



A GLIMPSE ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: FROM ANCIENT TO POST INDEPENDENT PERIOD

Kasturi Roy Chatterjee

Assistant Professor in History , Sundarban Mahavidyalaya , Kakdwip.

ABSTRACT:

Education is an elementary right for children ageing from six to fourteen in India now and higher education is an elementary need for the development of the nation. In my paper I have thus tried to focus on the point that higher education for attaining knowledge had always being given importance in our country. India since ancient days had stressed on spiritual enlightenment of human which was restricted to certain classes only. With the coming of colonial rule came education for all which helped in the development of Nation as a whole and the process is still ongoing.

KEYWORDS: Brahmanical, Buddhist, *Brahma vadini*, *Rishika*, *Upanayan*, *Gurukul*, *Acharaya*, *Samavartan*, *Vihara*, *Navya Nyaya*, *Sanghas*, *Maktab*, *Madrasah*.

INTRODUCTION

In India higher education has passed through different period's viz. Ancient, Medieval, Colonial and Post –Independence. In this journey of higher education several changes had taken place which acted as an important agency of social change and transformation, which finally helped in the development of a country. In my paper I will try to show how higher education in the past had tried to brought developmental changes and what type of changes. I will also try to sketch a picture of what type of changes do the higher education of today need to transfer our country from a developing nation to a developed nation very easily and quickly, so that we can bring about the changes in the higher education that our nation needs to move forward.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE ANCIENT PERIOD:

Higher education in India is not a recent phenomenon. It has a long historical root through which the modern system of education had evolved. The institutions of higher education in our country are the most important agencies to bring about social changes. In Ancient India, the nature of education was highly spiritualistic. Educational aim was then determined by the conception of life. Thus we see education was then self realization or attainment of Brahma. In ancient India, there were two broad trends in educational systems-Brahmanical education and Buddhist education.¹ (Ghosh S.C.2001) Brahmanical education developed during the Vedic period.² (Jha D. M.1991) Vedic literature was considered as the main basis of education. Verbal education was imparted in such a way that it could be preserved for years. Women enjoyed equal status with men in all spheres of education during the Rig Vedic period. Those who had attained highest education were called '*Brahma vadini*' and achieved the status of '*Rishika*'. Women also were given practical and useful education such as spinning, weaving etc. The Vedic education was mostly psychological verbal and meditative. Wards are sent to '*Gurukul*' or '*Acharaya's*' house to receive education, just



after 'Upanayan' ritual. The Gurukuls were fully free from the Government control and influence and education was imparted under Acharya's own way. Teachers of the Vedic Age were men of highest maturity in society from the point of knowledge and spiritual progress. The students put forward their doubts before the teacher and he tried to remove them as well. Side by side, meditation and self study was also encouraged. At completion of education 'Samavartan' rituals was performed which was like the convocations of the universities of present days.

The Post- Vedic period witnessed the crystallization of the 'Varna' system. During this period austerity and sacrifices had taken a prominent place. Brahman books are second to Vedas. Women still were educated but they were considered to be taught only by nearby relations like father, brother or uncle. Naturally therefore religious and secular training became possible only in case of girls of rich and cultured families.³ (Altekar. A.S.1994) In this period as Jha rightly points out that the category of prince raise from seven to sixteen.⁴(Jha.D.M 1991) Thus higher education was subservient to the requirements of priesthood and ritualistic religion. In the Post- Vedic period, 'Brahmans', 'Aranyakas' and "Upanishads' were mostly composed which helped in the higher education. The expression Upa-ni-shad literally means sitting down near and thus indicates confidential sessions when the secret or esoteric doctrines were taught to selected pupils towards the close of studentship. The intellectual evolution of Upanishad resulted in the development of 'Vyakarana', 'Shiksha', 'Kalpa', 'Chhanda' and 'Jyotish'. In the early Classical period (600-300 B.C.) we observe elaboration of rituals related to education. Education started with the ceremony of 'Vidyarambha' , theoretically twice born castes were allowed to receive education but in practice it was monopolized by the Brahmins.⁵(Jha.D.M 1991) In 'Arthashastra' details of the studentship of the Kshatriyas were given but it may be assumed that the society does not give such opportunities to study to the Baishyas and Shudras .

