

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
IN INDIA

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

India is a vast and ancient land with many age-old traditions and several millions of people. It has an area of 1.25 million square miles and a population of about 450 million.¹ About eighty three per cent of the Indian people live in over half a million villages of varying sizes.² Seventy per cent of the people in India are engaged in agriculture. The typical rural community in India still suffers from the evils of poverty, superstition, ignorance, and illiteracy.

An important fact that has significant implications for education is that India, in spite of being a geographical entity, has never achieved political homogeneity throughout her long and checkered history.³ Prior to 1947, when India gained her freedom, there were about 600 feudal and

¹India News (Weekly News Bulletin of the Embassy of India, March 1, 1963, p. 5.

²Research and Reference Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, India - A Reference Annual, 1959, (Delhi: Director of Publication Division, 1959), p. 46.

³V. P. Menon, The Story of the Integration of the Indian States, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1956), p. 1.

princely states⁴ cut off from the main stream of national life and thought.

Yet another reason that makes the problem of mass education still more complicated is the fact that India is a land of many religions and languages. Eighty-five per cent of the people are followers of Hinduism, ten per cent are Muslims, two per cent are Christians and the remaining three per cent belong to Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism and scores of other religions.⁵ There are fourteen major languages recognized by the present Indian constitution besides several hundred dialects spoken in different parts of India.

When India became independent in 1947, only a small fraction of the total population was literate and "at the elementary level, barely 30 per cent of children in the age group six to eleven were in schools of one kind or another. .."⁶ Thus, one of the most populous democracies of the world had to function and take roots in the minds of the people whose staggering majority could neither read nor write and, what was worse, had no experience in living under

⁴K. G. Saiyidain et al, Compulsory Education in India (Paris: UNESCO, 1952), p. 92.

⁵Research and Reference Division, op. cit., p. 44.

⁶Humayun Kabir, Education in New India (New York: Harper and Brothers, n.d.), p. 6.

a modern democratic system of government. It may, however, be said to their credit that even though they had no benefit of formal education, they were not barbarians and ignorant of higher human values. They were deeply religious and well-versed in the manners and customs of peaceful and orderly community living.

History gives credit to this ancient land for broadening the horizons of knowledge in many fields of sciences and letters. Hundreds of years before Christ, the Indian Universities of Nalanda and Taxila commanded great respect and attracted scores of foreign scholars from distant lands. It may, however, be made clear at the outset that education at that time was restricted to either the highest socio-economic classes or to the devoted scholars; its benefits never directly reached the humble masses. Also, for a variety of reasons, India never had a unified and unifying system of national education, nor did the masses have a keen desire for learning.

Statement of the Problem. The problem of this study was to undertake an investigation of the progress and major problems of elementary education in rural parts of India and to offer recommendations for its improvement.

Application of the Study. As a legacy of the foreign domination for more than three centuries, India is confronted

with the gigantic problem of mass illiteracy. She inherited a system of education which was based on the social, economic, and political concepts not suited to the genius of a free people. But from its very inception, India realized the fact that the extension of educational opportunities to the masses was basic to the ultimate solution of its social, political, and economic problems. Consequently, a vast reconstruction of its educational system has been undertaken in order to make it a more suitable instrument to serve the new needs and aspirations. This has led India to take a serious look at its existing public education system, both elementary and secondary, together with the teacher education system in order to reconstruct these systems on sound lines. The first important milestone in her tremendous endeavor in the field of education at the national level was the Commission of National Education set up by the Presidential Cabinet on the 30th of December, 1950. The recommendations of the Commission submitted to the Central Government on August 26, 1951, covered the broad policy matters in respect to a wide range of subjects related to the various fields of Indian education, such as primary, secondary, technical, vocational, higher, female, religious, and adult education, together with the medium of instruction, instructional materials, training and emoluments of teachers and student personnel

services. In the light of the recommendations of the Commission, the following historic resolution was adopted by the National Government:

"Compulsory education at the elementary level is essential if the country is to have an intelligent citizenry, able to understand and contribute to modern technological advances and the complex needs of a modern society. It is also indispensable for the proper identification of those talented young people who should be encouraged to continue their education to more advanced stages. To acquire these skills and understandings, at least high school compulsory schooling is necessary. The target should, however, be to achieve this in a phased program divided into two periods. The first of the five years compulsory schooling within a period of ten years followed by the next phase of five years when the duration of compulsory education will be extended to eight years."⁴

The far-reaching significance of this resolution may be obvious from the fact that according to the 1956 national census only 20 per cent of the population in India were able to read and write. In its great efforts to reorganize the public education system, India is anxious to learn from the experiences of the educationally advanced countries of

⁴Embassy of India, Report of the Commission on National Education - Government Resolution (Washington: The Embassy, 1953), p. 19.

the world, especially the U. S. A. It is hoped that this study will enable a citizen of India to envision educational reforms best suited to the country's new social, economic, and political conditions.

Research Procedure and Development. The study was developed by an analysis of a variety of primary and secondary sources of data. These sources included reports, books, periodicals, newspapers, pamphlets, microfilmed records, thesis, dissertations, and other research studies. The primary source used in the development of this study consisted mainly of the official reports and publications of different ministries and organizations of the Government of India. The demographic data on India which were used for developing a broad background for the discussion of the major problems of elementary education in India were taken from the Reference Annuals for the years 1955-1962.^{8, 9, 10}

⁸ Research and Reference Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, India - A Reference Annual, 1958 (Delhi: Director of Publications Division, 1958).

⁹ India - A Reference Annual, 1959 (Delhi: Director of Publications Division, 1959).

¹⁰ India - A Reference Annual, 1960 (Delhi: Director of Publications Division, 1960).

Necessary data on and pertinent statistics of elementary education in India were collected from relevant reports and publications of the Ministry of Education in India, 1947-1952, and are listed in the bibliography.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study. In organizing the remainder of this study, Chapter II was devoted to historical survey of elementary education in India. The historical resume was intended to provide a broad background for current status of elementary education in modern rural India. Chapter III deals with the current picture and the progress of elementary education in India since 1947, as well as a discussion of the major problems impeding a rapid expansion of education. Other aspects of elementary education in India are included in Chapter III, such as the theory and practice of basic education and progress of compulsory rural education. The last chapter contains the summary and recommendations regarding adaptation of some educational practices. The study in its initial stage was developed by furnishing a historical resume of elementary education in India. The next step was an investigation of the major problems and progress of rural elementary education in India since 1947. The following educational practices which offered the possibility of their application in India were selected and analyzed in detail:

1. The rural cultural missions.
2. Centers of education.
3. Schools for employees' children.
4. The campaign against illiteracy.
5. The bilingual approach to education.
6. The house for youth.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN INDIA PRIOR TO 1947

The following resume of the history of education in India has been intended to provide a broad background for understanding the state of elementary education in modern India. Another purpose of this resume was to trace briefly a growth and development of elementary education through the nineteenth century.

It has been customary with writers of the history of education in India to divide this history into different parts in the interest of clarity and convenience rather than into separate and unlinked periods.

Education in India, as education in all other countries, has been an on-going and continuous process. The educational history of India, however, has been particularly devoid of any revolutionary and sweeping changes in the sphere of mass education. Most of the problems and obstacles that existed throughout the nineteenth century were found to be still impeding the progress of elementary education in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The progress of education in India has been a painfully slow process which started more than two centuries ago

but has not reached its successful culmination. Needless to elaborate, the final phase of this long process could only be universal and free education not only for those who desired it, but also for those who would not attend school without some degree of persuasion, coercion, and compulsion.

The progress of elementary education in India, as well as the lack of it, should be viewed against the background of political, philosophical, and socio-economic factors operating in the Indian milieu. In Chapter III of this study, an attempt has been made to analyze all of these factors instrumental in retarding the growth of education. This chapter is devoted to an historical interpretation of the progress as well as the failures of elementary education in India.

The history of Indian education may be logically divided into four broad parts. Again, this classification has been adopted not merely for the sake of clarity but also to create a sense of continuity in a process which was still in progress. This approach has also facilitated examination of the problems and difficulties encountered both by an alien and national government in spreading mass elementary education.

From the preceding point of view, four main periods of Indian education may be divided as follows:

- I. Education under East India Company, 1813-1900.
- II. Education under rule of the British Crown, 1900-1920.
- III. Education under Indian control, 1921-1947.
- IV. Education in free India, 1947-1960.

This chapter deals with a brief historical survey of the first three main periods. The fourth main topic, i. e., 1947-1960, is considered in the following chapter.

I. Education under British rule, 1813-1900. There is a lack of complete data on the indigenous system of education in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially as it existed in the various parts of the country which were governed by hundreds of feudal princes and petty kings. The data available on Indian education during this period partially covered the British territories consisting of small and scattered parts of India.

A few official and unofficial inquiries into indigenous system of education were conducted between 1822 and 1835. The reports of these inquiries were often defective from statistical and factual points of view.¹ However,

¹Syed Nurullah and J. P. Naik, A History of Education in India (Bombay: Macmillan and Company, 1951), p. 2.

in spite of these shortcomings, these reports formed the main sources of information available on the native system of education as it existed during the first half of the nineteenth century.²

An inquiry undertaken by Sir Thomas Munro at Madras resulted in a report dated June 20, 1822. It revealed that learning to read and write was the privilege of Brahmins (high caste Hindus), mercantile classes, and petty village officials. Female education, as well as the education of low caste people, was greatly discouraged. There was only one school to every 1000 persons in the population. However, a large number of boys and a few girls were taught at home.³

Another inquiry held in Bombay, conducted by the Governor, Mountstuart Elphinstone in 1824, reported that schools were established in the temples, private houses, and at the homes of the teachers. Elementary education was confined to the boys belonging to higher religious castes. These were separate schools to cater to the needs of the Muslim community. These and other elementary schools taught the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic.

²Ibid.

³Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 4.

In Bengal, another inquiry conducted by William Adam, a missionary, greatly interested in the cause of education in India, resulted in the publication of three detailed reports between 1835 and 1838.

In his first report, he estimated the number of rural schools in Bengal at 100,000. According to this estimate, there was a school for every 400 persons.⁴ This estimate had been referred to by subsequent writers either as a myth or as a well established fact beyond a shadow of a doubt. In his second report, Adam estimated that the number of children under domestic instruction was nearly nine times the number of pupils attending public school.⁵ Adam attributed the lack of literacy among women to local superstitions and negative parental attitude.

It would appear from the above account of the inquiries that in absence of any uniform national or provincial system of education, the network of indigenous schools was the only medium for providing rudiments of knowledge to masses. If improved and reformed, these schools could have

⁴Ila Jasani, "Elementary Education in Colonial India and Reform Since Independence," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Smith College, Northhampton, Massachusetts, 1960), p. 3.

⁵Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 23.

formed a sound basis for developing a modern educational system in India.

In spite of the exhortations of thinkers like Adam, Munro, and Thompson, the directions of the Dispatch of 1854, and the strong recommendations of the India Educational Commission (1882-83) indigenous elementary schools were either killed by illiterate competition, or allowed to die of sheer neglect with the result that the educational position of India in 1921 was hardly better than 1821.⁶

The preceding statement of Nurullah and Naik was confirmed by Saiyidain, Naik and Husain, who stated that "the percentage of literacy in India as a whole in 1901-02 was, in fact, lower than that of Bengal area surveyed by Adam in 1833-38."⁷

Having briefly discussed the indigenous system of education, it would be in order to examine the progress made under the rule of the East India Company.⁸ The organized

⁶Ibid., p. 50.

⁷K. G. Saiyidain, J. P. Naik, and S. Abid Husain, *Compulsory Education in India*, UNESCO Studies in Compulsory Education, XI (Paris: UNESCO, 1952), p. 13.

⁸The East India Company was established under a Charter granted by Queen Elizabeth in 1600. The main interest of this company was commerce and trade, but taking full advantage of the political instability and anarchy that followed the decay and decline of the Moghal Empire, the company established its political sovereignty over India during the 19th century.

educational activities of the East India Company began with the Charter Act of 1813 which made an annual provision of rupees 100,000 for "the revival and improvement of literature and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India."⁹ It may be noted that at the time the percentage of literacy for Bengal as well as the whole of India was barely 6. 1 per cent.¹⁰ This amount, therefore, was woefully inadequate to meet the needs of Indian education. The provision of this amount may, therefore, be viewed as a token of partial acceptance of the state's responsibility for the education of the Indian masses. Because of the acceptance of this principle, the Charter Act of 1813 was regarded as the beginning of a modern system of education in India.

However, the East India Company was none too enthusiastic about undertaking a program of mass education. This reluctance on the part of the company may be attributed to several reasons. Chief among them was the fact that the

⁹ Percival Griffiths, The British Impact on India, (London: Macdonald, 1952), p. 248.

¹⁰ Saiyidain, Naik, and Husain, loc. cit.

East India Company was interested primarily in commercial activities. Further, during that period education was not regarded, even in England, as the state's responsibility.¹¹

These causes, coupled with the traditional apathy of the Indian masses toward education, were responsible for checking the pace of elementary education in India. Even though it was difficult to deny the impact of several factors on the slow progress of education, a large part of the blame rested with the East India Company which was fast changing its role from a narrow commercial organization to a sovereign political power that was destined to rule India until 1947.

