



# Evolution of Educational Movements in India: Through Historical Perspectives

Tahseen Bilgrami

Human Resource Development Centre, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, India

Corresponding author: drtahseenbilgrami2008@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

The development of education is a continuum, which gathers its past history into a living stream, flowing through the present into future. It is essential to see the historical background of educational development understanding the present and visualize the future. The history of education in the Indian subcontinent began with teaching of traditional elements such as Indian religions, Indian mathematics, Indian logic at early Hindu and Buddhist centres of learning such as Taxila and Nalanda before the Islamic era. Islamic education became ingrained with the establishment of the Islamic empires in the Indian subcontinent in the Middle Ages while the coming of the Europeans later brought western education to colonial India. A series of measures continuing throughout the early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ultimately laid the foundation of education in the Republic of India. Hence, the present paper aims to briefly look at educational developments from the ancient 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC to the modern period. The development of the education system in India can be broadly divided into four periods. While discussing about the periods, a brief attempt has been made to see the evolution of education from 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC to the modern period, focus is made on the movements of education, the phases of National Education Movements, the role of state (king), religious heads, institutions and people and its accessibility to the larger community.

**Keywords:** Development, evolution, literature, generation etc.

Our country India has always been famous for gaining education since the Vedic period. The dynasties which ruled this land of knowledge were taking more care of the education and giving knowledge to the world. Due to this India was esteemed high in the eyes of the world and even the foreigners of that time were interested in gaining knowledge from this rich country. Therefore from all around the world people came to India and gained a variety of knowledge which they spread all over the world. Due to this India was given great recognition throughout the world and ancient universities in India were famous for imparting knowledge. The education in India has a rich and interesting history. It is believed that in the ancient days, the education was imparted orally by the sages and the scholars and the information was passed on from one generation to another generation.

After the development of letters, it took the form of writing using the palm leaves and the barks of trees. This also helped in spreading the written literature. The temples and the community centers formed the role of schools. Later, the Gurukul system of education came into existence. The Gurukuls were the traditional Hindu residential schools of learning which were typically in the teacher's house or a monastery. This system is referred as the oldest and the most effective system of education.

In the first millennium and the few centuries preceding, there was a flourishing of higher education at Nalanda, Takshashila University, Ujjain, and Vikramshila University. Each university specialized in a particular field of study. For instance, the Takshila specialized in the study of medicine, while the Ujjain laid emphasis on astronomy etc.

The British records reveal that the education was widespread in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with a school for every temple, mosque or village in most regions of the country. The present system of education was introduced and founded by the British in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by the recommendations of Macaulay. It has western style and content. The British government did not recognize the traditional structures and so they have declined. It is said that even Gandhiji described the traditional educational system as a beautiful tree which was destroyed during the British rule.

The development of Indian Education System can be divided under the following era, (1) Vedic era (3000B.C. to 500 B.C.) (2) Buddhist era (500 B.C. to 1200 A.D.) (3) Muslim era (1200 A.D. to 1700 A.D.) (4) British era (The pre-independence era, 1800 A.D. to 1947) (5) Post-independence era (1947 to till date).

### **Transition of Education from Vedic to Muslim era**

**Vedic Era:** The system of education which was developed during Vedic period is termed as the Vedic system of education. The education was completely under the individual control of the 'Gurus' and not on the state control. The gurus themselves arranged for lodging and boarding of the students. The aims of education were inculcating religion, achievement of absolute (Brahma) which he himself is, and it was recognized that the entire visible world is fully pervaded with the absolute, development of knowledge, acquaintance and observance of social and national duties, preservation and development of culture, moral and character development, education of livelihood, arts and skills. Vedic literature, theology and ethics. The teachers considered the students as their son and the students regarded teachers as their father.

**Buddhist era:** Buddhism was born in India and was started by Gautam Buddha. Gautam Buddha taught the principle of a religion which was based on the analysis of actual problem of life. The aims of education was physical development for good health, development of knowledge, education of social behaviour i.e. compassion and kindness, preservation and development of human culture, character formation, and vocational development,

**Muslim era:** During medieval period Muslim rulers started a new system of education which is

popularly known as Maktab and Madarsa system which is a Muslim system of education. Side by side the old Pathashala system also continued for Hindu students. The main aim of Muslim education was development of knowledge, spread of Islamic culture & Islamic religion, development of character and morality, loyalty to the Government, education of arts, skills and vocations, Knowledge of alphabets, 30 sections of Quran, reading, writing, mathematics, letter and application writing and the way of conversation were given to children. Students obeyed the teachers out of fear in medieval period. In Maktab every student was made to learn verses of Quran, Islamic religion, Arabic, Persian and mathematics. Madarsa means to deliver speech. Higher Education was given in Madarsa. It is located either in state capital or in big cities. The medium of instruction at these centers were Arabic and Persian languages.

