



Educational Policy of the Colonial Government in Maharashtra

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The East India Company's rule was established in Maharashtra in 1818 by defeating the last Peshwa Bajirao II. Soon the new presidency was formed as the Bombay Presidency, comprising of Sindh, Gujarat, north-western Karnataka and Maharashtra except Marathwada and Vidarbha and Stuart Elphinstone was appointed as its Governor. He took the steps in the direction of educational development of Maharashtra.

India was invaded by many invaders since ancient times such as the Greeks, the Shakas, the Parthians, the Kushanas, the Turks and the Mughals. But there was a basic difference between the British and their earlier counterparts. All the previous invaders came to India and settled down here and became Indians completely by totally forgetting about their original homelands.

The British government was totally different in nature as compared to earlier invaders of India in this respect. They came here with the Imperialism which has the aim of exploiting India for the sake of progress of their homeland the Great Britain.

The British had laid down the foundation of limited capitalism as their need to exploit India in the nineteenth century. The feudal structure was destroyed completely by newly emerging capitalist class in Europe. But here the aim of the British colonial government was not to destroy feudal-caste based economic structure prevailing in India. The main aim of the British colonial government was to exploit India as to fulfill development of the British Imperialism. In this process to exploit India for the progress of their home country, the Great Britain, the new class of the Zamindars (Landlords), the Mercantile and capitalist emerged in India as a secondary partner of the colonial government.

In the first phase of the colonialism in India, this newly emerged class played the role as strong supporters of the new colonial government, the providers of raw material and as the mediators between the new colonial rulers and the ruled Indians. The colonial government had understood the utility of the high caste Hindus in establishing their rule. They knew that even the Mughal Empire had not succeeded in dismantling the cultural dominance of the high castes in the Hindu society. In Maharashtra, Mount Stuart Elphinstone was one of the early administrators who had understood the potential use of the high caste Hindus in the perpetuation of the colonial rule and framed his policies accordingly. The new class order was emerged as a result of the contact with colonial government and this new class order was already had the influence of the caste system prevailing here since Vedic times. The caste system has classified the working class as every caste was assigned certain duties in the productive system. The capital of the newly introduced colonial structure needed the 'Sweet Labour', i.e. the most exploited and lowest paid labour which was provided by the lowest ranked castes – the Dalits and Adivasis. In the caste system the dalits were already exploited by the all other high castes since long ago.

According to Prof. Dilip Chavan, the initial policy of the British government was to restructure the Indian economy on the lines of the capitalism so as to fulfill aims and objectives



of the British colonialism by pleasing newly emerged mediator class who was their strong supporter by limiting the benefits of new structure up to it. At the same time the colonial government also accepted the policy of not to destroy the feudal-caste based production structure prevailing in India as per the demand of their newly emerged supporter class of landowners, mercantile and capitalists. Thus the British colonialism developed in India to fulfill these two basic aims of exploiting India for the sake of the Great Britain and to maintain feudal-caste based structure as it was to please the newly emerged supporter class. So the educational policy was also developed on the same lines by the British colonial government.¹ The section 43 of the Charter Act of 1813, made it compulsory on the East India Company to accept the responsibility of the education of Indians.² As soon as Mountstuart Elphinstone took the charge of the first governor of the Bombay Presidency, he wrote his famous minute on education and done experiment for educational reorganization of the province. He believed that education would lead to the ending of evil practices like sati, female infanticide etc. It was clear from his experience that Indians were closely associated in educational reorganization of Bombay.

All educational institutions except Poona College and Elphinstone Institute were managed by the Bombay Native Education Society which consists of large number of Indians. The Bombay Native Education Society conducted 115 primary schools of English medium.³

The prime aim of the educational system developed here in India by the British Government was to make it according to their colonial interests and that it should strengthen their colonial power. Though the colonialism could not disturb the existing feudal structure, it had to remold and alter it according to new capitalist mould for the existence of itself. The colonialist had understood the necessity to take support of the dominant castes for the aim of exploitation and so did not tried to disturb the feudalism as per the will of new supporter class of the colonial government. The 'Educational Colonialism' developed by the British is the part of their 'Economic Colonialism'. Any country and especially the vast country like India could not be ruled without the consent of the subjects. To get the consent of the indigenous people to the colonial rule, the British had begun to spread that the new educational system of the government is good for the people of India. For that formally the education was made open to all irrespective of the caste, gender and religion. The move of making education open to all was aimed at spreading feeling among the indigenous people that the new government is far better than their earlier counterparts; there were no hidden interests of new government to keep people without knowledge rather it was more benevolent than any of the previous regimes. Many officers of the Government of Bombay Presidency had made it clear that the government was thinking to establish their rule and making it long lasting through educational perception of indigenous that the new rule was more just and reformist and better for the progress of them.