The East India Company in its anxiety to limit its expenditure on education, and also to provide its administrative machinery with English-knowing petty officials, adopted certain policies which were not constructive to the rapid growth of elementary education in India. One such policy which generated much heat and controversy was called "The Downward Filtration Theory" which dominated the Indian educational scene until 1853. This theory assumed that once the upper class of the society was educated, the culture and education would percolate down to the masses. It was

¹¹ England had to wait until 1870 before passing the first compulsory education law.

also believed that as a result of this process, mass literacy would be obliterated.

However, between 1780 and 1833, the theory was interpreted differently to suit the demands of the situation.¹² It was the first interpreted as an effort to create a ruling class by confining education to the elite. The second interpretation was that culture would filter down from the upper strata to the lower ones. However, when both these interpretations failed to bring about the desired results, the theory was defined in a different light. According to the third interpretation, only a selected few were to be given English education through the medium of the English language so that they could teach the masses through the vernacular Indian languages. These hopes, however, were belied in not too long a time. The educated Indians, alienated from their own culture and people, had little time or intention to go to the rural areas to start a crusade against mass illiteracy.

The Downward Filtration Theory failed and its failure impeded the progress of mass education in India for many decades to come. The immediate outcome of this theory was doubtful but later on it became evident that several factors

¹² Saiyidain, Naik, and Husain, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

were responsible for imposing this theory upon Indian education. The first and foremost among these reasons was the utter inadequacy of funds which did not exceed the scanty amount of one million rupees even by 1853.¹³ Educating the millions of Indians through a score of vernacular languages and organizing a mass education program on a "shoestring" budget was out of the realm of any immediate possibility. The East India Company, therefore, found it more practical to educate a few. "They therefore made a virtue out of a necessity, and exalted an idea which was forced upon them by lack of funds into a basic principle of educational administration."¹⁴

The much quoted and debated Minute of Macaulay (1835) contained the following:

"I feel...that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of people. We must, at present, do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us, and the millions whom we govern --a class of persons of Indian blood and color but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and intellect."¹⁵

¹³ D. M. Desai, Universal, Compulsory, and Free Primary Education in India (Bombay: Indian Institute of Education, 1953), p. 4.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁵ D. M. Desai, op. cit., p. 7, citing paragraph 35 of Macaulay's Minute, dated February 2, 1835.

The reasons for adopting the Downward Filtration Theory were, therefore, more financial and political than ideological, and more administrative than political. The overwhelming obstacles in the path of mass elementary education in India were enough to discourage and deter any government, either national or alien, and the East India Company representing a foreign government did not find it possible to plunge headlong into the challenging experiment of mass education in India.

This unsound policy was, therefore, officially given up by the Wood's Educational Dispatch of 1854 which was an outcome of a comprehensive inquiry into Indian education undertaken by a select committee of the House of Commons.

Varying opinions on the significances of the Wood's Educational Dispatch were found in the related literature. According to Zellner, it was "the most significant document on education in India since the British had come to that country."¹⁶

Moehlman stated:

"Although eulogized as the Magna Charta of modern Indian education, it was but an ordinary document of instructions to the government of India approving the educational

¹⁶ Aubrey A. Zellner, Education in India (New York: Bookman Associates, 1951), p. 58.

policies practiced and suggesting a few means of improvement from the perspective of the Company." 17

Philips criticized the Dispatch on the grounds that Sir Charles Wood, the President of the Board of Control and the author of the Dispatch, "took the administrator's easy way out of immediate difficulties by simultaneously accepting almost all points of view and therefore imposed on the Government of India the duty of primary school to the university." 18

However, a more balanced view of the Dispatch indicated that it was sent down to India to provide a future educational policy. At the time of the release of Educational Dispatch in 1854, the Indian educational scene was blurred by many bitter controversies on issues of varying importance. The Dispatch was intended to clear the air. It also provided a comprehensive review of the past and laid down detailed policy for the future.

The Dispatch recognized and admitted the gross official neglect of mass education. It also went one step

¹⁷ Arthur H. Moehlman and Joseph S. Roucek, (eds.) Comparative Education, (New York: Dryden Press, 1953), p. 511.

¹⁸ C. H. Philips, India (London: Hutchinson's University Library, n.d.), p. 58.

farther and rejected the "Downward Filtration Theory." It urged the government to shift the official emphasis from the education of the higher classes to the education of the masses. The Dispatch recommended that elementary education be imparted through the agency of the Government and it should be supported by a levy of special tax. The Government should also extend encouragement to indigenous schools. The Dispatch laid down an elaborate system of grant-in-aid based on the principle of strict religious neutrality. Such aid was to be granted for specific purposes and only to such schools which charged some fees and were subject to government inspection. Teaching of English was not to be forced where it was not desired by masses themselves and that language was not to be substituted for the vernacular dialects of India.

A system of scholarships, starting in the lower grades and continuing through subsequent grades, was to be established.¹⁹ Normal schools for the training of teachers were to be instituted. Study of classical languages and other professional subjects was to be encouraged.

Two of the most important recommendations of the Dispatch were the institution of three universities in the

¹⁹ M. Sen, History of Elementary Education in India (Calcutta: The Book Company, 1933), pp. 86-88.

presidencies of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras; and creation of separate Departments of Education in five existing provinces (states) of Bengal, Madras, and Bombay, the North Western Provinces and the Punjab. These departments were to be headed by Directors of Public Instruction who were made responsible for submitting detailed annual reports concerning the progress of education under their charge. The Directors were to be assisted by an adequate number of Inspectors.²⁰

Concerning the bitter controversy between Anglicists and the Classicists,²¹ the Dispatch observed that even though there were certain advantages in the study of Oriental Literature, it was basically deficient in all modern discovery and improvements. The diffusion of the European knowledge through the medium of either English or other Indian vernacular languages was therefore more appropriate for India.

The report contained far-reaching and significant recommendations and left a great impact on Indian educational

²⁰ Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., pp. 306-307.

²¹ The Anglicists or Occidentalists favored diffusion of Western learning through the medium of the English language. On the other hand, the Orientalists or Classicists supported the cause of classical learning and encouragement of the Persian and Sanskrit languages.

thinking during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Its emphasis on the education of the masses through the medium of Indian languages was most commendable and modern in its concept.

The recommendations of the Dispatch also led to the establishment of three universities in 1857 and five provincial Departments of Education. Also as a result of the recommendations primary and secondary education received greater amounts of public funds and attention. The Dispatch was also instrumental in introducing the practice of grant-in-aid and establishing teachers' training institutions.

It was, however, an irony of circumstances that two of the most important recommendations of the Dispatch, i.e., encouragement of education through Indian languages and expansion of mass education, were allowed to gather dust of time and were not put into practice. As stated by Philips:

"...in accord with the ideas of the time, not only in India but in England, education remained, along with the other social services, one of the last of the charges on the government of India's budget, and this grandiose scheme was therefore carried out "on the cheap." Had unlimited resources been available, it would have been difficult to achieve; with only scanty funds, it was impossible."²²

²² Philips, loc. cit.

Another event of historical significance which opened a new chapter in the history of India, was the 1857 Rebellion of the Indian Army, commonly called the "Sepoy Mutiny." A detailed discussion of the causes and consequences of the mutiny was outside the scope of this study. The expansionist policies of Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India from 1848-1856, was instrumental in bringing a vast area of princely India under the East India Company's control²³ and was one of the major causes of this mutiny. It was primarily confined to Bengal and to a lesser degree to Bombay.²⁴

However, the suppression of the Mutiny by the end of the year 1858²⁵ proved the swan song of the East India Company.²⁶ The company was abolished by a proclamation of Queen Victoria of England in November, 1858, and India passed under the rule of the British Crown. A significant and logical outcome of the change-over was assumption of

²³Vincent A. Smith, The Oxford History of India (Oxford, London: The Clarendon Press, 1st ed., 1919, rept., 1941), p. 704.

²⁴W. H. Moreland and Atul C. Chatterjee, A Short History of India (London, Longmans, Green & Company, 1957), p. 366.

²⁵Ibid., p. 369.

²⁶Ramakrishna Mukerjee, The Rise and Fall of the East India Company (Berlin: Veb Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2nd. ed., 1958), p. 43.

direct responsibility of the crown for the education of the Indian people.

II. Education under the Rule of the British Crown in the Latter Half of the Nineteenth Century. As observed by Luniya, the Mutiny was "the great dividing line in Indian history as the policy, practice and ideals of the government that followed differed fundamentally from the government of the East India Company which it dispatched."²⁷

Following the suppression of Mutiny in 1858, the British consolidated their hold over the vast Indian sub-continent. They brought the entire country either under their administrative control or their political influence. The Crown Rule ushered in an era of peace and re-established law and order in a land torn by long periods of strife and anarchy following the decay and fall of the Moghul Empire. The sweet newly found taste of peace was entirely to the liking of the Indian people who by their very virtue were peace-loving. As a result of the blessing of peace, "during this period, the attitude of the Indian people towards British was broadly one of loyalty, gratitude and admiration as com-

²⁷ B. N. Luniya, Evolution of Indian Culture (Agra, India: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal Educational Publishers, third edition, 1960), pp. 555-556.

pared to that of fear, distrust and suspicion between 1813 and 1853 and of open hostility after 1902."²⁸

As a result of the change in attitude, the Western culture and education were received with open arms by grateful Indian nation. The government on their part began taking a keener interest in the education of their loyal subjects. However, they soon discovered that their good intentions were neither matched nor supported by their financial and material sources. Paucity of funds had always been the bane of mass education in India. The task of educating the teeming millions of India never was an easy one for any government that ever ruled India. The Crown rule was not an exception to this general rule. India even at that time was a poor country, lacking any appreciable industrial development. Her raw materials, priced to suit the interest of colonial power, were shipped thousands of miles across the sea to be consumed in factories and mills of England. Thus, the government of India could not find an industrial base to levy taxes. The people engaged in agriculture were traditionally hard up and were too poor to pay taxes higher than they were already paying. The obstacles, coupled with

²⁸ Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 219.

a defective and unequal system of public taxation, tied down the hands of the government from launching an ambitious scheme of mass education.

However, the government tried to raise extra funds by imposing a local fund provision in rural areas, by taking contributions from municipalities in urban areas, by charging fees, and finally by solicitation of donations from the public.²⁹ But the funds raised through all of these sources proved inadequate to meet the educational needs of the country.

The growth and development of elementary mass education was, therefore, handicapped from its very beginning, an unfortunate tradition which still persisted in free India in the twentieth century.

The change over the administrative control from East India Company to the British Crown necessitated the issue of the Dispatch of 1859. This educational document stated:

"...reviews the progress made under the earlier Dispatch, which it reiterates and confirms with a single exception as to the course to be adopted for promoting elementary education."³⁰

The above Dispatch also set at rest the doubt raised by Lord Ellenbrough that the Dispatch of 1854 was responsible

²⁹Nurullah and Naik, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

³⁰Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 88 (*italics in original.*)

for the Mutiny of 1857.³¹ This Dispatch, also called Lord Stanley's Dispatch, following in the wake of the uprising of the Indian Army, warned the government that they should not make themselves unpopular by obtaining local support for establishment of the vernacular schools established under the grant-in-aid system proposed by the Dispatch of 1854, nor should the government solicit contributions from the public. It also stated that the grant-in-aid system was unsuited for India. Instead, the government should examine the desirability of levying a special rate on land to meet the expenses of the schools located in the rural areas.³²

The government of India decided that such rate should be levied to meet not only the cost of education, but also other local needs such as building of roads, police, etc. However, a subsequent report published by the Indian Education Commission indicated that the municipalities were spending a mere fraction of these revenues on education.

³¹ Lord Ellenborough, the president of the Board of Control of the East India Company at that time the mutiny broke out in India, was the author of the second Dispatch of April 28, 1858. This dispatch had only a historical significance owing to its retrograde thinking, its emphasis upon Downward Filtration Theory, and finally its allegation that the recommendation contained in the Wood's Educational Dispatch of 1854 led to the events of 1857.

³² Sen, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

The percentage of income spent on schools ranged from a low of 0.39 per cent in Asam to a high of 5.29 per cent in the Punjab.³³ The percentage for the eight provinces of the British India worked out to 2.19.

The government did not take any steps to correct this situation. The irony of the situation became more evident when the Indian Education Commission which point out this anomaly did not specify any percentage of local funds or provincial resources that should be allocated to education in general and elementary education in particular and justified its action on the grounds that different conditions existed in different provinces, hence, a uniform set of rules could not be framed.

An important event in the history of Indian education was the appointment of the Indian Education Commission. The report of the commission published in 1883 could truly be called epoch-making. Nurullah and Naik stated:

"The investigation by this Commission is the most detailed inquiry ever held in Indian education. It appointed provincial Committees to prepare preliminary reports; it examined about 200 witnesses; and received more than 300 memorials; (sic) its report is a bulky document of about 700 pages of foolscap size. Taken along with

³³Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 337.

the reports of Provincial Committees, we get about 3,000 pages of material regarding the development of education in modern India until 1882. The historical value of this document, therefore, is incalculable. But it had several other results as well; the inquiry of the commission led to a great educational awakening in India and its main findings, which agreed with the Dispatch of 1854, dominated Indian educational policy until 1902."³⁴

According to the Government Resolution appointing the Indian Education Commission:

"...the principal object of the inquiry should be the present state of elementary education throughout the empire, and, the means by which this can everywhere be extended and improved."³⁵

The main emphasis of the report of the Education Commission, therefore, was on the current status, organization and expansion of elementary education. The Commission recommended that some kind of primary education not necessarily leading to university education should be provided, and every effort for its expansion in all parts of the country, including the backward areas inhabited by the aboriginal tribes, should be made.

