses intervention by colonial masters in the field of education in India. Though systematic informal training of the younger generation to prepare for life existed prior to the entry of colonial powers, secular modern formal education open to all segments of society began only during the colonial regime. The formal education in pre-colonial India was the prerogative of certain castes and classes. As observed by Bhat (1995) "The Indian educational system is colonial in origin and development." Experts on the nature of education system in India opine that despite periodic efforts by successive governments of independent India to renovate and revamp the colonial system of education to suit national needs and aspirations, the structure of the educational system which we have today is basically the same as it was set up in 1854 after the famous despatch of Sir Charles Wood. At this juncture it has to be noted that though the education in the entire subcontinent continued during the British legacy, some tiny pockets of India like Goa and Pondicherry came under the influence of other colonial powers. Therefore, before discussing the impact of colonial encounter on education of the subcontinent as a whole we shall describe in brief the nature of India's colonial encounter, though, such a description amounts to sweeping generalisation.

The history of colonial encounter in India began with Vasco-da-Gama reaching the Calicut coast in the year 1498. Like the Portuguese, other three European powers – the French, the Dutch, and the British – too came to India as traders. All of them came to India to establish their fortified trade centers known as factories and to guard these forts, they maintained defense services. With the coming of the Europeans, the middle ages of India came to an end (Dwevedi 1994: 229). The whole of the subcontinent which was ruled by numerous dynasties developed alliances with the Europeans and there were numerous wars involving the different colonial powers. The initial century of colonialism witnessed political re-groupings and the result was the total expulsion of the Dutch from India and reducing the influence of the Portuguese and the French to limited pockets in South India. Whereas the British had their sway over the entire subcontinent, the Portuguese ruled Goa, Daman, and Diu until 19 December 1961 and the French had control over Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam until their merger into the Indian union on 01 July 1963. As among the three colonial powers the British ruled the major part of the subcontinent and also as the British did evolve a policy for promotion of education of the Indians it is quite understandable that the education pundits and other social sciences refer to modern Indian education as the legacy of the British. Scholarly discussions on the British influence on education in modern India abound. Even the system of education presently existing is more or less the model of education introduced by the British.

Therefore, we will consider in detail the transformations that took place in India with the introduction of modern education by the British.

British Colonial Encounter and Education

Education in Pre-British India

While commenting on the social background of education in his analysis of education in colonial India Desai (1976: 135-136) observed: "Pre-British Indian society which had been existing for centuries was, therefore, not without any scientific culture. It lived by agriculture and handcrafts, which presupposed such sciences as astronomy, agronomy, mathematics and mechanics. Pre-British Indian society also possessed the science of medicine....Since pre-British Indian society stood at a low level of economic development, the amount of scientific knowledge it had attained and accumulated was small".

In his analysis Desai (1976: 136-137) dismisses two misconceptions regarding the nature of pre-British Indian culture: National-chauvinist claim of Arya Samaj and the British ethnocentric judgment on the Indian culture. The Arya Samaj idealised India's past even to the extent of claiming that all knowledge, scientific, social and spiritual was achieved by the Aryans and lay immortalised in the Vedas. The Arya Samaj claimed that all modern scientific and technological knowledge is hidden in the Vedas only if one knew how to interpret it appropriately. Such a claim, Desai observed, shows only the ignorance of the proponents of the socio-historical conditioning of any knowledge.

The latter view point held by Macaulay and others suffered from a misconception of the contrary nature. "He (*Macaulay*) contemptuously dismissed all Indian culture as a colossal mass of unadulterated superstition" (Desai 1976: 137). However, in pre-British India education among the Hindus was determined by the caste positioning of an individual. The Brahmins had the privilege to acquire both religious and secular knowledge. For the common people there were vernacular schools which taught reading, writing, and elementary mathematics. These schools also imparted religious education to the students. Even the contents and methods of learning in these schools were controlled by the Brahmins. Education among the Muslims in pre-British India, Desai (*Ibid*: 138) observes, was not the monopoly of a section. This was due to the democratic character of Islam. Aim of education in pre-British India was not to develop a rationalist outlook among the pupils. The aim on the contrary was to make the pupils staunch Hindus or Muslims. In such a socio-historical condition, the introduction of modern education was an event of great historical significance for India. It was definitely a progressive act of the British rule (*Ibid*: 139).

Introduction of Modern Education: Three Agencies

In Desai's view (1976: 139-143) there were three agencies that were responsible for the spread of modern education in India: the foreign Christian missionaries, the British government and the progressive Indians. The missionary efforts at introducing modern education were the results of their proselytising spirit. The missionaries were among the pioneers of modern education in India. While imparting modern secular education, the educational institutions started by them also gave religious instruction in Christianity. While the overwhelming majority of the students who attended these institutions imbibed modern education, a very small fraction of them became Christians, Desai (Ibid: 139) concludes on their efforts.

