

Education in the Colonial Period



Discipline Course-1

Semester- 1

Paper : Colonialism in India

Lesson : Education in the Colonial Period

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12.1.INTRODUCTION.

Without an iota of a doubt, it would be worthy to express that Education is an instrument of *fiqr* (rationality), *zīqar* (thought and observation), *ijtihād* (critique and forming of independent opinions), and, above all, a tool for social transformation and economic development. It may be regarded as one of the most effective factors that has the ability to influence and condition people's perspectives and aspirations. It also challenges inequalities in the society and can preserve an egalitarian order.

However, history, through the growth of human civilization, is a witness to the fact that the benefits of education have been denied to the innumerable in India since antiquity, and thereby has been successful in creating two classes:

1. Privileged
2. Under-privileged (Bhattacharya :4)

12.1.1 EDUCATION IN PRE BRITISH INDIA

The prevalent inequality projected itself in a variety of ways, like, gender, caste, class, religion, economic status, et.al. But whatever the prejudices, they could not obliterate the right to education of the lower orders of *varnashramadharmā*, and even women. It is commendable to note that in many parts of pre-colonial India, education was not a domain of the *Brahmins* and *Kshatriyas* alone. It however, extended to the Muslims and to the Shudras and to some other castes as well; and although the gender-bias that dominated the Indian society up to the late 19th century, women in some regions of the country were educated within the confines of their homes, while in a few others, they went to school breaking the shackles of ignorance, tradition and backwardness. Noteworthy, however, is the fact that pre-colonial India had a deeply rooted wide-spread system of indigenous tools to enhance its tradition of learning and scholarship through *Gurukuls*, *Pathshalas*, *Makhtabs* and *Madrasas*. As a British scholar had stated –

'There is no country where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful an influence. From the simple poets of the vedic age to the Bengali philosophers of the present day, there has been an uninterrupted succession of teachers and scholars'.(Ghosh:6)

In the initial years of its stay in India, the British East-India Company – a trading, profit-making organization – showed very little interest in the social matters of India. In fact, its early policy had been one of non-intervention. Pragmatism demanded the continuation of

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the existing systems, as also that there was respect for the traditional Indian culture that expressed itself in Warren Hastings' Policy of Orientalism, that is, encourage the revival of Indian learning. At the advent of the 'white man's supremacy', as the British were making an attempt to take control of Bengal's administration, the higher education strictly was only restricted to tols and madarsas for the study of Arabic, Persian and classic Sanskrit. There was a pathetic and sad neglect of the vernaculars. Subjects like Mathematics, History, Political Philosophy, Economics or Geography never formed any part of the curriculum, and even natural science was completely ignored. The main thematic areas of higher education included only Literature, Grammar, Logic, Philosophy, Law and the religious books, while, on the other hand, the elementary education in *Pathshalas* and *Makhtabs*, consisted of the three R's along with the study of religious myths and legends. In comparison, Europe, in all these years, had seen giant leaps since the period of Renaissance, but Indians seemingly had little knowledge. Historians and scholars believe that India, with respect to education and intellectual progress, actually was passing through a period that was in sync with the middle-ages of Europe.