³⁴ Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., pp. 226-227.

³⁵ Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 346, citing Report of the Indian Education Commission, 1882-83, p. 582.

Another important recommendation of the Commission was the encouragement and improvement of the indigenous schools which were to be incorporated in the official system of education subject to their granting admission to the pupils of all classes and castes. The report also recommended that in granting aid to the schools, the principle of payment by results should be followed.³⁶

It is unfortunate that the Commission did not heed the public opinion then prevailing in India and did nothing to advance the cause of free and compulsory education. The indifference of the Commission toward the introduction of compulsory education was criticized by Saiyidain, Naik, and Husain:

"A number of leaders of the public opinion among all the religious, missionaries, the Indian and European officials gave evidence before the Commission suggesting the adoption of a law for compulsory education. But...the Commission took no notice of these demands, did not even discuss the problem, and closed the whole chapter by suggesting the Government should make strenuous efforts to spread primary education as widely as possible. Even the more restricted proposal of

³⁶ The system of payment by results was employed with a view to raising the educational status of the indigenous schools. Under this system of financial aid, the amount of grant-in-aid was directly based upon the number of pupils passing the Government held examinations. The procedure, however, led to the undue stress upon examination and the consequent cramming by the pupils which were still salient features of modern Indian education.

providing compulsory education for children employed in the factories, was not supported by the Commission."³⁷

The Government readily agreed with the proposals of the Commission and thus all efforts to introduce free and compulsory education were nipped in the bud.

According to data available, the population of India at the beginning of the twentieth century was 240 million and at the rate of 7.5 per cent of the entire population, the number of school age boys could be estimated, whereas only one sixth of these children were actually attending schools. In the province of the Punjab, the percentage of boys attending schools was between eight and nine, in the United Provinces it was 22, and in Bombay and Bengal, 23. Only ten per cent of the adult male population and 0.7 per cent of the female population was literate.³⁸

The number of recognized primary schools in British India and some Indian States in the last years of the nineteenth century was not only grossly inadequate for expansion of primary instruction, but their rate of growth was equally unsatisfactory. In 1881-82, the number of recognized primary

³⁷ Saiyidain, Naik, and Husain, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

³⁸ Nurullah and Naik, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

schools was 82,916 with 2,061,541 scholars receiving instruction in these schools. In the early years of the twentieth century (1901-02) the number of primary schools increased to 93,604 and that of students to 3,076,671.³⁹

It may be observed that the number of scholars increased by 49 per cent while the increase in the number of primary schools was found to be about thirteen per cent. In 1881-82, the average number of pupils per primary school was 25, and 20 years later, this average increased to 33 pupils per school.

The expansion of primary education in the provinces directly under British control was far from satisfactory. In 1881-82, there were 70,978 private (aided), departmental and board schools.⁴⁰ During a period of two decades, only 956 such schools were added to the existing ones. The increase in the number of schools was a little more than one per cent. In other words, between 1881-82 and 1901-02, only 48 schools per year were added to the existing aided schools and departmental board schools.

The volume of expenditure on primary education was equally disappointing. In 1886-87, the direct outlay on

³⁹ Ibid., p. 488.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 358.

primary schools from provincial, local and municipal funds was a little more than four million rupees. In 1901-02, the direct outlay from the above sources amounted to a little over six million rupees.⁴¹

It may be observed that the expenditure on primary education increased by fifty per cent in fifteen years. However, the per capita expenditure on primary education in India from the above sources was found to be less than Rupees 0.03 a year in 1901-02. These statistics leave little doubt about the sad state of elementary education and literacy in India that prevailed after two hundred years of British rule.

An analysis of the failure of elementary education indicated that it was largely due to the unwillingness of the Government to introduce compulsory education even on a modest scale. Saiyidain, Naik and Husain succinctly summed up the arguments that the Government advanced against any such step. According to the Government of India, the high birth rate coupled with a low national dividend made compulsory educational systems a financial impracticality. Other reasons included the enormity and magnitude of the

⁴¹Ibid., p. 487.

task of organizing schools, the inability to meet the needs of all villages, the selection and recruitment of teachers, the appointment of attendance officers, and provision of school buildings. Some other unfavorable factors were the general apathy of the masses toward compulsory or any other type of education and the caste system barring free mixing of children of different castes in the schools. However, the most interesting reason advanced by British Government was that being an alien Government, it was in no position to compel the people to send their children to school.⁴²

III. Education in the Early Twentieth Century Under the British Rule (1900-1921). Lord Curzon was appointed the Viceroy of India in 1899. He was a staunch supporter of qualitative improvement of Indian education at all levels. He frowned upon rapid quantitative expansion, which, he thought, was resulting in the deterioration of educational standards. He was, however, not totally unaware of the inadequacy of the present system of education at that time. He observed:

"The shortcoming of the present system in point of quantity are well known, four out of five villagers are without a school,

⁴² Saiyidain, Naik, and Husain, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

three out of every four boys grow up without any education; only one Indian girl in every forty attends any kind of school."⁴³

Lord Curzon, through a Resolution on Indian Educational policy, issued in March, 1904, declared that the Government considered a rapid expansion of elementary schools as one of its important duties. Paragraph 14 of that Resolution contained the following:

"The government of India fully accepts the proposition that the active extension of primary education is one of the most important duties of the State. The undertake this responsibility, not merely on general grounds, but because as Lord Lawrence observed in 1868, 'among all the sources of difficulty in our administration and of possible danger to the stability of our government there are few so serious as the ignorance of the people'."⁴⁴

It was an irony of circumstances that in spite of being so much conscious of the need of spreading literacy and education, Lord Curzon emphasized qualitative improvement and did precious little to expand primary education. Not only Lord Curzon, but his successors to the position of Viceroyalty followed the same policy. This was proved by the allocation of funds to primary educational grants

⁴³ P. L. Rawat, History of Indian Education (Agra, India: Bharat Publications, 1956), p. 222.

⁴⁴ Sen, op. cit., p. 177.

of more than 79 million rupees to provinces during the above period. Out of this amount, only eleven and a half million rupees, or 14.5 per cent of the total grant, were specifically provided for primary education.⁴⁵

The period between 1900 and 1921 also was marked by an intensive struggle of Indian educators for the introduction of compulsory education. The causality of this struggle was the good will between the Government and the Indian educationists. The Government was much more concerned about improving the quality of education while the latter were more anxious for rapid quantitative expansion. The two points of view were so radically opposed to one other that any ground for agreement was lost. The philosophy of expansion found a frequent supporter in G. K. Gokhla, whose main argument was that "the primary purpose of education is to banish illiteracy from the land. The quality of education is a matter of importance that comes only after illiteracy has been banished."⁴⁶

Even as late as 1911-1912, only six per cent of the people were literate and about 23.8 per cent of the school

⁴⁵ Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 437.

⁴⁶ R. V. Parulekar, Literacy in India (London: Mac-Millan and Company, 1939), p. 138.

age boys and only 2.7 per cent of school age girls were actually in school.⁴⁷

In view of the overwhelming majority of illiterate population, the Government's insistence that quality should precede quantity was no less ludicrous than the now famous advice to the masses to eat cakes when they could hardly afford bread. An analysis of the underlying factors behind the Government's decision revealed that its slogan of qualitative improvement was nothing but a face-saving device to avoid the introduction of free and compulsory education which in turn would have involved expenditure of millions of rupees. However, the impatient leaders of India were not prepared to wait until the Government's financial position improved.

Gokhale, a great exponent of the Indian point of view, introduced a private bill in 1911 in the Imperial (Central) legislature to make primary education free and compulsory. This bill was drafted on the lines of England's Education Act of 1870 and was "a brief and simple document ingeniously devised to meet the important objections then levelled by the Government against the proposal ... This bill

⁴⁷ Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 532.

was ... designed as a purely permissive measure which authorized local bodies, subject to prescribed conditions, to introduce compulsory education in their areas."⁴⁸

The bill was very modest in its scope. The main intent of the proposed legislation was to arm local bodies with sufficient legal powers. According to the provision of the bill, compulsion was to apply to boys aged six to ten years and not to girls of any age. The bill gave the Government necessary powers to exempt a particular class or community from the operation of the Act. It also contained a provision that the legal compulsion was to be introduced in such areas where a certain percentage of school age children was already receiving instructions on a voluntary basis. Such percentage was to be fixed in accordance with the departmental rules and was subject to the Government's approval. Also, local bodies were required to obtain the sanction of the Government before introducing compulsion.⁴⁹

The bill, first calculated to elicit public opinion, received overwhelming support from all the major parties, but was opposed tooth and nail by the Government and con-

⁴⁸ Saiyidain, Naik and Husain, op. cit., p. 22.

⁴⁹ Sen, op. cit., pp. 189-190.

sequently rejected by 38 votes to 13.⁵⁰ The rejection of this bill by the Central Legislature which was dominated by official members, showed that the Government was neither willing nor prepared to accept even a modest bill which purported to introduce compulsory education at the option of local bodies. Gokhla's untiring efforts for introducing legal compulsion, were, however, not totally fruitless. The Government became little more cognizant of the popular demand for compulsory education. In January, 1912, a recurring grant of five million rupees was sanctioned and it was announced later in the House of Commons of the British Parliament that the above amount will be spent primarily on 'primary education in India.'⁵¹

In February, 1913, the Government of India issued a Resolution on Educational policy. According to the statement of the policy laid down in the Resolution, the Government was not in favor of introducing compulsory education but would encourage the extension and expansion of primary education on a voluntary basis. This expansion was to be achieved through the agency of board schools and where it

⁵⁰ S. N. Mukerji, Education in India in the XX Century (Broda, India: Padamja Publications, 1945), pp. 65-67.

⁵¹ Sen, op. cit., citing the Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. XLI (July, 15 to August 7, 1912), p. 1896.

was not possible by means of aided institutions. The Resolution admitted that it was not possible at that time to make any great distinction between the curricula of rural and those of urban primary schools. However, it held out the promise that such differentiation would be made later, subject to the availability of competent teachers. It also stressed the point that teachers should be recruited from the class of boys whom they would later teach. It laid down the minimum educational qualifications and salaries of the teachers. Some provision for their pre-service as well as in-service training was to be made. The maximum number of pupils that the teacher would be called upon to teach was fixed at fifty.

On the matter of expansion of primary education, the Resolution reaffirmed the following:

"It is the desire and hope of the Government of India to see in not too distant future some 91,000 primary schools added to the 100,000 which already exist for boys and to double the 4½ million of the pupils who now receive instruction in them."⁵²

During all this time, the public demand for the introduction of compulsory education remained untabulated in all parts of the country. However, the credit of having the first compulsory education law in British India went to

⁵²Nurullah and Naik, *op. cit.*, p. 542, citing the Government Resolution on Educational Policy, dated February 21, 1913.

the Province of Bombay. The Bombay Primary Education Act of 1917, also called the Patel Act, merited special attention as the first Act in British India for introducing compulsory education for children between the ages of seven to eleven years. The municipalities were empowered to introduce compulsion for either or both sexes. The Act which was applicable to the urban areas, excluding the city of Bombay, had a penal clause for parents who failed to send their children to school and also for the employer who employed children of school age. It was left up to the discretion of the Government to fix the amount of grant-in-aid that was to be given to the municipalities for introducing compulsion. This Act was followed, in quick succession, by other similar Acts. Bengal, Bihar, Punjab, United Provinces, and Orissa passed such Acts in 1919. Acts covering the city of Bombay, Central Provinces and Madras followed in 1920. A detailed discussion of the provisions of these Acts is given by Desai.⁵³

It would here be in order to pause and look back at the progress of elementary education in India between the advent of the twentieth century and the Government of India's

⁵³D. M. Desai, Universal, Compulsory, and Free Primary Education in India (Bombay: Indian Institute of Education, 1953).

Act of 1919 under which the portfolio of education was transferred to Indian control.

In spite of the government's main emphasis on the qualitative improvement in education, the period between 1901-02 and 1921-22 was one of unprecedented expansion in the field of primary education. The increase in the number of schools, pupils, and expenditure could truly be called phenomenal and had no parallel in any other period before the advent of freedom.

An analysis of the available data showed that in 1901-02 there were 93,604 primary schools with an enrollment of 3,076,671.⁵⁴ In a span of 20 years, the number of primary schools increased to 155,017 and the enrollment rose to 6,109,752.⁵⁵

It was observed that during 1901-02 and 1921-22, the enrollment nearly doubled and the number of schools increased by sixty-six per cent. The average number of scholars for primary school, which was 33 in 1901-02, rose to 39 in 1921-22.

The social and political awakening of the Indian people leading to increased demands for education, coupled with

⁵⁴ cf. ante, p. 37.

⁵⁵ Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 778.

an economic boom, made it possible for the Government to make larger allocations of funds to primary education. In 1901-02, the direct expenditure on primary education amounted to over six million rupees,⁵⁶ in 1921-22, the direct outlay on the primary institutions rose to more than 49 million rupees.⁵⁷ Similarly, in 1901-02, the average cost per pupil and per school worked out to Rupees 2 and Rupees 67, respectively. The corresponding figures for 1921-22 were Rupees 8 and Rupees 319. It would appear that during 1901-02 and 1921-22 average expenditure per primary school rose nearly five times and the average per pupil cost increased four times.