EDUCATION IMPARTED BY THE BUDDHIST:

The nature of Buddhist education was religious and secular. The Buddhist Text includes not only 'Vinaya Sutta' or 'Abhidhamma Sutta' which were taught orally but also other subjects such as Astrology, Witch- Craft, Medicine, Music etc.⁶(Ghosh. S.C.2001) Basically Buddhist education was religious yet occupational studies were not neglected altogether. Mahabhagga mentions of weaving, spinning, tailoring etc. In this system 'Viharas' functioned as residential schools. The relationship between a teacher and a student was very close. The teachers and students both live together. Education was divided in to two categories Primary and Higher education. The prohibition of women in Sanghas by Lord Buddha shows that theoretically it was restricted but Buddha himself allowed her step- mother to enter Sangha with 500 companions. The rules of the Sangha were hard enough for women if they were admitted. Buddhist Sangha had given attention to the cultural development and social uplift of women. High spiritual training was imparted to women who wanted to stay back to the Viharas. Takshilla was the most famous Buddhist seat of higher learning. It was not an organized university rather it may be called an educational centre where different special subjects were taught. It was the main centre of medicine. Only higher studies were conducted in Takshilla, students above the age of sixteen was admitted in this study centre. Sarnath during this period was also an important centre of learning. Nalanda became the centre of higher education of both Buddhism and Jainism alike. The Vihara though belonged to Mahayana Buddhism yet Hinayana scriptures were also taught here. Students from far and wide came here to study Buddhist scripts. Vikramshila was established by Dharmapala of Pala dynasty in 8th Century.

Some of the Brahmanical schools of the period also flourished at the same time in Kashi. The 'Pundits' of Kashi were famous though no public institutions were made as such, yet education of highest extent was given by them. A centre of education was at Odantpuri where there was a big library of both Buddhist and Brahmanical books. In the Upanishadic age Mithila became a prominent seat of Brahmanical system of education. There was a Nyaya Vidyalyaya too. The pundits of this centre gave a new shape to Nyaya Shastra named Navya Nyaya . In Nadia there were three centres of education namely Navadweep, Shantipur and Gopalpur. Sometimes students here studied for twenty years, these schools gave a new line of Nyaya which was followed by many scholars. In Kanchi both Brahmanical and Buddhist study centres flourished. In

ancient India we thus see excellent centres of higher education which had contributed to the search of truth and for the knowledge of 'Atman' (individual) and 'Brahma' (soul).

EDUCATION IN MEDIEVAL INDIA:

The medieval period in India had passed through a major social and cultural synthesis. Both Sufism and Bhakti ideology played a crucial role in the process of integration of two diverse cultures. This does not mean that with the coming of the Muslim rule in India education of the prevalent era came to an end. It is true when Islam came to India and settled down to rule the people many among the Hindus suffering from castes and disabilities accepted the religion of Prophet Muhammad. Many upper class Hindus not only learnt Arabic and Persian to hold important position in the administration, but some of them converted themselves to Islam to do so.⁷ (Ghosh.S.C. 2001) The Brahmanical learning of the period was mainly among the priestly class. Nadia, Mithila, Benaras remained as centres of higher education of Hindus. Nadia became famous for its specialized study of Logic. The most radical feature of medieval Nadia was that the Non Brahmins including the trading castes had free access to Sanskrit. Many temple colleges were also found in early medieval India.⁸ (Alam Muzaffar 1991) The Buddhist educational institutions faced a severe blow. During Ikhtiyar'l-Din-Muhammed-Bakhtiyar-Khilji's invasion along with Hindu temples, Buddhist Viharas were also destroyed. The libraries of Nalanda and Vikramshila (C.1193) was burned resulting in the disappearance of Buddhist Learning.