Warren Hastings – First
Governor General of India

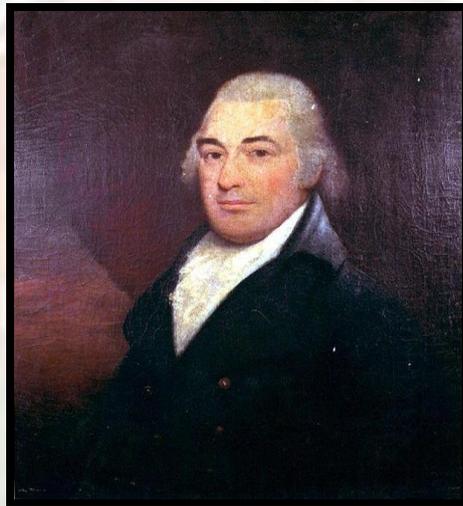
Figure 12.1

Source: en.wikipedia.org

12.1.2 ADVENT OF THE ENGLISH

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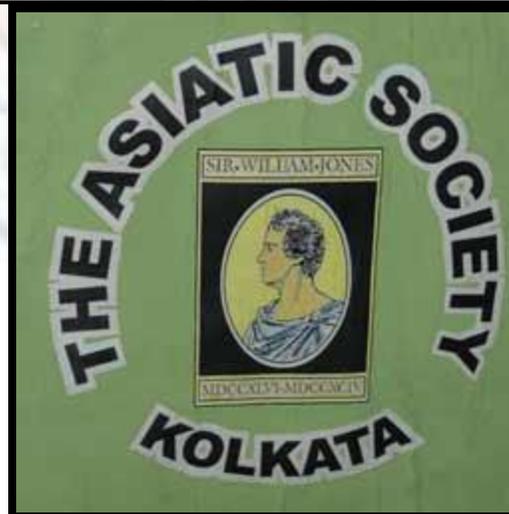
Warren Hastings, through his endeavors, tried attempting to learn about the Indian culture through a study of scriptures in the Sanskrit and Persian languages, and then put that knowledge to use in matters of governance. Hastings must be credited for laying the foundation of the Calcutta Madrassa. In the same spirit and enthusiasm, it was Sir William Jones who then founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta in 1784 and, thereafter a Sanskrit College was set up by the Resident Jonathan Duncan in 1792 in Benaras. However, even by then, nobody had anticipated any proposal or even a remote suggestion of establishing a system of education that would be under the control and supervision of the government.(Majumdar, Raychaudhari & Datta :810)



WILLIAM JONES

Figure 12.2

Source: commons.wikimedia.org



Logo of the Asiatic
Society

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Figure 12.3

Source: www.sasnet.lu.se



Figure 12.4

Source: www.asiaticsocietycal.com

Did You Know

What is ORIENTALISM?

French Communist Theorist Louis Althusser's student Michel Foucault's work is precariously rested at the intersection of innovations in theories of ideology, subjectivity and language, and has exerted an important influence on the shaping of post-modernist and post-structuralist ideas on post colonial studies. Foucault insisted on the idea that it is the condition of their existence that determines what human beings are. He attempted to analyze that the subject of human entity is not free and autonomous. It was his firm belief that ideas related to human beings and various other fields of knowledge are institutionalized and guided by 'the laws of a certain

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code of knowledge'.(Loomba:34-35). Knowledge, on the other hand, is not simple and innocent but is explicitly connected with the usage of power. Edward Said's Orientalism is based on this Foucaultian insight. Said's work asserts that 'knowledge about the orient', (Loomba :34-35) as produced and circulated in Europe, was an ideological accompaniment of the colonial power. Said's books is not about non-western cultures but about the western representation of these cultures, particularly in the scholarly discipline called Orientalism. The work also uses the concept of discourse to reorder the study of colonialism. It examines how the formal study of the Orient, along with key literary and cultural texts, shaped techniques and processes of viewing and analyzing, which in turn, contributed to the functioning of the colonial power, thus providing it stability and strength. Said also argued in his work that knowledge of the East could never be innocent or 'objective' as it was produced by human beings who were essentially embedded in colonial history and relationships (Loomba: .34-35). Orientalism is primarily concerned with how the 'Orient' was 'constructed' by western literature, travel writings and systems of studying the East, and not with how such a construction was received or dismantled by colonial subjects. But colonial authority, like any other, is legitimized through a process during which it constantly has to negotiate with the people it seeks to control, and therefore the presence of those people is a crucial factor in studying the authority itself.

Source: Loomba, Ania, 2005, Colonialism / Postcolonialism, Routledge, London, 2005.:34-35

12.2 INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Charles Grant, a civil servant of the Company was the first British to moot the idea of setting up a net work of schools for teaching English. He was of the opinion that a society like India was hit hard by the social abuses and the moral degradation of the people which were the outcome of dense and widespread ignorance, and which could possibly be removed only by means of education, first of all by education in English. Grant tried hard to convince the British House of Commons and the Court of Directors to his view on his return to England, but all in vain. Grant's advocacy of the English education to be introduced in India fell on deaf ears, before the Charter Act of 1793. for fear of political unrest.