IV. Education Under Indian Control (1921-1947).

The Government of India Act of 1919 was instrumental in establishing an administrative department in India. Under the provision of this Act, the departments of administration were classified as "reserved" and "transferred." Law and order, revenue and finance, and the power to impose taxes were "reserved" for the provincial governors, while the departments of local government education, sanitation, and economic development were transferred to the Indian

⁵⁶ cf ante, p. 38.

⁵⁷ Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 360.

ministers.⁵⁸

Also, under the provision of the 1919 Act, the Central Government ceased to give any educational grants to the provinces and mainly confined itself to publishing annual and quinquennial reviews of progress of education.

This was also a period of political unrest and social awakening for the people of India. The widespread mass dissatisfaction with the general order of things that existed at that time led directly to an intensification of political agitation against the alien government. The resulting turmoil gave birth to Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements. Violence, blood and smoke blurred the Indian scene for many years. Coupled with these unusual circumstances, the worldwide economic depression was slowing down the pace and growth of mass education in India. The government of India found it more difficult to spend increased amounts on education. For instance, the total amount spent in 1936-37 was still substantially below the expenditure incurred in 1930-31.⁵⁹

The direct contrast with the government's feeble

⁵⁸ Moreland and Chatterjee, op. cit., p. 461.

⁵⁹ Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 619.

efforts, the interests of the Indian people in education was both remarkable and unprecedented.

An important event of this period was the appointment of the Hartog Committee, named after its chairman, Sir Philip Hartog. Two of the main objectives of the committee were to examine the role of education in producing "political capacity" in masses and to examine thoroughly the official view that the rapid expansion of primary schools was telling upon their effectiveness, efficiency, and quality.⁶⁰

The Committee acknowledges the fact that the mass apathy toward education was on the wane⁶¹ but it also observed:

"Throughout the whole educational system, there is waste and ineffectiveness. In the primary system, which from our point of view should be designed to produce literacy and the capacity to exercise in numbers in primary schools, produces no commensurate increase in literacy, for only a small proportion of those who are at the primary stage reach Class IV...It is to be remembered that under the present conditions of rural life and with the lack of suitable vernacular literature, a child has very little chance of attaining literacy after leaving school."⁶²

⁶⁰J. F. Abel, "An Experiment in the Education of 247 Million of People," School Life, XV, 118-119, February, 1930.

⁶¹Zellner, op. cit., p. 161.

⁶²Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 623.

The Committee termed the premature drop-out of pupils as "wastage" and retention of a child for more than one year in the same class as "stagnation" and reached the conclusion that a very high percentage of wastage and stagnation was due to abnormal enlargement of the first grade classes.

The Committee was also critical of the Compulsory Acts which were passed in several provinces. According to them, the main defects of the schemes of compulsory education were the lack of experience on the part of the officials and the apathy of the local authorities. The Committee was also against leaving the initiative in this matter to local bodies and stated that hasty introduction of compulsory education in the circumstances then prevailing was uncalled for.

The Committee recommended that primary education should be provided for at least four years; and, that stress should be placed on the quality of the instruction. They were of the opinion that a policy of consolidation in preference to that of expansion should be followed. The Committee thus tacitly confirmed the suspicion of the Government that the rapid expansion of the primary schools was not conducive to raising the standard of instruction. As observed by Zellner,⁶³ this was one of the policies that

⁶³Zellner, *op. cit.*, p. 161

dominated the official viewpoint between 1927-1937.

The Committee's report devoted considerable attention and space to the problem of rural education. It listed the following as the causes obstructing the progress of rural education in India: poverty, indebtedness, illiteracy, and conservatism of the parents, differences of castes, religion and languages, and absence of any systematic attempts to educate the illiterate parents. Other reasons included were wide prevalence of epidemic and seasonal disease, low density of population coupled with inadequate means of transportation, an unfavorable climate, unequal distribution of schools in rural areas, inadequate provision of elementary schools, and absence of optimum utilization of the existing school facilities. The Commission also attributed the lack of progress of rural education to single teacher schools, often managed by untrained and unqualified teachers, a curriculum wholly unsuited to the needs of rural life, and finally to the inadequacy of the inspecting staff.

The Commission was fully aware of the difficulties in organizing and establishing rural schools. It observed:

"The school units are usually small; adequate staffing is more expensive; the conditions of life are not attractive to teachers unless they are specially selected and trained; women teachers cannot, as a rule, live in villages unless circumstances are exceptionally favorable; the teachers are isolated and the difficulties of administration, supervision, and

inspection are much greater; and it is more difficult to secure regular and prolonged attendance of children."⁶⁴

The Report of the Commission indicated that it had a deep insight into then existing problems of Indian education. Its opinion that the problem of Indian education was, in fact, a rural problem, was frankly realistic. The Commission's emphasis on the point that primary education should be developed side by side with rural reconstruction and that the school should be the center of such developmental activities, was most commendable. Another useful recommendation of the Commission was to adjust the school schedule and vacations to seasonal conditions and local requirements.

The period between 1937-47 could be called the pre-independence decade in Indian history. The Government of India Act of 1935 which superceded the previous Act of 1919 granted autonomy to the provinces.⁶⁵ The act was also instrumental in paving the way for complete independence that was to come in 1947.

In 1937, under the provisions of the 1935 Act, the Indian National Congress, the main political party of the

⁶⁴Desai, op. cit., p. 37.

⁶⁵Moreland and Chatterjee, op. cit., p. 487.

country, formed provincial governments in seven out of eleven provinces.⁶⁶ However, owing to the political differences arising out of the outbreak of World War II, the Congress Ministers resigned in 1937.⁶⁷ The resignation of the provincial ministers was followed by the formation of "caretaker" governments which lasted until 1946. As could be expected, all of the efforts and resources of the British government as well as those of the Government of India, were concentrated upon winning the war. As a result of this preoccupation, the caretaker governments strived only to maintain the "status quo" in education and other social service departments. The end of World War II saw the Congress ministries back in provincial governments in 1946.

It would appear that the period between 1937-47 had more than its share of international conflicts and national upheavals. The prosecution after World War II was draining out the financial and material resources of all the belligerent nations. India, also, by virtue of being under British rule, was involved in global hostilities.

Within India itself, the "Quit India" Movement, which was started by the Indian National Congress as a

⁶⁶ibid., p. 493.

⁶⁷Griffiths, op. cit., p. 346.

peaceful struggle against the British domination, soon degenerated into violence and bloodshed. During such a period of political turbulence and turmoil, the work of educational expansion and rural reconstruction had to wait for a more opportune time.

From an educational point of view, one of the most important events of this period was the birth of the philosophy of basic education which, according to Prof. Wood, was the only major creative idea in India during the last 150 years.⁶⁸

The National Government of India had accepted basic education as a national system of education.⁶⁹ The Scheme, therefore, is discussed in the following chapter in connection with the present status of elementary education in India.

During the pre-independence decade, the popular ministries, while in office, took several measures to expand primary education. Several compulsory education laws then in force were amended, but in spite of these efforts, there

⁶⁸ Hugh B. Wood, "Basic Education in India Takes an American Trend," National Schools, 55:54, May, 1955.

⁶⁹ Ministry of Education, Government of India, Education in India, 1952-53 (Delhi, Manager of Publications, Government of India, 1956), p. 92.

was no appreciable increase in the number of primary schools.

An important educational document of this period was the Sargent Plan, published by the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1944. The Report contained detailed plans of post-war educational development and expansion. According to Hampton, the Sargent Plan was the first comprehensive plan encompassing all phases of education in India.⁷⁰ The plan aimed at free and compulsory education for all children from six to fourteen years of age. The scheme of compulsory education was to be spread over a period of forty years.⁷¹ The plan also accepted the underlying philosophy of basic education but expressed strong doubts that the program of basic schools could ever be entirely self-supporting as claimed by Mahatma Gandhi, the founder of the idea.

The Sargent Report recommended the establishment of primary education for children between three and six years of age as an essential adjunct to the national system of education. The primary education program itself was to be divided into two states: (1) "Junior Basic" for children

⁷⁰H. V. Hampton, "Biggest Educational Structure Ever Planned," Journal of Education, 81:466, August, 1949.

⁷¹"Educational Planning in India," School and Society, 68:86, August 7, 1948.

six to eleven, and (2) "Senior Basic" for children eleven to fourteen.⁷²

The plan also stipulated that the primary school teacher must complete the high school course and should undergo professional training for a period of two years. It also recommended some type of in-service training for the teachers. It fixed the pupil-teacher ratio in Junior Basic school at 30:1, and in Senior Basic schools at 25:1. It also empowered the provincial government to take over the control of primary education from local bodies if they were not functioning efficiently.

The report was, however, criticized by the Indian educators on many counts. First, the period of forty years was considered to be too long a time to reach the goal of mass literacy. It was also said that the estimate of expenditure necessary for carrying out the scheme was too high and India, being a poor country, could not afford to foot the bill. Desai observed:

"The estimate of expenditure costing rupees 2,000 million a year was based on a population of 290 million and the price levels of 1938-39. If allowance is made for the rise in population by 25 per cent and rise

⁷²John Sargent, "Educational Reconstruction in India," Asiatic Review, 40:233-248, July, 1944.

in prices by 300 per cent, the same program would cost 7500 million rupees."⁷³

Obviously a poor country like India, needing not only educational expansion, but industrial and agricultural development, defense, and a score of other national services, was in no position to afford an expenditure of this magnitude.

In spite of its obvious financial impracticability, the Sargent Plan was the first comprehensive effort of the British government to chalk out long range programs for education in general and primary education in particular. A separate Department of Education was established by the Central Government in 1945. The main purpose of this department was to implement the recommendations of the Sargent Plan. However, the rising national demands for independence forced the British Government to relinquish its sovereignty over India. Consequently, on August 15, 1947, India, though divided, emerged as a free nation and the tremendous task of educational and national reconstruction fell upon the shoulders of the Indian National Government.

The circumstances prevailing between the period

⁷³Desai, op. cit., p. 249.

1921-22 and 1945-46⁷⁴ were not too conducive to the growth of primary education in India. The political unrest arising from the Indian struggle for independence and the financial stringency resulting from the worldwide economic depression of the early 1930's and the advent of World War II, all played their part in arresting the rapid progress of primary education which was so evident during 1901-02 and 1922-23.

A statistical analysis of the available data indicated that in 1921-22 there were 155,017 primary schools with an enrollment of 6,109,752. During about two and a half decades following the above year, the number of primary schools rose to 167,700 and that of pupils to 13,027,313.⁷⁵ The percentage increase in the number of schools and pupils was eight and 13 respectively. It was observed, therefore, that during the period under review the enrollment in primary schools more than doubled but there was no appreciable increase in the number of schools. It was also noted that in 1945-46, the average number of pupils per primary school was 78 against

⁷⁴ It was not possible to compare the figures for 1946-47, which related to the Republic of India only, with the statistics of previous years which were available for the undivided India. The year 1945-46 was selected because it was the last year for which the statistics for undivided India were available.

⁷⁵ Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 778.

39 in 1921.⁷⁶

In 1936-37, the direct outlay on primary schools amounted to rupees 81,338.015.⁷⁷ Even though this expenditure was sixty-four per cent higher than that of 1921-22, an actual decrease in per pupil cost was found. The average annual per pupil cost of eight rupees in 1936-37 was nearly two per cent less than the corresponding cost for 1921-22. The average annual expenditure per primary school in the former year was Rupees 423 which marked an increase of 33 per cent over similar expenditure in 1921-22. However, a large part of this and the overall increase in expenditure could be accounted for by the rise in prices.

It was stated in the Quinquennial Review of Education in India (1947-1952) that in 1946-47,⁷⁸ there were 134,966 primary schools in India. The number of scholars was reported

⁷⁶1936-37 was the last year for which figures of direct expenditure on primary education relating to the undivided India were available.

⁷⁷Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 680.

⁷⁸Vide footnote 74. The statistics for 1946-47, as furnished here, related to the Republic of India, and hence could only be used as a basis of comparison with the statistics for the following year.

to be 10,047,317⁷⁹ thus giving an average of 74 pupils per school. The total primary school enrollment was made up of 7,322,104 boys and 2,715,213 girls.⁸⁰ The number of schools for boys and girls were 120,600 and 14,366, respectively. It was observed that the total primary school enrollment consisted of 89 per cent boys and only 11 per cent girls. Similarly, 73 per cent of the schools were for boys and only 27 per cent for girls.

In 1936-37, the direct expenditure on primary education for the whole of undivided India was less than 82 million rupees.⁸¹

The average per pupil cost was eight rupees. In 1946-47, similar outlay for the new Republic of India alone amounted to about 153 million rupees⁸² with a per pupil cost of 15 rupees.

The rapid rise in expenditure looked impressive at first glance, but further analysis showed that not only was a large part of this expenditure due to a rapidly rising population and soaring prices, but was far short of the

⁷⁹ Ministry of Education, Government of India, Progress of Education in India, 1947-1952 (Quinquennial Review), (New Delhi: Manager of Publications, Government of India, 1953), p. 45.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 48-49.

⁸¹ Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 680.

⁸² Ministry of Education, op. cit., p. 56.

actual existing needs. The population of India, immediately before partition, was about 400 million people.⁸³ As a result of division of the country, about 80 million people came under the jurisdiction of the newly created States of Pakistan.⁸⁴ The population of the Republic of India 1946-47, could therefore be estimated at 320 million. The total direct expenditure on primary education was reported to be Rupees 152,621,387.⁸⁵ It could therefore be observed that in 1946-47 the per capita expenditure on primary schools was about Rupees 0.48 (about ten U.S. cents) per year. These statistics speak for themselves and need no further elaboration.

