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पुराणम् - PURANA

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COLONIAL POLICY AND EDUCATIONAL SCENARIO OF MAHARASHTRA IN THE 20TH CENTURY

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Abstract

In the early years of the twentieth century, the Indian Education received larger financial grants from the British Government as compare to previous period. The State played more active role than ever by officially abandoning the old policy of State-Withdrawal from education especially under the period of Curzon. Another important feature of the early nineteenth century was the qualitative improvement of the Indian Education again the lead given by Curzon, who had insisted upon the qualitative progress than to quantitative. The concept of National Education was another major hurdle in the education of women, Dalits and shudras. Overall impression of the state of education of women and Dalits was not satisfactory even at the eve of the independence, after the efforts of Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, due to the Brahmanical dominance in politics, administration and other important fields. The development of the education in Maharashtra in the twentieth century was satisfactory and it remained confined mainly to the upper castes due to the deliberate attempt of the colonial government and social conditions prevailing in the society. Genuine efforts were taken by the natives, like Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar to educate women and the Dalits to get rid of the Brahmanical tyranny and progress at their own, and thus gave immense importance to education.

Keywords: Colonial, Dalits, Mass Education, Patel Act, Diarchy, Provincial Autonomy.

Introduction:

The Modern Indian Education underwent many changes under the British Colonial Rule, during the first half of the nineteenth century. These are of immense importance regarding the development of the Indian Education, as this period presents several distinctive features. The State played more active role than ever by officially abandoning the old policy of State-Withdrawal from education especially under the period of Curzon. Another important feature of the early nineteenth century was the qualitative improvement of the Indian Education again the lead given by Curzon, who had insisted upon the qualitative progress than to quantitative. The newly educated Indians were generally loyal to the British Government during the eighteenth century though the nationalism began to rise towards the last two decades. But the scenario changed completely and the militant nationalism grew among the people rapidly from the days of Curzon itself.¹ The period

¹ Naik J. P. Nurullah Syed, (1974), *A Students' History of Education In India (1800-1973)*, McMillan India, Madras, p. 239-247.

saw the transfer of Departments of Education to Indian Ministers by the Government of India Act, 1919 resulting in the rapid development of mass education under the diarchy.² Due to the establishment of the British rule many of the persons from the shudras and dalits could get access to education for the first time. Though the British Colonial Government developed the policy of appeasement of the Brahmins, they also had made education open to all irrespective of caste, religion, gender etc. Therefore, the very existence of the British rule, paved way for the development of the shudras, women and dalits through the education, though not on large scale. Some of them get educated through the missionaries or through the government schools and colleges.

Anyone who is introduced to the western knowledge must have achieved the critical attitude and the desire for the self-respect. These English educated persons from shudras, women and dalits began to think and rethink rationally about the injustice and the worst conditions of their castes. They understood the need of education to come out of the worst conditions in the new atmosphere and began to educate their caste fellows and demanding the mass education towards the Government. The process of enlightenment of these downtrodden castes was already started in the nineteenth century with Mahatma Phule, who is the pioneer of the revolutionary social reform movements not only in Maharashtra but also in India. As a real humanist, he wanted the total social transformation and a new society based on the principles of liberty, equality, justice and fraternity. He had organized his efforts of liberating shudras, women and dalits from the Brahmanical thralldom by establishing the 'Satyashodhak Samaj' on 24th September, 1874.³ It was a platform to construct the movement of liberation under the leadership of Mahatma Phule. It took initiative in the education of the masses.

In the nineteenth century, many of the educated persons from the non-Brahmins came forward to educate the masses. The initiative was taken by Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, the benevolent king of Kolhapur, who started many schools and hostels for the education of the shudras and dalits. He introduced many revolutionary social reforms by enacting laws such as 50% reservation for the backward castes in his state.⁴ Maharshi Vitthal Ramaji Shinde also worked hard for the education of the dalits by establishing 'The Depressed Classes Mission Society of India' on 18th October, 1906.⁵ Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil devoted his whole life for imparting education

² Ibid, p. 361.