The British government was the principal agent in disseminating modern education in India. In spite of the criticisms levelled against colonial education for its distortions of Indian education system, "the fact remains that Britain by spreading modern education in India, liberal and technical, even due to its own needs, objectively played a progressive role (Desai: 1976: 139)".

The introduction of modern education in India was primarily motivated by the political-administrative and economic needs of Britain in India. The expanding Empire in India and the expanding trade in India necessitated a large pool of educated man-power well versed in English. Considered as 'instrumentalist version' by later analysts like Kumar (2005: 26), we also find such views in Desai's analysis of the reasons for the introduction of English education for Indians when he wrote "These educational institutions provided clerks for the government and commercial offices, lawyers versed in the structure and processes of the new legal system, doctors trained in the modern medical science, technicians, and teachers".

Desai (1976: 140-141) recognises another motive for the introduction of English education in India is the "anglicising" programme suggested by some enlightened Britishers. They were convinced that the British culture was the best and the most liberal in the world and when if India and other colonies and later on the entire world were "anglicised" culturally it would pave for the political unification of the world. To get an idea of such a sentiment we may refer to the views of Macaulay in his famous 'Minutes dated 2nd February 1835 in which he wrote "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, - a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population."

While the idea that the British modern education to train clerks has wide currency, Kumar (2005: 26-27) considers it as theoretically feeble and historically

untenable. Its theoretical weakness lies in the fact that it does not help us to distinguish between the ideas underlying the educational system and its practical purposes. A plain view of colonial education as a factory producing clerks is a purely instrumentalist view point which cannot be supported by facts. Along with producing clerks colonial education also produced nationalist leaders and many professionals and intellectuals. Even anti-colonial ideologies could develop among those who received colonial education. The intent and consequences of the introduction of modern education are more complex than they are presented so far. To understand the nature and role of education in colonial India in the broader context of nationalism a different model which can accommodate “the contradictions that were inherent in the vision of colonial education as well as those that became manifest in its consequences (*Ibid: 27*)”. Desai’s (1976: 141) historical materialist views explain objective conditions that made the British introduce modern education in India. He concluded that the political and economic necessity of British capitalism in India, together with an almost fanatical belief in the role of Britain as the Messiah to civilise and unify the whole world prompted the introduction of modern education in India.

The third agency responsible for the spreading of modern education in India was the Indians themselves. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the pioneer who advocated the progress of modern education in India. Subsequently, various organisations like Brhmo Samaj, Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission and individuals like Chiplunkar, Gokhale, Malavia, Gandhi and others worked towards establishment of educational institutions for both men and women imparting modern education throughout the country.

Advancement of Modern Education in India

Desai (1976: 145-153) traces the advancement of modern education in India in four phases. Growth of modern education up to 1854 was the first phase. Before 1853 there were sporadic efforts by Missionaries and the East India Company to start institutions imparting modern education. The Charter Act of 1813 marked a point a departure wherein the state took the responsibility of educating the subjects. The advancement of education was guided by two schools of thought among the Britishers. The Anglicists, of whom Macaulay was the most outstanding, propagated the substitution of the Western culture for the Indians. This school further stood for English as the medium of education. The Orientalists advocated Western education in vernacular languages. The controversy between the two was settled in favour of the Anglicists when Lord Bentinck endorsed and adopted their view in 1835 in his educational policy.

The second stage was from the period of Wood’s Despatch to Lord Curzon’s University Act. The Wood’s Despatch of 1854 laid the foundation of modern education in India. In fact after 1880 there was a quantitative growth of education in India which continued until 1904 when Lord Curzon introduced the University

Act. Before the enactment of this there was governmental opposition to quantitative enhancement of opportunities for education and the opinion of Indian intelligentsia to still widen the opportunities. Despite public opposition Lord Curzon enacted the University Act of 1904 which introduced some restrictions on the growth of education in India. The introduction of affiliation system was one among them. The period from 1901 to 1921 witnessed nationalist resurgence and political turmoil which was the third phase. The stringent rules introduced to ensure quality in all levels of education generated discontent among the nationalist leaders who even started to think of alternative educational experiments. The fourth phase spanned from 1921 to 1939. Under Diarchy, the Department of Education was transferred to the control of the Indian Ministers in the Provinces in 1921. The provincial governments were given greater autonomy to implement programmes of educational expansion that were curtailed in the earlier phase. However, due to the financial crunch caused by such factors as the shadow of the earlier measures, world economic depression and the World War did not permit many changes.