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Charles
Grant

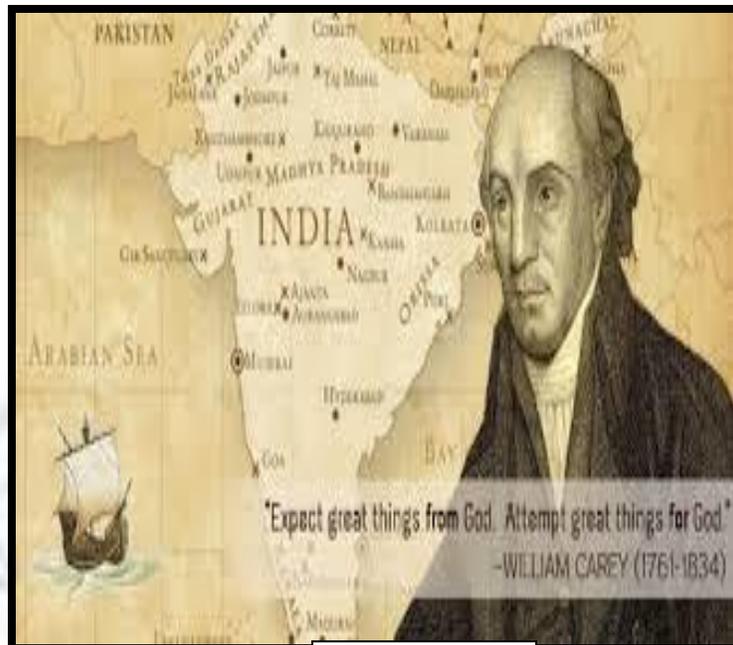
Figure 12.5

Source: www.peerage.com

12.2.1 ROLE OF MISSIONARIES

What Grant failed to do through the Government, the Christian Missionaries undertook as a convenient and handy tool to accomplish the task in Bengal and Madras. India owes the beginning of the English education to these missionaries and one name that stands apart is that of William Carey. While the Protestant Missionaries started working from the Danish station in Madras from the early 18th century, the Srirampur Danish settlement near Calcutta became, towards the end of the century, the refuge of the Baptist Missionary William Carey, along with Ward and Joshua Marshman. (Bandopadhyay:140). The three ran a printer and translated the Bible into local languages, especially Bangla. They also ran schools for boys and girls. The Company's Government tolerated such kind of Missionary activities, unless they offended the religious sensibilities of the local population.

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William Carey

Figure 12.6

Source: blogs.blueletterbible.org



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Department of Posts

India

Dr. William Carey Bicentenary 1793-1993

First Day Cover and Stamp

January 9, 1993

"The Department of Posts is privileged to issue a stamp on Dr. William Carey, who adopted India as his country and strived to serve her people. The stamp design depicts Dr. William Carey's portrait at his writing desk, against the backdrop of Serampore College."

Figure 12.7

Source: shantadaniel.wordpress.com

Did you Know

What Richard Fox Young wrote about William Carey ?

"In order to understand what he (Carey) wanted to do with India's sacred language, one must note that Carey has two reasons for being interested in its utilization for evangelism. First, he saw that Sanskrit acted as a stabilizing force upon the unsettled dialects amidst which he worked. Second, he had intransigently opposed Brahminical privileges, one of which was hegemony over Sanskrit."

Young wrote further –

"His intentions were also avowedly aggressive, a direct result of conflict with

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Brahmins. According to his plans, Hindu literature could be placed in disadvantageous juxtaposition with the Gospel, a task which would be done effectively by evangelists acquainted with the original sources of both religions."

Young has also quoted Carey himself to clarify the intentions, as saying –

"To gain the ear of those who are thus deceived it is necessary for them to believe that the speaker has a superior knowledge of the subject. In these circumstances, a knowledge of Sanskrit is valuable. As the person thus misled, perhaps the Brahmin, deem this a most important part of knowledge, if the advocate of truth be deficient therein, he labours against the Hill; presumption is all together against him."