³ Keer Dhananjay, (1964), *Mahatma Jotirao Phoolay: Father of the Indian Social Revolution*, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, reprinted 2013, p. 127.

⁴ Sangve Vilas, (ed.), *Rajarshi Shahu Chhatrapati Papers*, Vol. 3, p. 91, cited in Jadhav Ramesh, *Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj*, Bhende Subhash, Sakhalkar Eknath, (1996), *Maharashtrachi Manchinhe*, Majestic Prakashan, Mumbai, p. 127.

⁵ Shinde V. R., (1906), *The Depressed Classes Mission Society of India*, in Pawar G. M. (ed.), (2009), *Maharshi Vitthal Ramaji Shinde: Samagra Wangmaya*, Vol. 1, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Ani Sanskruti Mandal, Mumbai, p. 197.

among the masses by establishing 'Rajyat Shikshan Sanstha' in 1919, through which he opened many schools and colleges with hostels in Maharashtra.⁶

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was the real hero of the women and dalits, who devoted his whole life for the cause of their liberation and finally enacted measures in the Indian Constitution as its chief architect. He also understood the importance of education and so appealed his followers to get educated. He also established institutions for their education such as, *Bahishkrut Hitkarini Sabha* in 1924 and People's Education Society in 1945. He opened Siddharth College at Mumbai and Milind College at Aurangabad through People's Education Society.

Lord Curzon's Contribution to Indian Education:

Since 1882 the Government had adopted the policy of '*Laissez faire*', given complete freedom to the private institutions and even declared to withdraw from education. As a result, the average cost of education for a college student in India dropped from Rs. 198.6 in 1886-87 to Rs. 162.0 in 1891-92. The average cost of educating a child in England and Wales is nearly more than Rs. 30, while in India it was only Rs. 3.6 in 1891-92. But Lord Curzon had reversed the policy and given a great impetus to Indian Education by taking the responsibility on the state and controlling private institutes. He insisted on the qualitative progress of education and so brought the necessary reforms in it. He was committed for the expansion of the education to the masses. This was a right step in the development of the education in India. Curzon was a man of ability and so worked hard and studied deeply to find the answer for the educational issue.

He had strong sense of duty, great intellectual powers, intense desire to serve the people of India and magnificent achievements in almost all fields of administration. Even then he was strongly hated by the Indian intelligentsia, not for his ability as a good administrator but for his satiric views, he expressed about India and Indians. Lord Curzon had allotted large amount of funds to improve quality of education in the colleges, universities and primary and secondary levels also.

Indian Universities Act 1904:

Lord Curzon had given immense importance to the higher education and understood the essence of the reforms in it. So, he appointed an Indian University Commission under the chairmanship of Raleigh in January 1902, which recommended to enact an Indian University Act along with other recommendations according to the plan of Lord Curzon. The Universities Bill was passed despite the resistance of G.K. Gokhale and Asutosh Mukhopadhyay and become an Act on 21st March, 1904.⁷

The Indian Universities Act of 1904 brought radical changes in the higher education. It enlarged the functions of the universities such as maintaining libraries, laboratories and museums, which were tend to promote study and research. The university senates were made sizable by regulating

⁶ Chavan R. N. in Chavan R. R., (2015), *Sakaljansavad*, R. N. Chavan Pratishtan, Wai, p. 203.

⁷ Ghosh S. C., (2013), *The History of Education in Modern India 1757-2012*, Orient Black Swan Hyderabad, p. 120.

the appointments of the fellows from fifty to hundred. The principle of election was also introduced for senate for 20 fellows. The university syndicates were given a statutory recognition and the teachers were given adequate representation on syndicates. College affiliation was made strict and the government approval was made compulsory, by giving rights to syndicates to check the colleges.