According to J.P. Naik and Syed Nurullah, there were three objectives which primarily discussed during the finalization of the British Educational policy in India:

¹Chavan Dilip, (2003), Dr. Ambedkar Ani Bhatrtiya Shikshanatil Jatisangharsh (Dr. Ambedkar and Caste Struggle in Indian Education), Krantisinha Nana Patil Academy, Dhule, p. 22.

² Naik J. P. (1943), A Review of Modern Education in India (1813-1942), Tilak College of Education, Pune, p. 13.

³ Patankar R. B. (2014), Indo-British Encounter, Rohan Prakashan, Pune, p. 136.



- i) To spread the Western Knowledge,
- ii) To secure properly trained servants for the public administration of the country, and
- iii) To do the Sovereign's duty by the Indian subjects.

Though there was a difference of opinion among the British scholars on the above objectives of the Educational policy of the British government, all the three viewpoints existed there at all times. The first view was held by the missionaries and the officers under their influence and dominated from 1833 to 1853. The second view is often found in the directions made by the Court of Directors who always focused on getting chief and efficient servants for the administration of the vast country and it was dominated from 1823 to 1833. It was not correct to say that, the any of above view was the sole objective of the British Educational policy. Because the British administration was not run by the will of anyone person, but it was collectively run by the group of administrators having different aims and objectives in their minds. It would be more correct to say that at times the particular objective was more dominant than others.

The system of liberal education in India was organized with an emphasis of spread of the western knowledge and for this purpose the universities were established and attempts were also made for the education of women. And at the same time the system of professional and the vocational knowledge was organized with the prime object of training Indians for government service. J.P. Naik and Syed Nurullah were against the common view that the sole aim of the British educational policy was to prepare servants for the administrative set up, and further argued that the pioneers such as Mountstuart Elphinstone, Lord Macaulay were of the view that there should be eradication of superstitious culture and at the same time there should not arise the sentiments of rebel against the align regime by spreading western knowledge.¹

There was a difference of opinion among the British scholars on the issue of imparting western culture or the oriental culture. According to J.P. Naik and Syed Nurullah, the orientalist like Duncan, Hastings, Minto, Princep, and H. H. Wilson emphasized on the worth of the ancient literatures of the Hindus and the Muslims. Although the orientalist were not against the spread of western knowledge, they obviously attached far greater importance to the preservation and development of oriental culture. Many of the missionaries and men like Charles Grant and Macaulay believed in the substitution of oriental culture by that of the western. Macaulay had already declared very clearly that,

"A single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." Thus Macaulay had condemned the Indian culture and clearly stated that the western knowledge of sciences was the only answer to the backwardness of the Indian society and that important western knowledge should be imparted only through the medium of English. He had believed in creating a class of persons who should accept the western knowledge and manners etiquettes etc. It is evident from his famous Macaulay's Minuit of 1835,

¹ Naik J. P. Nurullah Syed, (1974), A Students' History of Education In India (1800-1973), McMillan India, Madras, p. 97-99.

"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 taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect."¹

It is clear from his views that the colonial government did never aimed at educating all the Indians but only creating a class of selective educated Indians who should act as comprador intellectual. The women and dalits were not included in Macaulay's plan of imparting education. Rather he wanted to educate only elites from the Hindus and the Muslims, who should be capable of buying the British goods produced in England. There was also a politics in Macaulay's minute taking care of the British capitalism and so his plan of educating selective Indians was according to the demand of the British capitalists. Another aspect of his plan was that these selective English educated Indians should remain loyal to the British Crown in any circumstances. The newly educated Indians began to look at the British rule as God's gift. It was justified by the fact that newly educated Indians had not participated in the Revolt of 1857 and thus the British policy proved to be successful.