The quality of education imparted in India was unparalleled. Hence, in spite of various hardship and hurdles students from different parts of the world flocked to Indian universities. As a home of knowledge and wisdom ancient India produced scores of scholars.

**British System of Education:** After the downfall of the Muslim rule, Britishers came to India and established the East Indian company. Britishers ruled over India for about 150 years. During this period western science and literature made good progress through English medium. By the time the British came to India as traders of the East India Company and to spread their religion with the attempts of Christian Missionaries. However, the British period was a breakthrough in the development of education in India. The Modern System of Education in India was started to take place with the efforts of Britishers. But this is also an important fact that in the beginning the British came as traders, though interested in the classical and spiritual education of the Hindus and of Muslims, but were reluctant to take an interest in the education of the people under their rule till 1813.

The educational system which the British introduced teaching of English language was given greater emphasis and the study of languages like Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit were left to individual efforts.

The English introduced modern education. To reduce the expenditure on administration. To

encourage the study of English language. To expand market for English goods. To spread Christianity. According to Lord Macaulay after receiving modern education Indians would remain Indians only in their color while their interests, ideas, morals and Intelligence would change. Introduction of Western Education in India was led by two causes: 1. East India Company 2. Christian Missionaries.

East India Company showed very little interest in the promotion of education in India. The only purpose of seeing up education systems in India was to ensure a steady supply of Indians to law courts by the company.

**Pre-independence Era:** The Indian education system faced a number of difficulties during this era which are as following, Government was not responsible for running educational affairs in India. They feared that people might ultimately rise against the British rule and would demand independence after receiving higher education. Company wanted to educate only a few number of people required to run the affairs of the Government. They thought that Indians are not keen to receive education. British Govt.'s main aim was to make money. Controversy continued on regarding medium of education. Oppositions of Brahmins against women education as well as British system of education as they involved in controversy with various renowned persons like Raja Rammohan Roy, Vidyasagar, H.L.V. Derozio and others. Swadeshi movement also influenced Indians to avoid British system of education. It was not national in character. It was anti-Indian as well as antidemocratic.

Due to so many difficulties Indians started a movement known as Indian National Education Movement. The causes of National education movement is not the creation of a particular cause. It is rather the cumulative result of a large number of factors such as,

*It was not national in character. It was anti-Indian as well as antidemocratic. The existing system of education failed to fulfill the needs and aspirations of the nation as a whole. Educational administration was entirely in the hands of the European bureaucrats who virtually determined policies and implemented them. The medium of education was also English and as such mother-tongue was utterly neglected.*

The Indian nationalist opinion became very strong at this time. National consciousness was at its peak. It was not at all in a mood to tolerate any imperialist design in the arena of education.

The immediate cause of the National Education Movement was the anti-national educational policy followed by Lord Curzon. Curzon was an imperialist to the core. He failed to enlist cooperation and sympathy of the Indian people in carrying out his educational reforms. Some international events such as the Boer War, the Young Turk Movement, the French Revolution, the Burmese War, the Russo-Japanese War, the 1st World War (1914-18) and the morley-minto Reforms also influenced the National Education Movement.

### **Different Phases of National Education Movement**

**First Phase (1906 -1910):** It coincided with the Swadeshi Movement or Boycott Movement or Bengal Partition Movement: It was limited within the boundary of Bengal. Of course it had its echos outside Bengal particularly in Maharashtra and Punjab which were sympathetic to the cause of Bengal. It was related with the extremist movement in politics. Till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was liberal in character. Thus a new turn in the character of the national movement immensely affected the national education upsurge. Educational upsurge was the result of political upsurge. It was the age of extremism and extremist leaders like Lala Lajpat Roy, Balgangadhar Tilak Balgangadhar Tilak and Bipinchandra Pal dominated the political arena.

In the first phase of the National Education Movement there was no clear-cut objectives, no clarity of thought. Absence of rationality was one of its peculiar characteristic. The first phase was dominated by emotion and sentiment. It was related with the Boycott Movement – boycott of British goods, official schools and colleges, law courts etc. This led to the suppression of the National Education Movement. It was negative by the anti-Indian policy of Lord Curzon.

**Second Phase (1911 -1922):** The second phase of the movement was more extensive and widespread than the first phase as it was not limited to the Bengal Presidency only. It coincided with the Hind Swaraj-Khilafat and Non-violent Non-cooperation

Movement launched by Gandhiji. The whole of India including Bengal, Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujrat, Andhra and Bihar was practically involved in this phase of the movement. The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase was more rational than the first one. It was more productive and fruitful than the 1st phase.