In Medieval India there were three main institutions of Islam teaching through which Knowledge was acquired Maktab, Madrasah and Khanqa. Maktab for elementary education, Madrasah for higher education and religious education and theology was discussed at Khanqah, the birthplace of spiritualism and Sufism in Islam.⁹ (Ghosh.S.C.2001) Although there was purdah system in this period yet Islam did not oppose to education up to a definite age but thereafter the education of women were stopped. Maktab and Madrasah were generally attached to the mosque and were supported or aided by the government. Many cities played a prominent part in imparting higher education. Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Jaunpur etc. became centres of higher learning.¹⁰ (Dongerkerly S.R.) Thus the traditional Hindu and Muslim education mainly spiritual, religious and philosophical in nature continued before the coming of the Europeans.

HIGHER EDUCATION UNDER THE COLONIAL RULE:

It must be however accepted that with coming of the Europeans came the modern system of education. The Christian missionaries played an important role in spreading western education in India. Portuguese saint St. Francis Xavier, was the first to start a centre of higher education in Cochin. Many primary schools were set at Goa, Bombay, Daman Diu, Ceylon, Chittagong and Hoogly to teach the European students along with the local children. The first graduate college in Goa was opened in 1575. The Dutch started schools for their children but had no serious religious propaganda. They also opened a college in Ceylon but as they did not stay here for long there educational attempts came to an end. The French had opened their institutions for all Indians and the education was imparted by the local teachers through local language, but teaching of Christianity was essential. Two German Bishops named Zigenbalg and Plustschan took help of the Danes for promoting Christian knowledge. They distributed a large number of Bibles translated in Tamil to local people and had translated Grammar and Dictionary in Tamil. Thus the missionaries made a good deal of attempt for the propagation of education in India with the object of spreading Christianity. In 1600 came here the British East India Company. The English did not make any attempt at the beginning to impose a western style of education on its Indian subjects for a long time.¹¹ (Basu Aparna.1991) It was only on June 3rd 1814, the East India Company came out with an announcement to spend about a lakh of rupees for Indian system of education as their motive was to know of the country and come nearer to the people through their vernaculars, In 1833, a new Charter was issued which intended at the spread of Indian as well foreign system of education.

In 1833, John Adams, who succeeded Lord Hastings temporarily as the Governor-General, appointed a general committee to decide how the fund of one lakh rupees accumulated so far under the Charter Act of

1813 could be spent for education in India. Two schools of thought emerged, the one led by H.H.Wilson which supported oriental learning and the other led by Trevelyan and later on strengthened by Macaulay who stood for English education. The exponents of the English school, especially Lord Macaulay argued that Arabic and Sanskrit were not suitable for judicial administration. Moreover the spread of English education would train the Indians to understand the English system and it would provide cheap Indian clerks. He also argued that the spread of English culture would develop a demand for the English goods in this country and give great impetus to the English industries.

Macaulay was appointed the chairman of the Committee of Public instruction by Lord William Bentinck. Macaulay Minute came on 1835; it championed the cause of the English. Macaulay Minute was designed to create a class of Indians in blood but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect. The years in between 1836-1853 witnessed a considerable progress in education. The Anglicists founded twelve new schools in Bengal Presidency alone, a Medical College at Calcutta, an Engineering college was established at Roorkee was established by Lord Dalhousie. Sir Charles Wood the president of the Board of Control drafted his Despatch of 1854. The idea of establishing universities in Indian model was promoted in Wood's Despatch. It has been described as the Magna Carta of English education in India.¹² (Power.K.B. 1995) This led to the establishment of Universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay in 1857 following the model of University of London. Curzon's Government was the first to apply a check to free education. It introduced a system of control which was extended to all grades of education from primary school to Universities.¹³ (Misra.B.B. 1961) Thus education was shifted from few too many people.