The period after 1937 was marked by three outstanding events which had implications for all socio-cultural and economic institutions in India. They are:

1. Introduction of Provincial Autonomy in 1937
2. Outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and
3. Quit India Movement of 1942 culminating in independence of India.

The first event gave an impetus to the growth of primary education and the other three had far reaching effects on all aspects of the life of Indians (Desai: 1976: 152-153). After examining the introduction and development of modern education in India by the British from the perspective of historical materialism Desai (*Ibid*: 153) concludes that the progress of education has been restricted. After more than a century of British rule, 94 per cent of the Indian population remained illiterate in 1911 and 92 per cent in 1931. Desai observed: "The illiteracy and resultant ignorance among the masses inevitably obstructed social, political, and economic progress".

Portuguese Colonial Encounter and Education

The Portuguese ruled Goa, Daman, and Diu until 19 December 1961. Varde (2002) describes the developments in the field of education in Goa during the various phases of Portuguese rule and then proceeds to comment on the major developments in the field of education.

Year 1510 to 1778

Albuquerque visualised for Goa a new mixed society, which he endeavoured by encouraging marriages between Europeans and Goans. He set up schools mainly

to train natives for Government services. However, these schools did not flourish and within 30 years of the conquest of Goa, public education in Goa was entirely in the hands of Church and later on the control passed on to the heads of religious societies. The educational institutions opened and run by the Jesuits, Franciscan friars, Dominican friars, Carmelites, and Augustinian monks provided scholastic education for centuries. When European society has already moving from medieval scholastic educational experiences to modern scientific and rational education, education in Goa was still scholastic. Lamenting on this educational scenario Menezes Braganza wrote: "More than two centuries witnessed the brain paralysing influence of these institutions on the people of this territory." Concluding his analysis of the development of education during this phase in Goa Varde wrote that the educational institutions run by the Portuguese religious orders continued to impart medieval scholastic education. The medium of instruction was not in the mother tongue.

Year 1778 to Year 1868

This language situation changed with Marquis de Pombal (1749 –77). 'The first subject should dwell on the languages of the places where we have churches and missions' decreed Marquis de Pombal whilst setting up the college of natives. In 1772 Marquis de Pombal, attempting to overhaul the system of education, created two posts of teachers of Reading and Writing (Magister Regius) in Goa. This was the forerunner of Government primary education, or the public schools, as primary education till then was carried on in parochial schools. But, after Pombal, the Governor, Veiga Cabral, on the pretext of poor attendance and inefficiency, discontinued the public school system and primary education was reverted to the parochial schools. As a result of this policy, public education was in doldrums. Governor D. Manuel de Camara, in 1823, writes of the disastrous effects of the policy: 'Public instruction here borders on nothingness. In a population of 2, 60,000, not a single educational institution can be traced.

Very little was done in the field of education till 1836, when a New Education Policy was introduced in Portugal and extended to Goa and other colonies. The provisions of the policy were actually implemented in Goa only in 1841. A primary school was set up in each village, thereby minimising the importance of parish schools. Parish schools could function only in areas where there were no government schools. Consequently, the number of parish schools was reduced from 49 to 25 for the Old Conquests, that is the areas conquered by the Portuguese in the earlier years of their rule. The New Conquests, that is the areas conquered later by the Portuguese when their missionary zeal had tapered, also benefited as six Portuguese primary schools were established during this period and they exempted non-Christians from religious instruction. The decrees of 1844 and 1845 encouraged privately sponsored institutions of primary education in Goa, and by 1869, there were 112 primary schools. Of these, 37 were government primary schools, whereas 75 were managed by parish schools or by other non-

governmental institutions. Only 16 were located in the New Conquest Goa. The total enrolment in all these schools was a meagre 6,124 in a population of 3, 85,000.

Year 1869 to Year 1911

Various educational decrees passed from time to time from 1869 to 1910 shaped the structure of primary education. According to the reforms introduced by Ferreira do Amaral, primary education was imparted in two stages (*graus*): Elementary or the first stage and complementary or the second stage. The elementary stage comprised: (1) speaking, reading and writing in Portuguese; (2) the four fundamental rules of arithmetic with integers and fractions; (3) principles of metric and decimal system along with those of the Indian system of weights and measures; (4) principles of linear drawing; and (5) principles of ethics and Christian doctrine for Catholics. For girls, the elementary stage comprised also needlework.