The new educational system, derived from the aim of keeping interests of colonial government and high caste Hindus, had assigned the duties of establishing colonialism in India. In the establishment of the colonial rule in India the caste system was played an important supportive role. The Brahmin and Baniyas played the same role of secondary rules at the local levels in the colonial frame as they played during the medieval Turkey governments. Now they become loyal to new colonial government with the same aim of keeping their own interests intact. The only change was that the upper castes were interested to learn the Persian, the language of the then rulers during medieval times and now they learned the English, the language of new rulers. While there was a majority of the Hindu students in the Persian schools during the early nineteenth century they begun to demand learning the English in the changed situation. On the other hand new masters, the British had developed the educational system so as to benefit these upper castes which provided the necessary support to their regime in the beginning.² Thus the superior position of the Brahmins in the Hindu society and their strong hold on the rest of the castes was tactically used by the British by exploiting the Brahmins' desire for power.

The Educational policy of the British government thus varied from time to time but never spent more amount of the expenditure for imparting education to lower castes women and dalits; because they did not want to disturb the feudal and caste based socio-economic structure so as to please the newly educated class of upper caste Hindus which was strong supporter and mediator between the rulers and the ruled. As these upper caste people did not want to educate their remaining castes in the fear of demanding justice and losing all kinds of privileges of caste system. So the focus of the Educational policy was upon educating the upper caste Hindus and not the dalits, women and lower castes.

According to the census the Brahmins were mere 3.94% of the total population and even then in 1896-97, there were 15 Brahmin students of every 16 students learning in the colleges;

¹ Ghosh S. C., (2013), The History of Education in Modern India 1757-2012, Orient Black Swan, Hyderabad, p. 32.

² Naik J. P. Nurullah Syed, (1974), A Students' History of Education In India (1800-1973). McMillan India, Madras, p. 97-99.



167 Brahmin students of every 197 students of the middle schools. The Brahmins comprises 71% of the total graduates during 1886 to 1910.¹ This clearly shows that the new colonial government had completely neglected the education of the dalits and other lower castes in favor of the Brahmins and Baniyas. On the eve of independence, the literacy ratio of the Dalits and Adivasis was below 1% and again this indicates that the British never tried to disturb the caste based feudal economy of the India and never wanted to disturb the interests of the upper castes as their support was needed and used in the colonial set up in exploiting the country.

The colonial government never had the aim of educating the masses and so the Macaulay's theory of educating selected persons was upheld by the high caste Hindus as it was in their interests. One more fact should be considered here that it was literary impossible for the British to borrow the administrative staff from their homeland and so it was their necessity to create such administrative staff by imparting education to natives. Here in India the upper castes such as the Brahmins and Baniyas had the tradition of education and serving in the administrative set up since ancient times and so given education by the new rule and used as the administrative staff and the mediators. The rules of caste system were so designed as to keep rest of the lower castes and dalits out of the field of education.

The class of newly educated Indians not only helped the government in the administrative field but also spread new cultural values suited to the British colonialism through the system of education. This class of newly educated began to speak the language of the rulers accepted the values of the rulers and this was helpful to decrease the cultural distance between the white rulers and the black ruled. The government was always keen to keep this newly emerged class loyal to the Crown and for this purpose they were very cautious about the curriculum of the educational system. There was a dominance of the moral education in the educational system of the Bombay University. The education of glorifying Christianity and Europe such as the Bible, 'Paradise Lost' of Milton, 'Elide' of Homer, 'Hamlet' of Shakespeare, 'Othello' were included in the curriculum initially. In the fear of creating rebellious mind set up, two articles, 'French Revolution' of Carlyle and 'Life of Socrates' were excluded from the syllabus.²

The policy of educating limited upper caste Indians according to administrative need was adopted by the British government and so also limited the spread of the primary education. The Public Schools based on their counterparts in England were opened here in India for the children of the old feudal landlords, merchants, kings, feudal officers and the Brahmins. These public schools were also meant for creating new educated class loyal to the British colonialism. According to Sir John Sargent, the educational adviser of the Government of India,

"The students of the Public Schools may be arrogant, intellectually weak and not having the feeling of sympathy, but they have the essential characteristic virtue of a good

¹ Basu Aparna, (1974), *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India*, Oxford University Press, New York, p. 124.