The regulations made by the senate were to be approved by the Government. The Governor-General-in-Council was empowered by the Act to define the territorial limits of the universities. Though the Act was the necessary to improve the educational system in the universities by deep study by Lord Curzon himself, it was disapproved by Indian intelligentsia. It was mostly because of the atmosphere of distrust created by Lord Curzon himself. He had a bad satirical vein and often spoke and wrote in such a way that hurt the feelings of the Indians.⁸ The Indian Universities Act of 1904 was a sincere attempt of Lord Curzon to improve the quality of higher education in India. Lord Curzon had given more importance to the expansion of primary education. Contrary to his policy of qualitative improvement in the higher education, he emphasized expansion side by side with improvement. He realized that due to lack of financial assistance from the government, the growth of primary education was slowed down. And so, taking into consideration, the necessity of the expansion of Primary education, he allotted large amount of grants for its expansion. In the field of secondary and collegiate education, he realized the need to improve and control the private schools and colleges, which had become more like a coaching institutions rather than centers for learning. So, he adopted a policy to control and improve quality of secondary education. Lord Curzon had given a tremendous impetus to the Agricultural Education by introducing the measures to improve it. He established a 'Central Research Institute' at Pusa for training in agriculture. He made it compulsory to the important provinces to have established a government owned, well equipped Agricultural College. He had also introduced agriculture as a subject in the middle and high schools to broadcast agricultural knowledge among the people.⁹ One of the greatest contributions of Curzon to the Indian Education was the establishment of the office of the 'Director-General of Education in India'. He has become the founder of the department of Archaeology in India by enacting the Act for Preservations of the Ancient Monuments. To improve the standard and quality of education, he accepted the responsibility of educational finance and thus the department of education was established in the central government and the regular funding to the provinces was started under his guidance. He also had given tremendous impetus to the development of Indian languages. Thus, we can observe that there was not any aspect of Indian Education which remained out of his touch; rather he had contributed to the welfare of the each and every field of the Indian Education. So, in spite of his political moves in India, now the people of India, and especially from the field

⁸ Naik J. P. Nurullah Syed, (1974), *A Students' History of Education in India (1800-1973)*, McMillan India, Madras, p. 244.

⁹ Naik J. P. Nurullah Syed, (1974), *A Students' History of Education In India (1800-1973)*, McMillan India, Madras, p. 265.

of education, remember and are grateful to Lord Curzon for his contribution to the qualitative development of Indian Education.

The Indian Educational system was thus given a great impetus by the British Government under Lord Curzon, but the education was not made compulsory yet. Maharaja Sayajiro Gaikwad had made the Elementary Education compulsory in his State of Baroda. The question of introducing compulsory elementary education into the British India was raised by Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1910 and a Bill for compulsory Elementary Education was also introduced by him in 1911 but was rejected. It was held that it was premature for an agricultural country where the demand for education was still slender.¹⁰ Thus the compulsory education was not rooted in the soil though the demand for it was increased among the Indian intelligentsia.

The education for women was taken seriously since the time of Lord Dalhousie and in Bombay presidency the number of girl students was increased by 47.7 per cent in the year 1912. According to the report of Government of India (1907-12), in Bombay Presidency an almost general spread of education had taken place in the depressed classes by 64 percent. But this report further states that vast number of them was still untouched by the education.¹¹ So it is evident from the Government report itself that the dalits were not getting an access to education properly as before though the percentage was increased.

The Hartog Committee found that there was a great disparity in the figures of school going boys and girls, the primary education for girls was insufficient and secondary education was quite inadequate. The committee also recommended employing women teachers, suitable curriculum and a Deputy Director to look after women's education. It also recommended a gradual introduction of compulsion for the education of girls as they are future mothers of the country.¹² Vithalbhai J. Patel had introduced a bill for compulsory primary education in municipal areas, which was accepted by the Bombay Legislative Council and had become the Bombay Primary Education (Municipalities) Act of 1918, and was popularly known as the Patel Act. Thus, for the first time the concept of compulsory education was upheld at least under the Provincial Governments. The concept of compulsory education was accepted in other provinces and the Patel Act was imitated by others.