Source: (Reference: Richard Fox Young, Resistant Hinduism: Sanskrit sources on anti-christian apologetics in early nineteenth – century India, P.33, published by The De Nobili Reseach Library, Vienna (1981)See, British Policies and Indian Culture at Orientalthane.com)

The example of William Carey was followed by not just the other missionaries but also by some liberal Indians. David Hare and Raja Ram Mohan Roy contributed significantly towards the establishment of several English schools including the Hindu College, that later developed into the Presidency College. When the Company's charter in 1830 was being renewed, the British parliament even asked the East India Company to take stock of the situation for the introduction of useful knowledge and religious and moral improvements. The Company also allocated one hundred thousand rupees per year for two specific purposes –

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1. To promote The example of William Carey was followed by not just the other missionaries but also by some liberal Indians. David Hare and Raja Ram Mohan Roy contributed significantly towards the establishment of several English schools including the Hindu College, that later developed into the Presidency College. When the Company's charter in 1830 was being renewed, the British parliament even asked the East India Company to take stock of the situation for the introduction of useful knowledge and religious and moral improvements. The Company also allocated one hundred thousand rupees per year for two specific purposes –learning amongst natives of India.
2. To encourage knowledge of the sciences amongst the locals.

It was unfortunate that no important or desired results could be achieved. It was only around 1823 that a General Committee of the Public Instruction was appointed in Bengal, that was clearly dominated by Orientalists. They planned to establish

1. Sanskrit college at Calcutta
2. Two Oriental colleges at Agra and Delhi
3. Patronize tols and madrassas as institutions of indigenous learning (Ibid,p.141).

Against all this, Raja Ram Mohan Roy protested by giving a petition to the Governor General, Lord Amherst, that read, "...the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But...it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction..."(Majumdar, Raychaudhari & Datta :811). Roy actually was of a genre who believed that modernization of India would come through the English language / education and dissemination of the knowledge of Western sciences.

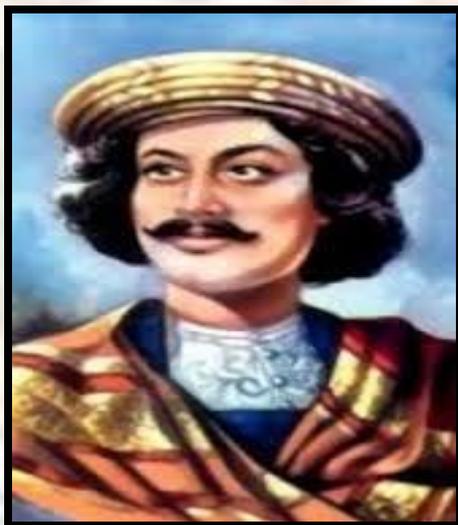
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David Hare

Figure 12.8

Source: calcutta-kolkata-asim.blogspot.com



Raja Ram Mohan
Roy

Father of Modern
India and Founder
of Brahma Samaj

Figure 12.9

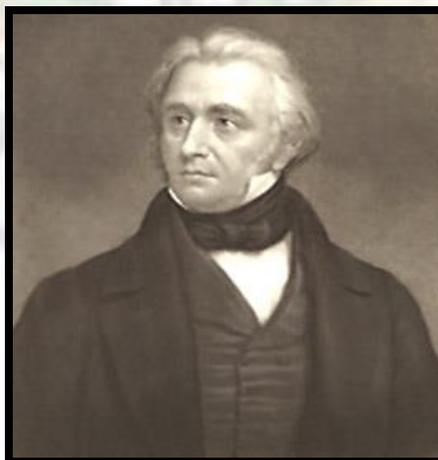
Source: www.helloraipur.com
Accessed 8.19pm on August 12, 2013.

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12.2.2 BENTINCK'S ERA

As William Bentinck, a Utilitarian reformist, took over as Governor General in 1828, the scales began to favor the Anglicists. Another remarkable entry was that of Thomas Belington Macaulay who got appointed as the law member in his council in 1834. Macaulay was soon given the position of the President of the General Committee on Public Instruction, and on February 2, 1835 he issued his famous MINUTE ON INDIAN EDUCATION. This document actually became the blueprint for the introduction of English education in India. Education had thus assumed a special place within the colonial civilizing mission in India. Who can forget the famous statement of Lord Macaulay about India in 1835 in the British Parliament:

"I have traveled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such calibre, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage, and, therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native self-culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation."