The dismal picture of low expenditure was matched by an equally low percentage of pupils attending schools. It was found that in the year 1946-47, only 30 per cent of the children in the age group six to eleven were actually in schools.⁸⁶

⁸³ Robert A. Smith, Divided India (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1947), p. 53.

⁸⁴ Richard Synods, The Making of Pakistan (London: Faber and Faber, n. d.) p. 13.

⁸⁵ Ministry of Education, loc. cit.

⁸⁶ cf. ante, p. 2.

CHAPTER III

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN FREE INDIA- ITS PROBLEMS AND PROGRESS

When India became free from the yoke of foreign domination in 1947, it had the burden of a score of unsolved problems accumulated during a long period of alien rule.

As stated by Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister:

"We would have had to face a multitude of problems that had accumulated during the past 150 years of British rule, because British rule being an imposition from outside, presented the normal adjustment of social relations, the normal solution of the problems which would otherwise have taken place, either peacefully or by violence."¹

As could be expected, the British administration in India accorded priorities to such projects as were considered to be essential in perpetuating their hold on India. Agriculture and industrial development, irrigation, sanitation, national health and education were not totally ignored, but at the same time, they did not receive attention that could normally be expected of a national government.

¹Jawaharlal Nehru, Independence and After: A Collection of Speeches, 1946-49 (New York: John Day Company, 1950), p. 134.

At the time India became free, not only was the bulk of the population illiterate, but the existing system of education was also divorced from the social, cultural and economic needs of the country. Before independence, the accent of education in India was on preparing the youth for clerical and other white-collar jobs, while the need of the country was for more technically trained men and women.

To make matters worse, a series of natural and man-made calamities attended the advent of freedom in India. Some of the more pressing problems included devastating floods accompanied by widespread epidemics, a succession of earthquakes, an acute shortage of food, and rising prices.²

Perhaps one of the biggest problems was the communal disharmony and riots following the partition of the country. These upheavals led to movement on an unprecedented scale.³ The rehabilitation of about eight million refugees who poured into India from West and East Pakistan between 1947

²John F. Cramer and George S. Browne, Contemporary Education (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956), p. 515.

³Humayun Kabir, Education in New India (New York: Harper and Brothers, n.d.), pp. 1-2.

and 1952⁴ caused a heavy drain on the government's material and financial resources.

These factors, though adversely affecting the progress of education were of a transitory nature. Some of the larger problems which were hampering the spread of mass education in India for the last 200 years were found to be still alive and active, even after India became free.

I. PROBLEMS AFFECTING EDUCATION

The lack of progress of education in India resulting in a high percentage of illiteracy may be attributed to a number of problems. These problems may be conveniently divided into (1) economic, (2) social, (3) ideological, (4) historical and political (5) administrative, (6) topographical and geographical, and finally (7) educational. A detailed discussion of these problems follows.

Economic. Much had been written about the poverty of the Indian people and much of it was found to be true and factual. The per capita income in India was found to be one of the lowest in the world, and was reported to be Rupees 255 per annum.⁵ Against this, the United States had a per

⁴G. D. Binani and T. B. Rama Rao, India At A Glance (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, Ltd., 1953), p. 1587.

⁵According to the existing rate of exchange Rupees 4.76 are equivalent to one U.S. dollar.

capita income of Rupees 5,855, United Kingdom, Rupees 3,125, and France, Rupees 1,942. Even such underdeveloped countries of Latin America as Mexico and Brazil had a per capita income of Rupees 488 and Rupees 451, respectively,⁶ which was found to be considerably higher than India's per capita income. Pathetic descriptions of low standards of living of people in rural India were given by Bauer:⁷

"An overwhelming majority of Indian villages was found to be without basic amenities of a civilized life. Basic medical facilities and even pure, uncontaminated drinking water, were some of the rarities of the Indian rural life. Furthermore, electricity, sewerage, and drainage are practically unknown in the villages, and over 95 per cent of rural houses do not have even a latrine. The mean life expectation at birth is 32 years, and at 15 years, it is 36 years. The infant mortality rate is 95 per thousand births and the standardized death rate around 31 per thousand... The diet of the vast bulk of the population is meager."⁸

Chester Bowles, a former Ambassador of the United States to India, had succinctly described an Indian village:

"The Indian village is a crowded cluster of perhaps a hundred mud and thatched huts with perhaps one thousand acres of farm plots, usually divided into hundred or more tiny holdings...(The) villages are still centers

⁶Binani and Rao, op. cit.

⁷P. T. Bauer, United States Aid and Indian Economic Development (Washington: American Enterprise Association, 1959).

⁸Ibid., p. 8.

of caste, of feudalism, and of poverty. Most of the villagers rent their land at exorbitant rates or work as laborers for a large landlord. Most of them are heavily in debt."⁹

The poverty of the villages was reflected in the bare-footed, half-clad and half-fed scholars who attended the impoverished schools. The typical rural school buildings lacked essential physical facilities, and were ill-lighted and ill-ventilated. Most of these were one-teacher and one-room schools facing a dearth of books and other basic instructional materials. The following description fitted a majority of rural schools in India.

"The typical school house is a low, thatched, inconspicuous building, its floor plastered with cowdung by the pupils who take turns in sweeping it out everyday. The children sit on the floor. Slates are used for writing and arithmetic is normally taught on abacus. Besides the Three R's, the syllabus contains carpentry, spinning and weaving.. ..Classes are coeducational, but this is more from economic necessity than from any progressive ideals of female emancipation."¹⁰

⁹ Chester Bowles, Ambassador's Report (New York: Harper Brothers, 1954), p. 415.

¹⁰ "Village Schools in India," Times Educational Supplement, No. 2253:1198, July 25, 1958.

The material poverty of the rural people, evident in every walk of life, was one of the results of the neglect of the rural areas.¹¹ It was observed that more attention was paid and more money spent for the development and beautification of large towns and cities which often were the seats of administrative offices. Even the comparatively few industrial centers that India had were located near large cities, thus leaving the bulk of rural population to fall back upon already over-pressured and over-exploited land. The pressure on land could be observed from the fact that less than one acre was the area sown per head of population.¹² Against this, two and one-half acres of arable land per person were needed to provide adequate food, shelter and health.¹³

A combination of several causes made agriculture the main occupation of India, a not too lucrative enterprise. Outmoded implements, inefficient methods of cultivation,

¹¹ Ministry of Education, Government of India, Report of the All-India Educational Survey (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1960), p. 121.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Arthur Henry Moehlman and Joseph S. Roucek, (Eds.), Comparative Education (New York: The Dryden Press, 1953), p. 505.

and harvesting, fragmentation and small size of land holdings, all made per acre yield amazingly low. "Gradual exhaustion of the soil, the inadequacy of irrigation and the constant recurrence of drought, floods and damage by pests"¹⁴ were given as other causes of low agricultural productivity.

The results were obvious. The tiller of the soil was not able to eke out even a mere subsistence from the land. He, therefore, often was in debt paying exorbitant rates of interest to the local money lender who was sufficiently unscrupulous to take maximum advantage of his needs and illiteracy.

Related to the meager income of the average rural parent was the vexing problem of child labor. The income of the family was forever short of its actual needs. Both parents had to work; so had their children, which, incidentally, kept them at a safe distance from school and literacy. However, it was both unrealistic and cruel to blame the rural parents for making use of his child's labor. Such contingency was forced upon him by dire material need and not by any narrow and selfish motives. All had to pull together, no one could afford to leave anyone behind.

¹⁴ Research and Reference Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India: A Reference Annual, 1955 (Delhi, Director of the Publications Division, 1955), p. 164.

A very high birth rate, viz., forty per thousand per annum¹⁵ was found to be responsible for the aggravating of misery and poverty of the average Indian family. India, world's second most populous country, had a population of 450 million. India was only 2/3 the size of the United States but her population was between two and three times as great. It was increasing by 12 million, or about three per cent, every year.¹⁶ According to another estimate, by 1980, there would be about 596 million mouths to feed.¹⁷ The overpopulation did not only aggravate the existing unsatisfactory conditions, but it resulted in an acute food shortage, necessitating high imports of food grain, and consequently draining out the precious foreign exchange. A team of American agricultural experts which visited India under the sponsorship of the Ford Foundation warned that even if the present rate increases in food production were maintained, India would be about 25 per cent short of meeting basic nu-

¹⁵ Research and Reference Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India: A Reference Annual, 1960 (Delhi: Director of Publications Division, 1960, p. 39).

¹⁶ Gordon G. McKenzie, "Educational Problems of India and the U.S.A." Teachers College Record, 60:378, April, 1959.

¹⁷ UNESCO, The Needs of Asia in Primary Education, (Paris, UNESCO, 1961), p. 9.

tritional requirements of its people by 1966.¹⁸ The desperate situation confronting India was aptly summed up by King in these words: "The whole world's problems of food and population, of class, of superstition, of poverty and disease are gathered together in the Indian peninsula in an acute form."¹⁹

It would be belaboring the obvious to explain that a low economic productivity and low per capita income of a country would be reflected in limited financial resources at the disposal of its government. India was an example of this unhappy situation. The State Governments of India, committed to provide universal, free and compulsory education, often found their hands tied by an acute financial stringency. In direct and glaring contrast to limited material resources, the actual needs of universal and free education in India made painful reading.

Wood, writing in 1955, reported that in order to make universal education an accomplished fact "India would need to construct three million classrooms and train three million teachers. This training will require the construction and staffing of 1500 new teacher's colleges of the size now pre-

¹⁹ Edmund J. King, Other Schools and Ours (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1958), p. 178.

valent. If the job were to be done in ten years, conservatively, to finance such a project would increase educational expenditures tenfold."²⁰

Another economic cause which hindered a rapid expansion of mass education in India was the high priorities accorded to defense and other economically productive activities. Priorities in planning were given to agriculture, heavy industry, irrigation projects, and transport and communication. Few would dispute that those were not the vital needs of the country, but as observed by Norton, it was doubtful whether a proper balance between the resources allocated to the formation of material capital as opposed to educational capital was kept.²¹

Social. In a discussion of social problems confronting Indian education, the caste system claimed precedence over all other factors. The caste system evolved thousands of years ago as a result of division of labor within the community. It was then flexible enough to allow mobility from one caste to another. However, as time passed, the demarcations between castes became more clear and rigid, and

²⁰Hugh B. Wood, "Education in India Under Five-Year Plan," Elementary School Journal, 55:522, May, 1955.

²¹John K. Norton, "Lessons from Education in India," National Education Association Journal, 49:40, November 1960.

then the barriers higher. Also a long process of subdivision and stratification of the existing castes into still narrower sections set in. Speaking about religions and castes in India, Desai commented:

"...There are more religions and religious forms in India than in any other nation. The largest group is that of Hindus...the Hindu society is extremely heterogenous and is divided into more than 2000 castes and sub-castes which mostly do not inter-marry and inter-dine, between whom such impervious barriers have been raised by custom as to make social mobility almost non-existent."²²

The vexing problems of untouchability were found to be a by-product of the caste system. The number of people belonging to the lowest caste was variously estimated between 51 and more than 80 million.²³ These were the "Untouchables," having access neither to the village temple nor to the water well of the high class group. The free mingling of the children of the high and low caste pupils in a classroom was, therefore, out of the question. Separate provision of educational facilities being an impossibility, large minority of the untouchable children were left without any schooling.

²²D. M. Desai, Universal Compulsory and Free Primary Education in India (Bombay: Indian Institute of Education, 1953), p. 235.

²³Bauer, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

It might, however, be added here that Articles 17, 25, 15, and 29 of the free Indian Constitution made the practice of untouchability, in its various forms, illegal.²⁴ Also, due to the influence of urbanization, the caste system still held sway in the rural areas, especially in the southern parts of India.²⁵

Religious diversity of the Indian people could be listed as another social problem. About 80 per cent of the Indians were Hindus, ten per cent Muslims, and the remainder of the five per cent belonged to different other religions.²⁶

It was not too difficult to estimate the intensity of emotions attached to religions, and religious forms, in an illiterate and underdeveloped country, nor did it take any effort to visualize the resulting differences and conflicts among the followers of different religions. As observed by Cramer and Browne, religion meant a great deal in the

²⁴ Research and Reference Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, India - A Reference Annual 1958 (Delhi: Director of the Publications Division, 1958), p. 158.

²⁵ Bauer, op. cit., p. 12.

²⁶ Research and Reference Division, India - A Reference Annual, 1958, op. cit., p. 23.

lives of the Indian people. They further commented:

"...Muslims, Hindus, and Christians favor general education, but they all want to teach their own religious beliefs. They would all support separate schools for each religious community, but this would enormously increase the expense and would defeat the aim of national unity through education."²⁷

The amazing multiplicity of languages and dialects spoken in the far-flung corners of the country and their mutual intelligibility posed some difficult problems for India. The 1951 census enumerated as many as 845 languages or dialects.²⁸ The situation was often aggravated when a language was identified with a particular religion. Like religion, language was found to be a factor in arousing deep and strong emotions, thereby culturally dividing the people from each other.²⁹ Such sentiments were bound to affect adversely the evolution of a unified national system of public schools with unifying and harmonizing effects.