Hunter's Commission of 1882 made various recommendations for higher education mainly recommended for grants in aid to the colleges, keeping in mind the efficiency and local needs. It also emphasized on secular and physical education. Most important of all was that Hunter Commission was pained at the pitiable condition of women education of the time recommended for overall development and expansion of women education. It also talks of Muslim education and education of Harijans and Backward class. The commission emphasized that though any sort of religious education was to be excluded, yet some arrangements should be made to satisfy the popular demand regarding the development of sense of right or wrong among the students. Majority of its recommendations were adopted by the government with the result that with the devolution of control to the local bodies, the British element in the teaching and inspecting of departments were reduced.

One of the greatest achievements of Lord Curzon writes Frazer lies in the field of education. He felt that Macaulay Minute or Woods Despatch had helped much for the education of the mass. He realized that an ideal university should be expanding and encouraging knowledge and education and also it should build the character of the students. So for necessary enquiries of the condition of the universities he made a University Commission in 1902 and leading to the Universities Act on 1904. This was the law that for the first time that pointed out the defects of the Indian education. They may be summed up as such that the general aim of higher education is nothing but get an employment but due to this the scope of education has become narrower. Undue importance is attached to examination system. The courses are absolutely bookish and very little attention is paid towards intellectual development. Industrial and technological education is not given importance. Vocational education with the aim of benefitting the public is not properly attended. The Government of India in the time of Lord Chelmsford appointed the Saddler Commission for searching the problems of Calcutta University. Although it was appointed to solve the problems of Calcutta University but the report made a comparative study of Indian education from secondary stage to the University education as a whole. The recommendations in regard to the vocational, technological and professional courses were very useful afterwards also. It was an inspiration to the country. Next was the Hartog Committee Report of 1929. This Committee tried to make a balance between men and women of the society. It recommended for women to be kept in the planning of the development of education so that their needs are to be properly looked after. Compulsory education of women at the primary level must be looked for, arrangement of educational facility for women at every level etc. The Abbot and Wood Report, 1937 dealt with education on two parts general education and its organization and the vocational education

and its organization in the country. One of the landmarks in the history of higher education was the report of Sergeant Commission on post-war educational development in India in 1944. The report has suggested the three years degree course, appointment of University Grants Commission, tutorial system, improvement of research education of adults, training of teachers etc. the Sergeant Commission Report thus was the first attempt to formulate a policy of education in India.¹⁴ (Ghosh.D.K. 1983) In 1947 thus we observe that India had eighteen Universities with a total student strength of 0.2 million.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE POST INDEPENDENCE ERA:

Higher education in independent India has faced many changes. In 1948 a University Commission was made under the chairmanship of Sir. S. Radhakrishnan, it recommended for higher education to meet the demand for scientific, technical and other human power needed for the socio-economic development of independent India. The report was considered by CABE (Central Advisory Board Of Education) in 1950, and most of its recommendations were accepted through inclusion of education in concurrent list was rejected. The University Grants Commission came up for coordination and development of universities of India. Women education at all level was given importance. The third Five-Year plan observed that 'Education is the most important single factor in achieving rapid development and technological progress and in creating a new social order based on values of freedom, social justice, and equal opportunities.'¹⁵ (The Third five Year Plan.1961)The Central Government in 1965 under the chairmanship of Dr, S, Kothari (Chairman, University Grants Commission) set a national pattern of education and on the general principle and policies of education at all stages and in all aspects.¹⁶(Report of Education Commission.1985) The Report made very important recommendations covering all the aspects of future development of national education. It stressed on the necessity of science based education. It visualized education as an instrument for the nation's progress, security and welfare. The Report stressed further on the radical improvement in the quality and standard of higher education and research it was said that expansion of education was needed to meet skilled manpower requirement for the building of the Nation. The recommendations of the Kothari Commission were discussed in both houses of the parliament and there from emerged the first National Policy of Education.¹⁷ (Ghosh. S.C. 2000). The recommendations of Kothari Commission though diluted at every stage yet it paved the way for the first basic framework of governmental action. The new national policy of education appeared in 1986 which stressed not only to skilled manpower but also for developing crucial values. The policy tried to implement education for all and inculcate among young generation Co-operation and peaceful co-existence. The policy indicates a major thrust in higher education incorporating expansion of higher education, improving the quality of higher education and increased relevance and job oriented higher education.