Lord William
Bentinck

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Source : www.indianetzone.com

Did You Know
What is Civilizing Missions?
<p>Civilizing Mission, nineteenth century expression, is clearly a reflection of European colonialism. In the 19th and even the 20th century era of imperialism, the phrase was an ever – shifting set of ideas and practices that were used to justify and legitimize the establishment and continuation of overseas colonies. To India, during the British Raj, the civilizing mission meant various things, like</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Bringing the benefits of British culture2. Free trade and capitalism3. Law and order4. Good Government <p>The idea in propaganda was that the British rule would supposedly bring to an end the conditions of chronic warfare, violence and disorder prevalent in India and would institute peace and order in the form of Pax Britannica. "At its core, the civilizing mission was about morally and materially 'uplifting, improving and later developing the supposedly backward and rude people of India' to make them more civilized and more modern." (Watt & Mann:1) The European civilization claimed to be the universal or the 'silent referent' in all narratives of development and the transition to modernity, and modern civilization in the form of European liberalism and capitalism.</p>
<p>Source: (Watt & Mann :1)</p>

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12.3 EDUCATION POLICY

The education policy of the Company's government so introduced, critics asserted, ignored the education of the masses and also neglected indigenous village schools that imparted elementary education. The Anglicists, it is said, believed in the Downward Filtration theory which held that knowledge would percolate from the educated classes to the masses through the independent effort of the former (Desai: 134).

12.3.1 MACAULAY'S MINUTE



Lord T.B.
Macaulay

Figure 12.11

Source : www.telegraph.co.uk

The famous Minute of Macaulay was full of contempt for Oriental learning, thus giving the Vernaculars a considerable back seat. The Minute asserted that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. (Bandopadhyay:142). Macaulay, therefore, advocated education in European literature and sciences inculcated through the medium of English language for the Indians. He further argued that such an education would create "a class of persons 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." (Ghosh :31).

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Macaulay's proposals were immediately endorsed by Bentinck in an executive order on March 07, 1835. This was the inauguration of New Era in the history and life of the Indian Education system in which a metropolitan country was assigned the task of producing knowledge, while the colonized community shouldered the responsibility for its reproduction, replication and even dissemination. The shift was herculean: from the language to the literature, it was meant only for 'the rich, the learned, the men of business', as C. E. Trevalyan observed, that they were the ones who had the eagerness, the means and sufficient leisure at their disposal. .

Let us see what was the net impact of MACAULAY'S MINUTE as being meritorious or demeritorious. The **merits** can be identified as -

A clear cut picture of the national system of education in India emerged.

1. The system proved very helpful in promoting the objectives for which it was planned.
3. English schools began to be established.
4. English became the medium of instruction.
5. Western arts and sciences became popular.
6. Filtration theory of education emerged.

As far as the issue of **demerits** is concerned, they may be identified as -

1. Indian culture and philosophy receded to the background
2. Vernacular languages began to be neglected
3. Mass education was neglected
4. Western culture made rapid strides.
5. Arabic and Sanskrit languages found very few takers
6. Arabic, maktabas and Sanskrit pathshalas saw gradual disappearance

Macaulay's Minute asserted that the great objective of the British Government was promotion of European literature in India and the funds needed for such work would be well appropriated for English education only. Although the minutes conveyed that no college or school of native learning would see a decline, yet the introduction of English language altered many theories. It is valid to note that utilitarians, like Mill, still favoured the vernacular education as being more suited for the Indians. In a text published in 1817, he challenged the myth about India's economic and cultural supremacy which he felt was an imagination of men like William Jones. He actually felt that India only needed a wise Government that could promulgate good legislation. His efforts established a law

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commission in 1833 which drew up an Indian Penal Code in 1835. However it could not become an act until the year 1860.

