
Chapter – 08 History

Civilising the ‘Native’ Educating the Nation

- British rule affected Rajas and Nawabs, peasants and tribals.
 - British felt that they had a cultural mission, they had to ‘civilise the natives’, change their customs and values.
 - **How the British saw Education-The Tradition of Orientation:**
 - (i) In 1783, William Jones a linguist, was appointed as a junior judge at the Supreme Court that the company had set up.
 - (ii) William Jones started studying ancient Indians texts on law, philosophy, religion, politics, morality, arithmetic, medicine and other sciences.
 - (iii) Englishmen like Henry Thomas Colebrooke and Nathaniel Halhed were busy discovering the ancient Indian heritage, mastering Indian languages and translating Sanskrit and Persian works into English.
 - (iv) A Madrasa was set up in Calcutta in 1781 to promote the study of Arabic, Persian and Islamic law.
 - (v) In 1791, the Hindu College was established in Benaras to encourage the study of ancient Sanskrit texts that would be useful for the administration of the country.
 - **‘Grave Errors of the East’:**
 - (i) In early 19th century many British officials began to criticize the Orientalist version of learning.
 - (ii) James Mill was one of those who attacked the Orientalists.
 - (iii) According to him, the aim of education ought to be to teach what was useful and practical. So, Indians should be made familiar with the scientific and technical advances that the West had made, rather than with the poetry and sacred literature of the Orient.
 - (iv) Thomas Babington Macaulay, another critic of Orientalists, saw India as an uncivilized country that needed to be civilized.
 - (v) Macaulay emphasized the need to teach the English language. Following Macaulay’s initiative, the English Education Act of 1835 was introduced.
 - (vi) A decision was taken to make English the medium of instruction for higher education and to stop the promotion of Oriental institutions.
 - **Education for Commerce:**
 - (i) In 1854, Wood’s Despatch, an educational dispatch, was sent to India. Outlining the educational policy that was to be followed in India. It emphasized on the practical benefits of the system of European learning.
 - (ii) Wood’s Despatch argued that European learning would improve the moral character of Indians and make them truthful and honest and thus supply the company with civil servants who could be trusted and depended upon.
 - **What happened to the Local Schools:**
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- (i) In the 1830s William Adam, a Scottish missionary toured the district of Bengal and Bihar and was given charge by the company. To give report on the progress of education in vernacular schools.
 - (ii) Adam found that the system of education was flexible and local schools were known as pathshalas.
 - (iii) There were no fixed fee, no printed books, no separate school building, no benches or chairs, no blackboards, no system of separate classes, no roll-call registers, no annual examinations and no regular time-table.
 - (iv) Teaching process was oral and the guru decided what to teach , in accordance with the needs of the students.
- **New Routines, New Rules:**
 - (i) After 1854 the company decided to improve the system of vernacular education by introducing order within the system, imposing routines, establishing rules, ensuring regular inspections.
 - (ii) Company appointed a number of government pundits each in charge of looking after four to five schools.
 - (iii) Teaching was now to be based on textbooks and learning was to be tested through a system of annual examination.
 - (iv) Those Pathshalas which accepted the new rules were supported through government grants.
 - **The Agenda for a National Education:**
 - (i) Some Indians impressed with the development in Europe felt that western education would help to modernize India.
 - (ii) Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore reacted against western education.
 - **English Education has enslaved us:**
 - (i) English Education has enslaved us.
 - (ii) Mahatma Gandhi urged that colonial education create a sense of inferiority in the minds of Indians. It was sinful and it enslaved Indians, it cast an evil spell on them.
 - (iii) Mahatma Gandhi wanted an education that could help Indians to recover their sense or dignity and self-respect.
 - (iv) According to Mahatma Gandhi, Indian languages ought to be medium of teaching and the means to develop a person's mind and soul.
 - **Tagore's 'Abode of Peace':**
 - (i) Rabindranath Tagore stated Shantiniketan in 1901.
 - (ii) According to him, creative learning be encouraged only within a natural environment and hence set up his school 100 kilometres away from Calcutta in a rural setting.
 - (iii) He emphasized the need to teach Science and technology at Shantiniketan along with art, music and dance.
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