The problem of printing textbooks, supplementary books and preparing other instructional aids in a score of languages and the training of teachers belonging to different

²⁷Cramer and Browne, loc. cit.

²⁸Research and Reference Division, op. cit., p. 44.

²⁹King, op. cit., p. 191.

linguistic groups, did not lend themselves to any easy solution. Also, as observed by Kabir, the multiplicity of languages made the movement of teachers and children from one region to another more difficult.³⁰

Similarly, a high rate of adult illiteracy was also found to be responsible for assigning a low place to literacy and education in rural communities. An adult, himself illiterate, finding everyone around him similarly unlettered, could not be expected to see any meaning in sending his children to school, especially when the immediate benefit of his child's help was badly required. Also, an average illiterate parent observed that his children, if they ever got a chance to be sufficiently educated, did not see eye to eye with him on most of his family and community matters. Many an educated youth, lured by the rosy prospects of a better life, migrated to towns and cities. Some of them fell easy prey to the vices more commonly found in cities. Education beyond certain stages was, therefore, looked down upon as an alienating process leading to family disintegration; also disturbing the established pattern of the rural life. Education of the girls for similar reasons, did not find favor with the rural parents. Consequently, an over-

³⁰ Kabir, op. cit., p. 49.

whelming number of females remained illiterate and so did their children.

Early marriages were found to be another normal feature of village community life. It was not too uncommon to find parents arranging marriages between children of school age. These marriages were consummated on the attainment of puberty. The "married" girls were not supposed to be attending schools. The institutions of early marriages were found to be a source of many evils. Non-attendance of girls at schools resulting in a high rate of female illiteracy, dearth of women teachers, and a high birth rate, could be listed as some of the consequences of such marriages. However, an attempt was made to improve the situation by legislation. The Sarda Act of 1929, forbidding marriages of girls before the age of fifteen, brought some measure of improvement about.³¹

The dowry system, which made parents pay huge amounts of money to the bridegroom or his parents for getting their daughters married, made the expense on female education appear as a waste. Few parents were prepared to make any sacrifices for their girls' education and also to pay dow-

³¹ Aubrey Albert Zellner, Education in India (New York: Bookman Associates, 1951), p. 218.

ries for their marriages. The dowry system, therefore, affected adversely the expansion of female education in India.

Ideological. The significances of ideology could not be denied in the life of a nation. Nations were made and unmade, thrived or died by the motivation stemming from the fountains of ideology. Ideology was found to be a determinant of attitude, constantly shaping and reshaping, molding and remolding, a nation's life. It was, therefore, not surprising to find that the attitudes and philosophy of the Indian masses played a significant role in deciding the fate of education in that country.

A large majority of the Indian people held the belief that life was a transitory period of sojourn in this world; at best, it was a preparation for a better and everlasting life. Hence, no one should succumb to its varied temptations. No attempt should be made to make living so comfortable as to enmesh oneself in the alluring bondage of this world, thereby making the final salvation from the painful cycle of birth and death impossible. Further, one's station in life was predetermined, and was based on the good or bad deeds of previous life. This unquestioning and fatalistic acceptance of one's position in life was not too conducive to the development of materialistic culture with its modern paraphernalia. It was, therefore, not surprising

that Indian masses lacked any initiative or desire to better their socio-economic conditions. Also, the marked rurality was found to be responsible for making Indian society static and consequently resistant to change.³²

In the peculiar circumstances prevailing in India, education was not recognized as a means of social and economic uplift. Literacy was considered necessary only for the landlords, the village officials, and the priests, who managed, in their own majestic ways, the common man's affairs of this and the other world.

Kirpal, commenting upon the negative attitude of the masses toward education, observed:

"Indian society doesn't yet attach sufficiently high value to education. In spite of the magnitude of the task of eradicating illiteracy and improving the quality of education, and despite lack of resources in money and trained personnel, greater progress could have been made if there had been a strong public opinion demanding adequate facilities for education and willing to make corresponding sacrifices."³³

The low socio-economic condition of the teacher in

³² Humayun Kabir, "Indian Education Since Independence," Phi Delta Kappan, 39:105, December, 1959.

³³ Prem Kirpal, "From India," National Education Principal, 38:31, December, 1958.

the Indian society was found to be a corollary of the mass apathy toward education . King reported that in 1955 some of the villages teachers received eight rupees, or less than two dollars a month. Even properly qualified teachers earned Rupees 80 per month.³⁴ Saiyidain observed that it was not too uncommon to find a graduate and trained teacher earning Rupees 40 to Rupees 50 a month.³⁵

Historical and Political. Several historical and political forces played their part in turning India into a vast desert of illiteracy. During the 150 years of British rule over India, education remained a neglected area. Even if it was admitted that the British had heavy odds against any scheme of mass education in India, they did not go a great deal to overcome these odds. They not only failed to evolve a national system of education, but they did not even have a long-range plan of eradicating illiteracy. They also overlooked the social, political, and economic development of India. The East India Company was interested mainly in trade and commerce. The British Crown rule that followed

³⁴ King, op. cit., p. 183.

³⁵ K. G. Saiyidain, Problems of Educational Reconstruction (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1950), p. 291.

the Company's regime, concerned itself chiefly with perpetuating its hold over India at the cost of national unity and by adopting a policy of divide and rule.³⁶

Similarly, the adoption of short-sighted educational theories and wrong methods led to the lack of progress of education. The adoption of the downward filtration theory, the neglect of an already existing indigenous system of education and the modern Indian languages, and finally an imposition of a Western system of education, ill-suited to the social, cultural, and economic needs of the country, could be blamed for alienating masses from education.

It was also unfortunate that the political parties of India which were vocal in blaming the British for not making any strenuous efforts for making education universal, free and compulsory, did not show any acute concern for the education of the population of free India. It was observed that none of these political parties made the provision of free, universal, and compulsory education a major political issue before, during, or after political elections. This apathy was clearly reflected in low priority accorded to education in the five-year plans and also in day-to-day activities of

³⁶ Syed Nurullah and J. P. Naik, op. cit., pp. 858-862.

the government. Saiyidain, commenting on this aspect, observed that the education budget of India reveals a very painful story. The total expenditure on education in this vast and predominantly illiterate country is less than 10% of her overall national budget, while the defense budget accounts for more than 50 per cent.³⁷

Administrative. India inherited a very efficient system of civil administration from the methodical English. However, educational administration was one of the most neglected areas. One of the criticisms leveled by Nurullah and Naik was that the Education Department was staffed with European officials of small stature. Also, necessary personnel to plan and organize a national system of education were not mobilized.³⁸

The top echelon of the Education Department was staffed with civil servants, who were often unaware of the classroom problems, the education needs of the school and community, and were not too well-versed in the philosophy and aims of education. Their approach to day-to-day problems,

³⁷Saiyidain, loc. cit.

³⁸Nurullah and Naik, op. cit. p. 863.

was, therefore, more administrative than educational. The practice of subordinating the Education Department to a civil administrative official was repeatedly criticized by various Commissions and the Central Advisory Board, but still persisted in all the States of the Indian Union.³⁹

Saiyidain laid a great deal of emphasis upon "humanizing" the educational administration in modern India. He deplored the authoritative, bureaucratic and the "red-tapish" mentality in educational administration and pleaded for re-orientation in the outlook of teachers, inspecting staff, and administrators.⁴⁰

Another valid charge that was often levied against educational administration in India was that local bodies were made responsible for enforcing compulsory education in their areas. The local authorities often lacked sufficient power to impose taxes and were also found wanting in the initiative and drive necessary to carry out a scheme of compulsory education.⁴¹

³⁹ Ministry of Education, Government of India, Program of Education in India, 1947-1952, Quinquennial Review (Delhi: Government of India Press, 1953), p. 196.

⁴⁰ Saiyidain, op. cit., pp. 261-262.

⁴¹ Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 682.

Topographical and Geographical. The topographical and geographical factors played their own part in making educational facilities inaccessible to considerable numbers of school age population. The large majority of the Indian villages had a very low density of population. Of the total rural "habitations" 30.25 per cent had less than 100 people.⁴² The situation was often aggravated by the absence of any means of communication linking the villages. The Indian climate could be described as essentially monsoon-tropical with some local variations.⁴³ The climate, therefore, made it impossible for children to cover any long distances in incessant rains or scorching heat. The typical rural schools had mud floors and walls, thatched roofs, inadequate lighting and ventilation, and no furniture. Consequently, they afforded little protection against the vagaries of the climate. In Northern India, schools were forced to be closed down during the winter because there was no provision for heating the school premises. In Kashmir, small rural inhabitations were scattered all over the state, and the snow often made the unimproved roads impassable.

Trumbull, calling India the "orphan of nature" ob-

⁴² Ministry of Education, Report of the All-India Educational Survey, op. cit., p. 163.

⁴³ Research and Reference Division, India 1960, op. cit., p. 3.

served:

"Nobody in the world takes such a heavy beating from nature as the Indians do. Half the year they suffer hellish heat, and in the brief winter, throughout the northern half of the country, piercing cold takes a death toll from thin-blooded underfed peasants and city waifs, who can afford neither sufficient clothes nor fuel."⁴⁴

The outburst of epidemics and seasonal illness in rural India did not affect adversely school attendance, but claimed a heavy toll of life. As cited by Abel:

"Regularity of attendance in India is made impossible by epidemic and seasonal illness. Epidemic diseases are far more prevalent and persistent in India than in non-tropical countries, and millions of the population are constantly incapacitated for example, by malaria. The average number of patients treated at hospitals each year for malaria alone is over 7,000,000."⁴⁵

Educational. It sounds odd that there could be some educational causes retarding the progress of education. Unfortunately, such a paradox did exist in India. Certain inherent causes within the educational system made education

⁴⁴ Robert Trumbull, As I See India (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1956), p. 239.

⁴⁵ Jones F. Abel, "An Experiment in the Education of 247 Millions of People," School Life, 15:18, February 1930, (Article citing the report of the Auxiliary Committee appointed by the Simon Commission, May, 1928.)

an almost exclusive privilege for a small minority of children. Education in India was not related to the real life of the country, but was an intellectual exercise for those who could afford to pay for it. The curriculum generally neglected the actual needs of the children, community, and the country. It was merely academic and literate. No emphasis was placed on teaching useful and usable skills that could enrich the life of the individual and that of the community. It was small wonder that the illiterate peasant regarded formal education as a waste of time, and as non-productive activity adding little to the well-being and welfare of the family, and needed much persuasion to send his children to school. Also, there was an absence of any plan of vocational and educational guidance offered by schools. The schools did not revise and broaden their curriculum offering nor did they help children to select subjects best suited to their needs and abilities.

The deficiencies in the educational system itself, coupled with economic reasons, led to the problems of "wastage" and "stagnation." According to a Government of India Report, the wastage was 57 per cent in 1947-48, 41 per cent in 1948-49, 50 per cent in 1949-50, 33 per cent in 1950-51 and 45 per cent in 1951-52.⁴⁶ The premature withdrawal of

⁴⁶Ministry of Education, Progress of Education in India, op. cit., p. 58.

children not only resulted in huge wastage in primary school expenditure, but also caused the dropouts to lapse back into illiteracy. Similarly, the problem of stagnation, i.e., retaining a pupil in the same class for more than one year, was found to be another weakness of the present school policies. The dearth of children's literature and the comparatively few opportunities of reading and writing for rural children after they quit school, always posed the risk of their relapse into illiteracy.

The deficiencies in the existing Indian educational system were keenly felt by the Indian educators. However, the basic reforms in elementary education were proposed by Gandhi, who was a political leader. The proposed changes soon claimed the approval of the Indian National Congress, the main political party of India. When Congress came into power in 1947, it accepted basic education as the future educational policy for India.

II. BASIC EDUCATION

Having accepted the ideology of basic education, the Indian National Government was striving to convert as many elementary schools into basic education as possible.⁴⁷ Mac-

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 6.

kenzie reported that India's elementary schools are at various stages in respect to their acceptance of basic education.⁴⁸ Also, as observed by Hingorani, "Schemes for basic education are being dovetailed into projects of compulsory primary education."⁴⁹ This comparatively new trend in Indian elementary education made a discussion of basic education both imperative and pertinent to this part of the study.

The philosophy of basic education was propounded by Gandhi, one of the greatest political leaders of India. Gandhi was not educationist either by training or profession, but "his insight into the educational problem of the country was the fruit of his firsthand knowledge of men and matters and his insight into realities of the Indian social situation."⁵⁰

Gandhi's philosophy of basic education received its first national acceptance at the First Conference of National Education held at Wardha in 1937.⁵¹ This conference endorsed

⁴⁸Gordon MacKenzie, "Education in India," Educational Leadership, 16:426, April, 1949.

⁴⁹D. K. Hingorani, Education in India: Before and After Independence, Educational Forum, 19:222, January, 1955.

⁵⁰Saiyidain, op. cit., pp. 155-156.

⁵¹T. S. Avanasilingam, Understanding Basic Education (Delhi: Manager of Publications, Government of India, 1957), p. 3.

Gandhi's proposals that free and compulsory education should be provided for a seven year period. Also, the new education was to center around some form of manual or productive work and integrated with a central handicraft. The conference also appointed a committee under Zikir Husain, an eminent Indian educationist. The report of this Committee, published in December, 1937,⁵² wholeheartedly supported education as the future national educational policy of India.