Summary

12.3.2 IMPACT OF POLICY

Bentinck's proclamation was the first declaration of the educational policy of the British government which it wanted to adopt in this country. Bentinck was greatly influenced by the views of Macaulay. The orientalist lost their battle. With Bentinck's proclamation following results were clearly visible:

- i. The aim of education in India were defined by the British
- ii. Type of education envisaged for Indian people was spelt
- iii. The promotion of western arts was acknowledged
- iv. The printing of oriental works was to be stopped
- v. New grants or stipends to students of oriental institutions were to be stopped in future
- vi. The proclamation promised to supply government with English educated Indian servants , cheap but capable at the same time
- vii. The proclamation gave impetus to the growth of new learning.

Vernaculars, in the meanwhile, as the medium of education suffered a defeat. William Adam recommended improvement of vernacular education through indigenous village schools, but his report was ignored for being impractical, and the offer expensive. However, Thomason, a civilian in the north-western provinces, experimented with vernacular elementary schools successfully; following which Lord Dalhousie recommended its extension to Bengal and Bihar. Charles Wood's Education Dispatch of 1854 signaled a similar shift, and recommended the extension of vernacular elementary education.

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VALUABLE INFORMATION

Education was promoted for the 'economy' of the E.I. Company.

Though it is evident that the government was shifting its focus towards elementary mass education, one could clearly visualize a concern for the political economy of trading empire that was based on the idea of division of labour. If, on the one hand, a smaller number of highly educated Indians were required to man the subordinate positions in the administration, on the other hand, the wider population had to be given 'useful and practical knowledge' so that they become good workers who have the capacity to develop the vast resources of the empire, and may also become good consumers, who value the superior quality of British goods that flood the markets. Colonial education's first priority was to stabilize and strengthen the colonial rule. Further boosting the higher education, three universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were created on the model of the University of London in 1857.



Fig 12.12

University of Calcutta

Source: en.wikipedia.org
Accessed at: 8.28 pm on August13,2013.

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Image

THE UNIVERSITY OF BOMBAY.



University of Bombay

Figure 12.13

Source: en.wikipedia.org
Accessed at: 8.33 pm on August 13, 2013

Image

THE UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS.



University of Madras 1857

Figure 12.14

Source: Source: www.alagappauniversity.in
Accessed at: 8.40 pm on August 13, 2013

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12.4 CHARLES WOOD'S EDUCATION DISPATCH POLICY

Charles Woods' Education Dispatch of 1854 laid the foundation for the structure of modern education system in India. The Dispatch was also referred as the Magna Carta of Indian Education due to the elaborate task it set before the government. The Dispatch clearly stated the objectives for organizing the educational system in India. These were:

1. Spreading Western Culture
2. Securing properly trained servants for public administration
3. Doing their duty to the sovereign by the Indian subjects (Desai :136).

The Dispatch also insisted –

1. English must be used as the medium of instruction and the collegiate stage
2. Secondary education to be imparted both through English and through Modern Indian Languages
3. Modern Indian languages to be encouraged with a view to making them the media in the course of time for imparting higher education.

Indian critics believe that the last two clauses never received adequate consideration. Nevertheless, the growth of education gathered momentum after 1854.



Sir Charles Wood

Figure 12.15

Source: www.isfdb.org
Accessed at 8.50 pm on August 13, 2013

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The Indian Education Commission in 1882 tried unsuccessfully to resolve the problem of duality in education. It made efforts to bring about a balance between higher English Literary Education for a few and Elementary and Technical Education for the masses. It believed in education for all. It also instituted 'special funds' for the education of backward communities. By 1885 there were, in India, an English-educated class of about 55,000 natives. But in 1881-82 out of a total population of more than 195 million, only a little more than two million had attended elementary schools (Bandyopadhyay:144). Backward Groups like Dalits continued to be excluded from state schools as their presence would drive away the higher caste pupils. Colonial bureaucracy actively supported this exclusion.

12.4.1 WHY ENGLISH EDUCATION? MANY REASONS

From the basic idea of proselytizing the Indians to imparting education to the natives as a moral duty, and from Indianizing the subordinate positions in the administrative structure to inculcating a spirit of loyalty among the Indian subjects, the English education did it all. It were the Hindu upper-caste males from middle and lower income groups, who were predominantly attracted to English education due to its functional utility as:

1. It was a means of survival in difficult times.
2. It was a tool for achieving economic prosperity.
3. It came handy in getting power.