The complementary stage comprised: (1) Reading, recitation of prose and poetry; (2) handwriting and exercises in writing; (3) elementary arithmetic and geometry and their most simple and usual applications; (4) grammar and exercises in Portuguese language; (5) legal and usual system of weights and measures; (6) elements of chronology, geography and history of Portugal; (7) linear drawing and its usual applications; (8) elementary knowledge of agriculture;

(9) ethics and sacred history; and (10) general duties and rights of citizens. In addition to these subjects, girls were taught duties of mother in a family, needlework, embroidery and so on. Not only that the subsequent decrees introduced reforms in the structure and content of primary education, they also prescribed general norms for the furniture and buildings. The decrees provided for instituting teacher's training courses also.

Developments in the Field of Higher Education

Higher education in Goa, outside the theological field, can be traced back to two institutions: the School of Mathematics and Military and the Medical College of Nova Goa. Their existence in these historical times shows that the scientific preoccupation was not unknown to the Portuguese colonisers. The establishment of the former was the outcome of the pressing needs of the defence of the colony. Initially started as a Military Academy the institute was later transformed as the School of Mathematics and Military. However, the School had a short span of life. In 1871 after the Military rebellion of Marcela, the army of the Portuguese possessions in India was disbanded and consequently the Military School was abolished and the Professional Institute of Nova Goa was created in its place.

The establishment of Medical education is another landmark in the history of education in Goa. Medical education in Goa started in the early 18th century in the Royal Hospital at the Old city of Goa. In 1842 Medical education was radically changed with the formal creation of the Escola Medico-Cirurgica de Nova Goa. It was planned by the Chief Physician Marcus Cesario Rodrigues Moacho, degree holder of the Medical School of the Lisbon and Doctor of Medicine of the University of Lavain in Belgium. The course received the assent of the Governor; Count of Antas by *Portaria* dated the 5th of November 1842. This was the first Medical school in the whole of Asia. The duration of the course was four years. The Medical School continued until liberation and renamed as Goa Medical College after liberation.

Technical and Professional education entered late. In the year 1871 the Professional Institute of Nova Goa was created in place of the old School of Mathematics and Military which had by then been abolished. The Institute provided training in the branches of agriculture, industry and commerce. It was observed that the attempts at technical and professional education in Goa were not successful till the end of the Monarchy. By the end of Monarchy (academic year 1910-1911) and the setting up of the Republic there were in all 105 Government Primary Schools in the whole of the territory (Goa, Daman, Dadra and Nagar-Aveli, and Diu). There were 88 Portuguese schools (71 for boys and 17 for girls, seven Marathi schools, and 10 Gujarati schools. However, this scenario changed during the Republican Regime until Liberation in 1961.

French Colonial Education: An Enlightened Perspective on Education

Before French colonialism, the ancient rulers of Pondicherry like the Pallavas and later the Cholas encouraged Vedic learning through the endowment of lands and villages. There have been numerous inscriptions which speak of endowments specifically provided for the pursuit of Vedic studies. Popular education was also taught in temples and other places. This education consisted of recitations and expositions of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. Higher education was also pursued through denominational learning of the scriptures and was taught in mutts and temples.

Early French colonial education

Like the British and the Portuguese, the French too tried to replace traditional education in India with that of Western education. Despite its homogeneity, the education imparted by different colonial powers, varied depending on the objectives of each colonising power and based on local conditions. The French colonial education system was different from that of the Portuguese and English.

The educational system practiced in the colonies was similar to that which was prevalent in France. Infused with the ideas of equality, liberty and fraternity, the

French education system was much enlightened when compared to that of the British. These values of the French revolution were also reflected in the education system in the French colonies in India. Though the French colonisers were as rigid as the British when it came to administration, in matters of education, the natives were granted various privileges. Western education was introduced in colonies like Pondicherry in a series of stages.

French Colonial Education in the Eighteenth Century

Though the French occupied Pondicherry in 1674, for nearly a century and half, the colonisers were focused on consolidating their hold over their territory. It was only in 1815, that the French colonisation was stabilised in Pondicherry. So during the earlier centuries of their rule, the French were not very serious about transplanting French education in India. Nevertheless French education gradually began making its presence felt in the colonies. For example, in 1703, the Jesuits opened a few schools in Pondicherry for the children of the 'colons', i.e. the European residents in the settlements. These schools catered to the needs of the European settlers in various parts of India and elsewhere, but had very little to do with the education of natives. They were meant only to train and educate their own men to take up the priestly career. The twentieth century also saw the beginning of modern education in Pondicherry with separate classes, standards, prescribed syllabi and curricula, examinations, time tables, promotions, detentions, etc. These schools run by the missionaries were however found inadequate to meet the needs of the settlement.