HIGHER EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NATION

There is no doubt that the development of a nation depends upon its mode of education. The development of nation depends upon the rise of the educational level of common citizen. There should be present a class of educated persons representing every sections of the society. In a democratic country like India, hence the main function of education is to grant each Indian the greatest possible opportunities for the growth of all his powers.

India's higher education covers all the post-secondary education beyond class twelve in all subjects including professional streams such as medical, engineering and technology, agriculture etc. They are meant for the knowledge for the of greater depth of an individual subject. The Indian higher education system is growing very fast irrespective of various challenges but there is no reason that these Challenges cannot be overcome. With the help of new-age learning tools, it is easy for country like India to overcome these problems and bring a paradigm shift in the country's higher education sector. With such a vibrant country with huge population properly educated, the possibilities are endless. If knowledge is imparted using advanced digital teaching and learning tools, and society is made aware of where we are currently lagging behind, our country can easily emerge as one of the most developed nations in the world. There are

opportunities for strategic engagement and capacity building in higher education leadership. A student even can enter to the field of research in an specific subject. The Indian education system have recently gave more attention on the stem fields i.e. sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics. One of the key proposals in India's Twelfth Five Year Plan called for "establishing twenty innovative and research Universities', and fifty centres of excellence, training and research in science , technology, social science and humanities"¹⁸ (British Council 2014). According to the report of British Council, The OECD predicts that in 2020, 200 million of the worlds 25-34 years old will be university graduates and forty percent of these will be from China and India 'By 2030 the two countries together are expected to supply more than sixty percent of workers in the fields related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics for G-20 countries'¹⁹(OECD, 2015). The Indian government is trying hard for the rapid expansion of higher education so that it can meet the demand of the future.

CONCLUSION

We see from ancient times Indian Universities were renowned seats of higher learning. It attracted scholars from outside. During the medieval era education of higher learning continued. In the Colonial era however the British Government consciously does not use higher education for sustainable development, though many policies were framed by them till 1916 and the colleges formed under them only offered degree courses and it was only after 1920 that the post- graduate courses started and research departments developed. Since independence numbers of Universities and Colleges increased in numbers and higher education in all arenas got importance. Most of the India's best universities are public. Some of the highly regarded universities are Indian Institutes of Technology, the Institutes of Management etc. In its 12th year plan, The Indian government declared its intention to improve academic quality, allow more autonomous governance to the University system and offer better financing for research and infrastructure. It is thus evident much thought has been given in identifying the problems of faced by higher education in India. This rapid growth of higher education however does not hides the stark inequality that prevails access to higher education. There are many basic problems faced by higher education system in India. These include Lower level of teaching quality, Financing of higher education, More concentrated on theories and rather than practical knowledge, Traditional methods of teaching, Privatization, Inadequate facilities and infrastructure Quota system.²⁰ (Mrs. Chahal Mukesh.April 2015).The total enrollment of students in higher education is not equal, the rate of higher education in all States are not equal. Their still prevails caste, class, religion and language discrimination in higher education. There thus remain needs to re-examine and replace and implement new policies for the extension of higher education which is very much needed in the nation building process. Indian Universities of world class education should increase their collaboration of studies with foreign Universities taking advantage of the globalization process. To achieve that goal it must adopt uniform international syllabus in its educational institutions. Higher education must be for the flowering of personality but not for the suppression of creativity or natural skill. In the globalized world of today there are various opportunity for the educated people. As a result business process outsourcing (BPO) activities will increase That is the way that India can be developed for peace, prosperity and progress by able and skilful men. Thus it may be concluded, that over the period of time, growth have been take place in higher education in India in terms of institutions, enrolments etc. but it is not sufficient. Indian economy is facing various challenges regarding higher education, which need to overcome through appropriate policy formation and their effective implementation.

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Kasturi Roy Chatterjee

Assistant Professor in History , Sundarban Mahavidyalaya , Kakdwip.