Not only this, but as material expectations dwindled, knowledge as power became the best weapon for confronting an authoritarian colonial state throughout the various phases of the Indian National Movement.

12.5 EDUCATION AND HIGHER CIVIL SERVICE DURING BRITISH RULE

Let us examine something contemporary. Do you know that the present civil service system in India had its origin in the arrangement developed by the East India Company. The employees of that company were called civil servants but they were all traders, their job being mercantile in nature. Their work was entirely commercial but gradually their trader's role was replaced by responsibilities. It was not till the beginning of the 19th century that

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the Government was compelled to state publicly that commercial knowledge was no longer necessary. It was stated that not only was mercantile knowledge unnecessarily, but the Indian civil servants invested with the powers of magistracy were bound by an oath to abstain from every commercial pursuit. Lord Wellesley wrote on August 18, 1800, to dispense justice to millions of people of various languages, manners, usages and religions, to administer a vast and complicated system of revenue..., to maintain civil order..., to discharge the functions of magistrates, judges, ambassadors and Governors of provinces, these are now the duties of the large proportions of the civil servants of the company (Maheshwari :18). As the East India company acquired administrative duties in 1765, Lord Cornwallis reorganized the civil service whereby the civil servants were not to engage in trade but to hold principal administrative posts with a handsome salary. The mode of recruitment was patronage that vested in the Directors. The higher civil service was known as the Covenanted Civil Service. A covenant was a contract that spelt out the obligations and prerogatives of a civil servant. These services were open only to the Europeans and if Indians were lucky to find patrons, at best they could find entry only in the un-covenanted service which was of a lower order. It was in 1853 that the British Government decided to do away with patronage in favour of a open competitive exam as the mode of public recruitment. The first such examination was held in London in 1855. As English was becoming India's official language, Indians began to learn English to prepare for a secure career and the growing number of English educated youth expectedly led to a demand for employment of Indians in Civil service. Queen Victoria, in 1858 assured complete equality between Indians and Europeans in matter of Public recruitment. However, the Royal assurance remained a dead letter as to undertake the long voyage to London was not easy or practical for most Indians. Also racial consideration always effected public recruitment. The first ever Indian, Satyendra Nath Tagore, could enter the covenanted civil service only in 1864. In 1879, a separate civil service, called the Statutory Civil Service was created to provide avenues of public employments to Indians. Nomination to the service, for posting within the province exclusively, was made by the provincial Government subject to the approval of the Secretary of State for India. To attract Indians to the service, one - sixth of the covenanted post were transferred to it.

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12.6 SUMMARY

The present article traces the history of the growth and development of English education in colonial India. Right from the days when the Christian missionaries landed on the Indian soil, the effort is to explore as to how the entire education system was altered in totality. Drawn from a huge reservoir of knowledge based on colonial history, the article is value – loaded for students to have an insight into how English language, as introduced by Macaulay and the Education Dispatch of Charles Wood, changed the future discourse of the Indian Education System.

12.7 Exercises

- 1 Describe the background in which English education was introduced in India by the British.
- 1.1 Write a brief note on Warren Hastings and his idea of Orientalism?
- 1.2 Discuss the contribution of William Carey to the spread of English education.
- 1.3 What is 'Civilising Mission' and how is the idea of education connected to it?
- 1.4 Write an essay on Macaulay's Education Policy.
- 1.5 Do you agree that the spread of English Language has created a global community or is it a sign of Imperial benevolent gesture? Give reasons for your answer.

12.8 Glossary

1. **Brahmins:** The highest rank of social classes, in Hinduism.
2. **Gurukuls:** A place of pupil learning who have a common vision, and are bound by similar disciplinary rules.
3. **Kshtriyas:** Warrior class including people in security and military positions.
4. **Madrassa:** a Muslim school, college, or university that is often part of a mosque.
5. **Makhtabs:** Muslim elementary school.
6. **Pathshalas:** School
7. **Shudras:** A hindu of the lowest caste

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8. **Varnashramadharma:** *Varnashrama-dharma* – duties performed according to the system of four *varnas* (social divisions) and four ashrams (stages in life).
9. **Vedic age:** A period during which the Vedas, the oldest scriptures of Hinduism, were composed.

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