The scheme of basic education was an outcome of Gandhi's personal opinions about what education in India should and should not be. Gandhi was satisfied neither with the alien political rule over India nor with an alien educational system imposed on the country. He insisted that knowledge could only be effectively imparted to children through their mother tongue. Gandhi was keenly aware of the wide gap that existed between "book-learning" and the actual conditions then prevailing in that country. He held the belief that stuffing children's minds with factual information could not be called education and said:

"Up until now our children's minds are stuffed with all kinds of information without being stimulated or developed. Let us now educate

⁵²Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 805.

the children through manual work -- not as a side activity, but as the prime means of intellectual training."⁵³

Gandhi was a strong advocate of the development of the child's mental as well as physical faculties. He, however, held that education of the intellect could only be accomplished through training of the body organs.⁵⁴

The roots of the philosophy of basic education could be found in various educational theories advanced and experiments carried out in different parts of the world. As observed by Rice, the purposes of basic education were similar to those of work-experience programs, life adjustment programs, core curriculum, community improvement projects, the Four-H Clubs and Future Homemakers of America. All these projects and programs drew their inspiration and strength from the philosophy of "learning by doing."⁵⁵

Gandhi was fully cognizant of the fact that India lived in its villages. He, therefore, favored an educational

⁵³ Shamsuddin, "Some Facts About Basic Education in India," Education, 78:174-175, November, 1957.

⁵⁴ M. K. Gandhi, "Gandhi on Education," Education Digest 14:25, September, 1948.

⁵⁵ Theodore Rice, "A Comment on Miss Sykes's Article," The Journal of Educational Sociology, 28:217, January, 1955.

system best suited to the needs of rural India.⁵⁶ His new system of education provided for the practical training of the children in making salable and useful products which would yield sufficient money to recover the cost of schools. As observed by Kabir,

"It is the addition of this element of social utility to the child's activity that differentiates Basic Education from other types of activity-centered education."⁵⁷

According to Agarwal, the fundamental principle of basic education was "the teaching of different subjects through some productive activity or craft. For example, the child learns spinning and weaving of cloth as he learns the craft, the teacher tells him about the geology of the soil, the botany of the cotton plants, general science, geography regarding rain, climates and countries in which cotton is grown and cloth manufactured, the history and growth of civilization, and the use of the different kind of dress, the social science of cooperative calculation and distribution, and the arithmetic of numerous practical calculations, involved in the processes of carding, spinning and weaving."⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Kabir, Education in New India, op. cit., p. 26.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁸ Shirman N. Agarwal, "Mahatma Gandhi's 'New Education,' " Education Digest, 15:14, April, 1950.

However, basic education could not be considered completely craft-centered even though it made expensive use of local crafts both as a teaching aid and as a means of recovering the cost of schools. The practice of basic education did not overlook the study of academic subjects, and social, cultural, and community activities. Wood reported a program of a typical basic school located in Bihar. The schedule of this school revealed the objectives of basic education as well as the techniques used to achieve these objectives. According to Wood, the program of basic education was spread over 113½ hours in a month. The time allotment of school hours was as follows:

"Social activities...sanitation...4½ hours; prayers and attendance...4½ hours; children's assembly...3 hours; celebration of festivals...2 hours; celebration of important anniversaries...2 hours; newspaper and library...12½ hours;

"Crafts...spinning, weaving and connected activities...30 hours; maintaining accounts...1½ hours; kitchen gardening...6½ hours; contact with surrounding communities...15½ hours; nature study...1 hour; study of the related academic subjects...30½ hours."⁵⁹

It would appear that the basic craft occupied 26 per cent of total school time, and the study of related academic

⁵⁹Hugh B. Wood, "Basic Education in India Takes an American Trend," National Schools, 55: May, 1955.

subjects claimed about 27 per cent of the school time. This fact indicated that training in craft and study of academic subjects received almost equal attention.

The emphasis on crafts partly stemmed from Gandhi's opinion that schools should be financially self-supporting. He observed that "our rural education is to be made self-supporting if it is to be made compulsory."⁶⁰ He held the opinion that the scheme of basic education could yield sufficient revenue for running the schools. In fact, the degree to which basic schools were self-supporting was made a measure as well as a test of their efficiency.

However, recent experience has shown that it had not been possible for basic schools to recover the cost of their operation only by selling their products. In 1948-49, in Madras, the basic schools were non-self supporting, but proved to be more expensive than non-basic schools.⁶¹ In Bombay, the adoption of the system of basic education during 1948-49 resulted in the increase of the cost of education by 33 1/3 per cent. The same trend was found to exist in other states where basic education schemes were introduced. Bihar proved an exception to this general rule. In Bihar, during 1949-50,

⁶⁰ Shamsuddin, op. cit., p. 174.

⁶¹ Desai, op. cit., p. 300.

the cost of basic schools actually recovered amounted to about 20 per cent.⁶² Desai, therefore, observed that basic education proved to be more expensive than non-basic education, with the result that the scheme of basic education had developed into qualitative drive which has made expansion even more difficult than in the past.⁶³ Desai concluded that maximum results that could be expected were recovery of the cost of additional materials besides leaving a small surplus. Even these small financial results depended on full pupil attendance and upon the States buying all of the products of the schools.⁶⁴

It was found that more emphasis was being placed by the Indian Union and State Governments upon the purpose of basic education rather than upon the school's ability to recover operational expenses. The Report of Zakir Husain Commission published as far as 1937, contained the following:

"We wish to make it quite clear that we consider the scheme of Basic Education to be sound

⁶²Ibid., p. 302-306.

⁶³Ibid., p. 275.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 311.

in itself. It should be accepted as a matter of sound educational policy and as an urgent measure of national reconstruction."⁶⁵

By 1940, the scheme of basic education was looked upon as an accepted plan of education for Indian children. The Central Advisory Board of Education meeting in May, 1940, divided the age range of six to fourteen years of compulsory basic education in junior stage of five years to be followed by a senior stage of three years.⁶⁶

Even though basic education was accepted as the national system of education, it did not seem to provide a panacea for all the evils of Indian education. The chief weaknesses were found in its emphasis upon its production of salable articles, its stress upon teaching all subjects through craft, and finally, the prohibitive cost of organizing and operating basic schools.

The Zakir Husain Committee, which scrutinized the scheme of basic education from an educational and practical point of view, had the following to say about child labor employed in basic schools:

⁶⁵ Nurullah and Naik, loc. cit.

⁶⁶ "India's Basic System of Education," Schools and Society, 52: November 16, 1940.

"There is an obvious danger that the economic aspect may be stressed at the sacrifice of the cultural and educational objectives. Teachers may devote most of their attention and energy to extracting maximum amount of labor from children, while neglecting the social, intellectual and moral implications and possibilities of craft training."⁶⁷

Kabir, another Indian educationist, warned against over emphasis on production, which carried the risk of turning schools into factories exploiting child labor.⁶⁸ However, another distinguished educationist, Saiyidain, tried to allay these fears in the following words:

"This apprehension reveals a failure to appreciate the basic difference in spirit, approach, and atmosphere between a good school and a bad factory. If the inner meaning of the scheme is rightly understood, there is nothing in it which is repugnant to the healthy all-around development of children."⁶⁹

In spite of the staunch defense of supporters of basic education, the risk of giving the production aspect the first place in a scheme of basic instruction, especially by the untrained, half-trained and overzealous teachers, was found to be too real to be brushed off lightly.

⁶⁷Nurullah and Naik, loc. cit.

⁶⁸Kabir, op. cit., p. 32.

⁶⁹Saiyidain, op. cit., pp. 166-167.

As could be expected, the lack of adequate finances was a factor adversely affecting the expansion of basic education. As reported by the Government of India, the scheme of basic education was proving more expensive because of higher salaries paid to teachers and the cost of equipment. Lack of marketing facilities was another contributing factor in increasing the total cost.⁷⁰

King reported that in 1953 there were only 45,000 basic schools, almost confined to the children in the age group six to eleven. He attributed the slow expansion of basic schools to a lack of well-trained teachers.⁷¹ Another Government of India report stated that by the end of First Five Year Plan (1955-56), the percentage of junior basic and senior basic schools was about 15 and 20 per cent of the total number of the primary and middle schools. The target of the Second Five Year Plan ending in 1960-61 had increased the percentage of both categories of basic schools to 30.⁷² It was also estimated that by the end of the Third

⁷⁰ Ministry of Education, Government of India, Education in India, 1952-53 (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1956), p. 92.

⁷¹ King, op. cit., pp. 198-199.

⁷² International Bureau of Education, International Yearbook of Education, 1963 (Geneva: International Bureau of Education, 1963), pp. 175-176.

Five Year Plan, terminating in 1966, all primary schools would be oriented in basic pattern.⁷³

Having discussed the basic problems of Indian education and the philosophy and practice of basic education as an attempted solution to some of these problems, it would be worthwhile to review the progress of elementary education in India since that country became independent in 1947.

III. PROGRESS OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

When India became free in 1947, it was one of the most educationally backward countries of the world. Commenting upon literacy in India in 1947, some authorities observed that only 25 per cent of the children went to school, only 15 per cent of the population was able to read, and only ten per cent was able to read and write.⁷⁴ This high percentage of illiteracy assumed greater dimensions when it was considered that India, on the eve of independence, had a population of 320 million.

Even the inadequate educational facilities that were available were not distributed evenly in all parts of India.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴King, op. cit., p. 197.

For example, the North Eastern Frontier Agency, an area comprising about 30,000 square miles, was without a single school before 1947.⁷⁵ Similarly, education in rural areas was sadly neglected. No vigorous measures were taken to enforce compulsory education in that country. A discussion of rural education and compulsory education may be found elsewhere in this chapter. The following is an analysis of progress of elementary education since 1947.

Before a review of progress of education is undertaken, two important factors need to be explained at the outset. First, according to the existing pattern of school organization in India, elementary education was divided into two stages, primary and junior basic stages for the age group of six to eleven and eleven to fourteen.⁷⁶ It was a common practice in India to enumerate the school by their nomenclature rather than by the stage or level of instruction offered.⁷⁷ It was not too uncommon for a high school to contain

⁷⁵ Ministry of Education, Progress of Education in India, 1947-52, op. cit., p. 46.

⁷⁶ Planning Commission, Government of India, Third Five Year Plan, op. cit., p. 99.

⁷⁷ Ministry of Education, Report of All-India Educational Survey, op. cit., p. 194.

primary as well as senior primary (middle) classes. Similarly, many middle schools had classes starting down from the first grade. The statistics pertaining to the number of schools in India, therefore, could not be treated as completely accurate. However, these statistics served a useful purpose of indicating major tendencies in the expansion of education in India.

The review of development of elementary education in India since 1947 was divided into two parts. The first dealt with the progress made between the dawn of independence and the eve of launching of the First Five Year Plan in 1950-51, and the second phase dealt with the expansion under the Five Year Plans.

It was observed that after India's independence, there was a rapid increase in the number of schools as well as in the number of pupils. In 1946-47, there were 134,966 primary schools,⁷⁸ and this number increased to 209,671⁷⁹ in 1950-51, marking an increase of 55.35 per cent. Similarly,

⁷⁸Ministry of Education, Progress of Education in India, op. cit., p. 48.

⁷⁹Research and Reference Division, India, A Reference Annual, 1960, op. cit., p. 114.

in 1946-47, the middle schools numbered 8,294,⁸⁰ and in 1950-51 there were 13,596,⁸¹ middle schools showing a percentage increase of about 64. In 1946-47, both primary and middle schools, catering to the age group six to fourteen, numbered 143,260. By 1950-51, their number rose by about 5.58 per cent.⁸²

The large increase in the number of pupils attending schools indicated that India's political independence had given a new impetus to education in that country. It was found that in 1946-47, a little more than a million pupils were in primary schools. By 1950, about 19 million⁸³, or ninety per cent more children were receiving primary education. The number of pupils attending both primary and middle schools in 1946-47 was a little more than eleven million. By 1950-51, the corresponding figure climbed up to 22 million,⁸⁴ showing an increase of 97 per cent.

⁸⁰ Ministry of Education, Progress of Education in India, 1947-52, op. cit., p. 69.

⁸¹ India, A Reference Annual, 1960, loc. cit.

⁸² Ministry of Education, Progress of Education in India, op. cit., p. 49.

⁸³ Planning Commission, Government of India, Second Five Year Plan, (n.p. Government of India Planning Commission, 1956), p. 501.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Opening of new schools and rapidly rising enrollment necessitated a greater outlay of public funds on education. In 1946-47 the direct expenditure on primary education amounted to about Rupees 153 million.⁸⁵ By 1950-51, the direct expenditure on primary education rose by about 140 per cent.⁸⁶

An analysis of the data indicated that even though there was a rapid increase in the total number of schools and scholars, great disparities in the number of boys and girls attending schools persisted. In 1946-47, total enrollment of both primary and middle schools consisted of 73.79 per cent boys and only 26.21 per cent girls. In 1951-52, the corresponding percentages were 73.36 and 26.64, respectively.⁸⁷

In 1950-51, a year marking the eve of India's First Five Year Plan, the number of schools providing facilities for elementary education was 223,267. Their number consisted of 209,671 primary and 13,596 middle schools. By the

⁸⁵ Ministry of Education, Progress of Education, op. cit., p. 56.

⁸⁶ Research and Reference Division, India, A Reference Annual, 1960, op. cit., p. 115.