National Education:

The concept of National Education was another crucial development in the field of education. Tilak had also used the concept of national education towards the end of nineteenth century to cater his concept of Hindutva. He was very critical about educating women, shudras and dalits, so in his concept of national education, there was no scope for the education of these downtrodden

¹⁰ Sharp H. (1914), *Progress of Education in India (1907-12)*, Vol. 1, Superintendent, Government Printing India, Calcutta, p. 9.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 27.

¹² Ghosh S. C., (2013), *The History of Education in Modern India 1757-2012*, Orient Black Swan, Hyderabad, p. 157.

castes and women. The nationalist had under impact of the admiring history as glorious and so the religious education was given importance in the concept of national education. The national education was given in the private institutes with the university recognized curriculum as an extra part. The religious syllabus was taught to make student aware of the cultural glory of the nation. Very often these institutes were sectarian in character rather than national.¹³

This was an attempt of the upper castes to maintain their privileges, conferred upon them by the caste system and the patriarchal society, with the introduction of national education, which was less national and more sectarian. The concept of secularism was totally neglected in the concept of national education by the upper caste intelligentsia.

The concept of national education was given up under the diarchy. It was advocated by Lala Lajpat Rai that the National Education should be given by the national state and not by the private institutes, so it would better to wait for freedom. His view was widely accepted and the concept of national education was given up by most of the private educational institutes.

Education under Diarchy:

The Government of India Act, 1919 had transferred the Department of Education to the Indian Ministers under the new constitution, known as Diarchy. There was large number of expansions in the colleges and students. In the field of secondary education there was an unprecedented expansion of secondary education as a whole.¹⁴ The rural area presented a remarkable of growth in the number of schools. The mother tongue was accepted as a medium of instruction and there was a growth in the schools for the girls also. The most important feature of the Indian Education under diarchy was rapid development of mass education.¹⁵

There was a remarkable growth in the field of women's education. Some steps were also taken to abolish untouchability by Mahatma Gandhi and it resulted in the growth of education for dalits, who were organized under the capable leadership of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, who also appealed his followers to get educated and emphasized on the importance of education for their emancipation. There was decrease in the number of special schools for dalits though not abolished. Overall, the period witnessed good advance in the field of education under the Indian Ministers, though they had faced many problems like lack of grants, lack of support from bureaucracy etc.

Education under Provincial Autonomy:

The system of Diarchy was replaced by the Provincial Autonomy by the Government of India Act, 1935, which transferred the whole administration of the provinces to the elected Ministry. In 1937, it came into effect in eleven provinces of the British India, including that of Bombay. There was

¹³ Naik J. P. Nurullah Syed, (1974), *A Students' History of Education In India (1800-1973)*, McMillan India, Madras, p. 299.

¹⁴ Naik J. P. Nurullah Syed, (1974), *A Students' History of Education In India (1800-1973)*, McMillan India, Madras p. 361.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 341.

an expansion of university education and Bombay University was having 43090 students in the year 1946-47. But the percentage of the university students in relation to the total population was very less as compare to other countries; it shows the backwardness of India. It is clear from the report of the Nargent Commission,

¹⁵In the pre-war Germany, the proportion of the students in university to the entire population was 1 to 690, in Great Britain, 1 to 837, in United States 1 to 225, in Russia 1 to 300 and in India, 1 to 2206.¹⁶

Dalits, being socio-economically backward could not able to pay the huge fees of the university education and so in spite of having potential; it was very difficult for any dalit student to achieve the university education at the eve of the independence.

Another serious defect of the university education was that there were a smaller number of students acquiring education in scientific, technical, agricultural or professional branches. So, India was lacking in the trained personals to meet the needs of the country. This shows that the educational policy adopted by the British Government was not according to the needs of the country but was according to their colonial interests.

¹⁶ Naik J. P. Nurullah Syed, (1974), *A Students' History of Education In India (1800-1973)*, Madras, India, Madras, p. 368.