² Chavan Dilip, (2003), *Dr. Ambedkar Ani Bhatrtiya Shikshanatil Jatisangharsh (Dr. Ambedkar and Caste Struggle in Indian Education)*, Krantisinha Nana Patil Academy, Dhule, p. 24.



administrator such as taking responsibility and high quality in their behavior and thinking.”¹

The fact is that the students not only from such Public Schools but also from the ‘New English School’ started by Tilak and Agarkar for the spread of nationalist thinking, did not contribute to the national struggle. The another officer, Trevelyan from the East India Company makes this point more clear while he stated that the newly educated Indians had become more English than being Hindus. This is quite evident that newly educated class had become mediator between the rulers and the ruled and this was exactly designed by the colonial rule.

One more responsibility was on the Educational system to create the new consumers for these newly introduced British goods in India. Therefore the British Government had deliberately articulated the Educational system in India in such a way that it created the new consumer class for the British goods and took one step forward to fulfill their colonial interests. Macaulay had made it clear that the newly educated Indians must have affinity towards using British costumes without thinking of its price.

It was evident even from the famous Dispatch of Woods (1854) that the spread of English Education had become the necessity of the colonial market. In the objectives of the Educational policy the Dispatch elaborates as:

“Nor, while the character of England is deeply concerned in the success of our efforts for the promotion of education, are her material interests altogether unaffected by the advance of European knowledge in India. This knowledge will confer upon them all the advantages which accompany the healthy increase of wealth and commerce and at the same time secure to us a large and more certain supply of many articles necessary for our manufacturers and extensively consumed by all classes of our population, as well as an almost inexhaustible demand for the produce of the British labour.”²

The tremendous lack of knowledge among the masses was an obstacle for the colonial administration. The colonial government was interested in the commercialization of the Indian agriculture which was happened as a result of the spread of railways throughout the country and some other colonial efforts. Indian Agriculture was made connected to the English trade and the modernization of Indian Agriculture was the necessity of the British Capitalism which was totally depended on the British colonies for the raw material as well as for the market to their produce to be sold. So for the modernization of Indian Agriculture it was necessity to develop new methods of farming, to establish special banks for agriculture and to improve and make suitable changes in the rural parts of India. It was not possible without spread of minimum education among the masses; so this was the politics behind declaration of the aims and objectives of imparting education to the masses by the colonial government.

The Downward Filtration Theory:

It was new idea of educating selective people from the Indians to be used in the administration. As the British colonial government was urgently needed a class of English Educated Indians to run day to day administration of the East India Company, this idea of

¹ Singh R.P. cited in Chavan Dilip, (2003), *Dr. Ambedkar Ani Bhatrtiya Shikshanatil Jatisangharsh (Dr. Ambedkar and Caste Struggle in Indian Education)*, Krantisinha Nana Patil Academy, Dhule, p. 25.

² Naik J. P. Nurullah Syed, (1974), *A Students' History of Education In India (1800-1973)*, McMillan India, Madras, p. 133-134.



educating selected Indians through the medium of English put forward. Warden, a member of Governor's Council in Bombay was the first to express the idea of Downward Filtration Theory, with some objectives in mind. Firstly, the government wanted to please the adversely affected class of the feudal chiefs by educating and including them into the governance of the East India Company. The second objective was to educate elite or influential classes of the society with assumption that their culture would naturally descend to the lower classes, The third objective was naturally to meet the essence of the administrative staff, some of the Indians might be provided education through the medium of English and it was expected from them to educate their people through the medium of local languages.¹ The British Government is thus interested in educating limited selective Indians as per their colonial needs. It is evident from the fact that in Bombay Presidency, there were only 492 students were graduated in B. A. and only 14 students passed M. A., in the five years from 1883 to 1887.²

¹ Naik J. P. Nurullah Syed, (1974), A Students' History of Education In India (1800-1973), McMillan India, Madras, P. 99-101.

² Nash A. M., (1893), Progress of Education in India (1887-88 to 1891-92) Second Quinquennial Review, Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, Calcutta, p. 54.