During the 2nd phase a large number of schools, colleges and universities came into being. These included the National Muslim University of Aligarh, the Gujrat Vidyapith, the Bihar Vidyapith, the Kashi Vidyapith, the Bengal National University, the Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapith, Quami Vidyapith, the Andhra Vidyapith etc.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase came to an end with the withdrawal of the Non- cooperation Movement by Gandhiji in 1922 after the violent Chauri Chaura incident in the district of Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh.

**Third Phase (1930-1938):** The Third phase of the National Education Movement coincided with the Civil Disobedience Movement launched by Gandhiji in 1930. Though the physical existence of the National Education Movement practically came to an end with the termination of the non-cooperation movement, yet it continued for sometime more in the mental horizon of the people as it was related to revivalism. During this phase Gandhiji enunciated his famous scheme of Basic education. The Third phase was characterised by consciousness in respect of technical and vocational education. Again, during this phase the National Planning Committee chalked out a National Plan for education in 1938. It was initiated by the National Congress as it came to power in nine provinces under the new constitutional arrangement of 1935.

**Causes of Failure of the Movement:** The causes of failure of the national education movement are not far to seek. The causes are numerous. The movement was emotionally toned. It was not based on reason, particularly in its first phase. Emotion cannot last long. It was directly related with political ups and downs of the country. Finance was a great hurdle before the movement. Difference of opinion among national leaders with regard to the concept and pattern of national education gave a rude shock to the survival of the movement. Leaders of national education movement urgently felt the need of spreading education among women which increased the percentage of literacy among

women. National education movement again led to the establishment of a large number of permanent national educational institutions which included Jamia Millia Islamia, Jadavpur Polytechnic, National Medical College, Banaras Hindu University, Visva-Bharati, Kashi Vidyapith, Gujrat Vidyapith, Andhra Vidyapith, Bihar Vidyapith, Kangra Gurukul etc.

**Post independence period:** After the independence was won the leaders and the government gave education huge priority because it was the only way to mend the rotten down economy. Educated people will know how to carry their responsibilities and how to improve the condition of the country. For this various systems and schemes were included to give education to all. And now even though not all but a major portion has become literate. The modern education system has been based on one formula: *cheap, compulsory and common education to all*. Even people are able to decide by their conscience that what way of education will be best suited for them. But still there are many people who know nothing about words and literacy. So, they are in the most of the need to get a proper education. It is needed to provide education to all because other nations are way ahead in the field of education.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we feel that everyone has the right to be educated. Although education may not solve all our problems, we must intensify our efforts to educate all children. We should carry on the tradition of providing children the education that they will need in order to meet the challenge of a constantly changing world. Education helps us to develop lifelong skills. The future of a society, state lies in innovation, new ideas and ground-breaking approaches. And only the intellectual can champion the path of innovation. An independent original thinker is the only one capable of creating new opportunities for the society. Recent government policy changes in higher studies are a welcome step for this. As India progresses in her journey from a developing country to a developed state, the need of developing intellect will continue to assume more importance. While the society much change its attitude towards education. To ensure all our children's education, whole communities must – together – think of ways to improve the education system. We must build a critical mass of leaders

who are clear about the vision and mission. When they are willing to reinvent themselves to achieve the objective, change will happen. Education is about holistic development, not just cognitive development.

## REFERENCES

- Aparna Basu, 1982. *Essays in the History of Indian Education*, New Delhi: Concept. Publishing Company, pp. 8: 63-80.
- Bob, 2008. Clifford. "Dalit Rights are Human Rights": Caste Discrimination, International Activism, and the "Changing Educational Inequalities in India in the Context of Affirmative Action." *Demography* 45(2): 245-270.
- Construction of a New Human Rights Issue." *Human Rights Quarterly* 29.1 (2007): 167-193. Print.
- Desai, Sonalde, and Veena Kulkarni. 2008. "Changing Educational Inequalities in India in the Context of Affirmative Action," 45(28): 245-270.
- Keay, F.E. 1972. *A History of Education in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 141 144.
- Naik, I.P. 1975. *Equality, Quality and Quantity*, Bombay: Allied Publishers, pp. 1.
- Naik, P. and Syed Nurullah, 1972. *A Student's History of Education*, Delhi: MacMillan, pp. 24–27.
- Sharma, R.S. 1985. "Class formation and the Material Bases in Upper Gangetic Basin" (1000-500 BC), *Indian Historical Review*, 2(1): 1-13.
- Yeehuri Sitaram, "Educational Development in India", *Social Scientist* No. 153.