The eighteenth century also saw the colonisers taking various initiatives to enhance the education of the girl child. Some convents of indigenous sisters were started by Jesuit fathers. The missionaries also tried to start schools for native girls. This is a commendable effort given that native girls were seldom allowed to even leave their homes after they attained puberty.

Two prominent educational institutions were established in Pondicherry in the eighteenth century. One was the Siminaire Pndral of Virampattinam established in 1771 by Mgr. Pigneau de Behaine. The Siminaire was well known for its quality education even outside of the French colonies. Among those who took admission in this institution were Europeans, Chinese as well as Annamites. Those Indians who were hesitant to enroll in the institutions run by the missionaries on account of caste and religious considerations sought admission in Collage Malabare.

Institutions of Higher Education Developed in the Nineteenth Century

As seen in the preceding paragraphs, though the French were yet to consolidate their hold over their Indian territories in the eighteenth century, they began introducing Western education in the colonies. Their focus on education intensified after French hold over India stabilised in 1815. While the initial phase

of educational reform was largely the responsibility of the missionaries, in course of time, there was a move towards secularisation and laicisation. The nineteenth century saw the introduction of professional education in French India. The French started the School of Law and the School of Medicine in Pondicherry. As far as the law course was concerned, Hindu law and Muhammadan law continued to be taught as a special subject, though Roman law and administrative law were included in the curriculum. The French administration also tried to make education compulsory for all who lived in the colonies but this policy remained only on paper.

One of the most remarkable schools set up by the French was the Lycée Français de Pondicherry. It is the oldest secondary school in the erstwhile French colonial empire. It offered schooling from nursery to senior secondary. The school also offered vocational stream comprising of the electrical technology and office work. Incidentally when the French left Pondicherry, this school was not transferred to India.

Conclusion

This module discussed the impact and influence of colonisation in the field of education in India. While formal and informal education, both religious and secular, was prevalent in India since ancient times, the secular modern formal education open to all segments of society was introduced only during European colonisation. Though one normally associates European colonisation with British rule over the Indian subcontinent, in this module we have also discussed the impact on education in some tiny pockets of India like Goa and Pondicherry which came under the influence of other colonial powers.

There were three agencies that were responsible for the spread of modern education in India: the foreign Christian missionaries, the British government and the progressive Indians. The introduction of modern education in India was primarily motivated by the political-administrative and economic needs of Britain in India. Some enlightened Britishers also felt that if the natives were imparted English education, then the British culture, which was the best and most liberal in the world, would be accessible to the Indians. This sentiment is best exemplified in Macaulay's views which were recorded in his Minutes in 1835. Along with producing clerks colonial education also produced the nationalist leaders and many professionals and intellectuals.

With regard to the impact of Portuguese colonialism on the educational policies in Goa, it is noted that from the year 1854 till Liberation there was opportunity for Secondary and Higher Secondary education in the Goa *Lyceum*. The total duration of school education under the Portuguese regime was of 12 years: five years of primary education, plus seven years of secondary education. The secondary level

included five years of learning general course and two years of complementary or pre-university course.

University education of four or five years duration according to the course to be followed could be pursued only in Portugal and came after the complementary course of the Lyceum, that is after twelve years of schooling. The fifth year of Lyceum was equivalent to the S.S.C.E. examination. Varde opines that though the quality of education during the Portuguese regime was good the expansion was slow. With the establishment of the Republican Regime, the private initiative to start educational institutions started. By the end of the last years of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century schools with English and Marathi medium went on increasing. By the mid 20th century the majority of the population of the territory started to opt for instruction through Marathi and English, as was the pattern followed in British India. In 1950, the number of students in 65 primary, middle and secondary private- owned English teaching schools in Goa was 13,477 as against 10,944 in all Portuguese schools in Goa, Daman and Diu. We can conclude by saying that the educational scenario at all levels did not match the development of education in British India by the time of liberation.

Like the British and the Portuguese, the French too took a keen interest in education in colonial India. However, the education imparted by the French colonisers was different from that of the British or Portuguese. Inspired by the spirit of the Enlightenment that had pervaded France since the sixteenth century, liberal values also found their way in the field of education. Thus education in the French colonies reflected, in some way or the other, the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. Along with religious education initiated by the missionaries, the French also took a keen interest in starting secular modern professional education. They wanted the natives too to benefit from the French educational system. They made the bold move of starting educational institutions for girls, which also included native girls. This was a courageous move at a time when many families hesitated to even send their children outside their home. In 1898, the French colonial administration made education compulsory for all who lived in the colony. Though this decree remained only on paper, given the tradition bound and conservative nature of the natives, it reflected the progressive and liberal mindset of the French colonisers in the field of education.

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