⁸⁷ Ministry of Education, Progress of Education, op. cit., pp. 48-70.

end of the First Five Year Plan, the number of primary schools rose by about 33 per cent and that of middle schools by about 60 per cent. The increase in the total of primary and middle schools worked out to 34 per cent. According to the targets set for the second Five Year Plan, there were 330,897 primary and 25,185 middle schools marking a percentage increase of about 19 and 16 over the corresponding figures for 1955-56.⁸⁸ Thus, in 1960-61, the number of both primary and middle schools was 356,082, indicating an increase of about 19 per cent over the 1955-56 figure. By the end of the Third Five Year Plan, the number of primary schools had risen to 500,000, and that of middle schools to 45,000.⁸⁹ This marks the percentage increase of 138 per cent and 231 per cent, respectively. The total number of both primary and middle schools was 545,000 showing an increase of 144 per cent over the number of those in 1950-51.

Not only was there a rapid increase in the number of schools opened under the Five Year Plans, but there was also an appreciable rise in school enrollment. In 1950-51, about

⁸⁸ Research and Reference Division, India: A Reference Annual, 1960, loc. cit.

⁸⁹ Planning Commission, Government of India, Third Five Year Plan, op. cit., p. 41.

nineteen million and three million children in the age group six to eleven and eleven to fourteen, respectively, were in the primary and middle schools. Thus, a little over 22 million could be considered at the elementary stage of education. By the end of the First Five Year Plan in 1955-56, a little less than 30 million or about 36 per cent more pupils were receiving elementary education.⁹⁰ The percentage increases in the age group six to eleven, and eleven to fourteen, worked out to about 33 and 43, respectively.

The position has even improved further under the Second Five Year Plan ended in 1960-61. In 1960-61, 32½ million and a little more than six million pupils attended primary and middle schools.⁹¹ In other words, about 39 million children in the age group six to fourteen, against 22 million in 1950-51, benefited by the expansion of elementary education.

An analysis of the percentages of children in the age group six to fourteen attending primary and middle schools, during the operation of the Five Year Plans indicated progress in the expansion of elementary education.

⁹⁰ Planning Commission, Second Five Year Plan, op. cit., p. 501.

⁹¹ Ibid.

It also revealed the perpetuation of disparities in the number of boys and girls enrolled.

In 1950-51, 46 per cent of the boys and only seventeen per cent of the girls in the age group of six to fourteen, were in schools. It was also observed that only 32 per cent of the children of both sexes, ages six to fourteen years of age, had the opportunity of being in schools. The position was improved by 1955-56. Fifty-seven per cent of the boys and 23 per cent of girls in the age group six to fourteen were in school. The Second Five Year Plan helped to increase this even further to 49 per cent of elementary children in schools. This percentage was made up of 70 per cent boys and 28 per cent girls in the age group six to fourteen.⁹²

The target set for the Third Five Year Plan envisioned that by the end of 1965-66, 50.4 million pupils, representing about 80 per cent of the children in the age group six to eleven, and another ten million or 30 per cent of the children in the age group eleven to fourteen, would be in the primary and middle schools, respectively.⁹³

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Planning Commission, Third Five Year Plan, op. cit., p. 99.

One of the directive principles of the Constitution of the Republic of India, which came into force in 1950, laid down that universal, compulsory and free education must be provided for all children within ten years of its promulgation. However, even after fifteen years of the operation of the Constitution, it was not possible to provide the facilities of universal, compulsory and free education.

The inadequacy of funds, impeding a more rapid expansion of elementary education, was discussed elsewhere in this chapter. The following is a discussion of allocation of financial resources to education in India's Five Year Plans.

India's Five Year Plan involved a total outlay of Rupees 23,560 million.⁹⁴ Education was allocated Rupees 1,690 million, which was 7.17 per cent of the total outlay. Out of 1,690 million, an amount of 930 million or 55.03 per cent of the funds for education, was earmarked for elementary education.⁹⁵ The Second Five Year Plan provided an amount of Rupees 3070 million for education which worked out to 6.4 per cent of the total plan outlay. Out of the total amount allocated to education, elementary education was provided with

⁹⁴Planning Commission, Second Five Year Plan, op. cit. p. 52.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 500.

Rupees 890 million,⁹⁶ or slightly less than 29 per cent of the total provision for education.

It was observed that even though allotment made to education under the Second Five Year Plan was twice as much as provided under the First Five Year Plan, the share of elementary education was reduced from 55.03 to less than 29 per cent. However, the total amount earmarked for education including elementary education, was far short of the actual need. The cost of the universal education was considered to be too prohibitive to be borne by India's hard pressed economy. The cost of providing primary education was estimated to be as much as Rupees 960 million or about 1/5 of the total plan outlay of the Second Five Year Plan. It was therefore admitted that Government alone could not shoulder the financial burden, and it was for local communities to make further efforts.⁹⁷

In direct contrast to allocation of funds for education in general and elementary education in particular, the plan's program of spending on agriculture and communications

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 672.

⁹⁷ Planning Commission, Government of India, The New India: Progress Through Democracy (New York: MacMillan Co., 1950), pp. 332-335.

made an interesting reading. It was observed that agriculture and community development claimed Rupees 3,570 million and Rupees, 5,680 million in the First Five Year Plan, which was 15.1 and 11.8 per cent of the total plan outlay. Similarly, under the head "transport and communication" Rupees 5,570 million and 13,850 million were provided.⁹⁸ This constituted 23.6 and 28.9 per cent of the total provision of the funds under the First and Second Plans. Considering these allotments of funds, there was little need to belabor the point that elementary education failed to get priority in India's first two Five Year Plans.

The official recognition accorded to significance of education, which was never lacking even in the past, was once again piously expressed in the draft outline of the Third Five Year Plan in these words:

"It is realized that in the development of the country's human resources, in evoking widespread public understanding and participation, education and other social services will have significances which cannot be too greatly stressed."⁹⁹

But in spite of this recognition, first priorities in the Third Five Year Plan were given to Agriculture, in-

⁹⁸ Planning Commission, Second Five Year Plan, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

⁹⁹ Planning Commission, Third Five Year Plan, op. cit., p. 24.

dustry, power and transport and communication.¹⁰⁰ The Third Five Year Plan envisioned a total outlay of Rupees 75,000 million,¹⁰¹ which included a general provision of Rupees 4,178.33 million for education. About Rupees 2,089.16 million were to be allocated to elementary education.¹⁰² It was observed that the provision for education was only 5.57 per cent of the total play outlay, while 50 per cent of the education budget was to be utilized for elementary education.

The comparatively low priority given to education in the general scheme of planning and development in India was also found to be chiefly responsible for the lack of any appreciable progress of elementary education in India. The following is an examination of the progress of compulsion since 1947.

IV. COMPULSORY EDUCATION

It was of interest to recall Article 45 of the Indian Constitution, adopted in 1950, which laid down:

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 23-24.

¹⁰¹ Information Service of India, India On The March (Washington: Information Service, 1962), p. 12.

¹⁰² India News (Weekly Bulletin of Information Service of India, Washington), March 1, 1963, p. 5.

"The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory primary education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years."¹⁰³

Assuming a child to be in the primary stage at six to eleven years of age, the period of compulsory education worked out to be seven years. This period was generally considered to be an inadequate amount of time for keeping the child in school. As reported by Zellner, the Sargent Report and the Inter-Provincial Board on Anglo-Indian Education in India, both recommended universal and free compulsory education in India from the sixth to the fourteenth year.¹⁰⁴ The New Delhi Seminar on educational reforms held by UNESCO in 1950 also recommended that all member states should provide a terminal primary course of seven years or more.¹⁰⁵ It appeared, therefore, that the age limit for compulsory education laid down in the Indian Constitution was sound in itself. However, the actual provision for universal, free and compulsory education in India was still more in the nature of an ideal

¹⁰³ K. Santhanam, The Constitution of India (New Delhi: The Hindustan Times Press, 1951), p. 42.

¹⁰⁴ Zellner, op. cit., p. 212.

¹⁰⁵ UNESCO, Needs of Asia in Primary Education, op. cit., p. 10.

rather than an accomplished fact. The crux of the problem was found to be an acute dearth of financial resources for making provision of educational facilities difficult even for those who were in school on a voluntary basis. In other words, even if all the parents of school age children were willing to send them to school, the existing facilities would fall pathetically short of the universal demand for education.

Thus, the progress of compulsory and free education suffered from two reasons stemming from the same source, i.e., lack of adequate finances possessed by the average parents, and the limited financial resources of the government. The payment of any compensation to parents for foregoing their children's labor was also found to be impossible. It was therefore not surprising that the introduction of compulsion in India did not prove successful anywhere in the country.¹⁰⁶

Nurullah and Naik reported that back in 1947-48, the schemes of compulsory education were enforced in only 277 towns and cities and 10,705 villages.¹⁰⁷ Desai observed that even though compulsory education laws existed in most of the states, little was done to enforce them. For example,

¹⁰⁶ Desai, op. cit., p. 174.

¹⁰⁷ Nurullah and Naik, op. cit., p. 777.

Bihar had a compulsory education act since 1919, but was able to enforce compulsion in 17 urban and one rural area. Similarly, in Orissa where a compulsory education act was passed as early as 1920, compulsory education was enforced in only one urban and 24 rural areas. The only exception was provided by Bombay, where compulsion was introduced in 104 towns and 5,267 villages. But even in Bombay, a leading state in compulsory enrollment, towns and villages with population below 10,000 were without compulsion. The number of such villages was 28,000, of which 9,000 or about 32 per cent, did not even have a school in them.¹⁰⁸

By 1952-53, about 652 towns and 33,834 villages were brought under compulsion in the whole of India. The total number of children enrolled under the scheme of compulsory education was 4,752,196. This figure consisted of 60 per cent boys and 34 per cent girls. Similarly, about 23 per cent of the pupils were enrolled in town schools and 62 per cent were attending village schools.¹⁰⁹ The number of schools

¹⁰⁸ Desai, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-224.

¹⁰⁹ Ministry of Education, Government of India, *Education in India: 1952-53* (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1956), pp. 62-63.

under compulsory schemes in 1952-53, was 36,559, consisting of 27 per cent and 73 per cent of the schools located in towns and villages, respectively.¹¹⁰ By 1955-56, the number of schools increased to 46,218,¹¹¹ marking an increase of a little over 26 per cent. However, no appreciable change in the ratio of schools located in towns and villages was found.

In 1956-57, compulsory education was in full force in 1,511 towns and 57,939 villages. The number of school age children in these towns and villages was 3,330 and 6,288,000, respectively. However, 2,607,390 and 4,068,336 representing 78.3 and 64.7 per cent of the school age children were actually enrolled. It appeared therefore that even in those towns and villages where compulsory education was in effect, only 59.41 per cent of the total school age children were actually in schools.¹¹² It was also observed that the increase in compulsory enrollment between 1952-53 and 1956-57 worked out to a little over 40 per cent. The census of 1951 re-

¹¹⁰ Information Service of India, Universal Education in India (Washington, D. C.: Embassy of India, October, 1958) p. 4.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ministry of Education, Government of India, Education in India: A Graphic Presentation (New Delhi: Manager, Photo Litho-Wing, 1959), p. 32.

ported a total number of 3,016 towns and 588,089¹¹³ villages in the country. As late as 1956-57, compulsory education was in operation in only 50 per cent of the towns. As many as 530,149, or over 90 per cent, of the villages were without compulsory education. Considering the fact that the problem of mass elementary education was essentially a rural problem, the progress of compulsory education was in India far from satisfactory. As observed by Cramer and Browne, the results of introducing compulsion were so far disappointing. But they also admitted that "the difficulties facing the implementation of this objective were enough to daunt any government and cause it to proceed slowly."¹¹⁴

In view of the predominant rurality of India, no discussion of elementary education could be considered as complete without a detailed examination of rural education in that country. It was therefore considered worthwhile to conclude the present chapter with a discussion of progress of elementary education in the rural areas of India.

¹¹³Research and Reference Division, India - A Reference Annual, 1958, op. cit., p. 26.

¹¹⁴Cramer and Browne, op. cit., p. 514.

V. RURAL EDUCATION

India had a total area of 1,176,680 square miles, 98.7 per cent of which was rural and only 1.3 per cent was urban area.¹¹⁵ Four-fifths or more than eighty per cent of the Indian population lived in the villages of varying sizes. However, it was observed that education in India was generally neglected in favor of urbanized localities. It was reported in the Quinquennial Report of Progress of Education in India 1947-52, that even though 75.3 per cent of the elementary schools were located in rural areas, only 34.3 per cent of the total education expenditure was incurred on them. Most of the rural schools were impoverished one-teacher schools lacking even rudimentary educational facilities and equipment.¹¹⁶ Another government of India publication reported that in 1956-57 eleven out of every thirteen institutions, including 88 per cent of primary and preprimary schools were functioning in rural areas. However, expenditure on all rural institutions accounted for only 35.6 per cent of the total national budget on education. The

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Education, Report of the All-India Educational Survey, op. cit., pp. 119-121.

¹¹⁶ Ministry of Education, Education in India, op. cit., p. 4.

annual per pupil cost in rural areas was Rupees 30.9 as against the national average of Rupees 56.6.¹¹⁷

Another study by UNESCO, published in 1960, reported glaring discrepancies in the cost of primary education per pupil. It was stated that in large cities in India, the cost per pupil came to about 16 U.S. dollars or Rupees 76.16 per annum, while in rural areas it varied between four to six U.S. dollars, equivalent to about Rupees 19.04 to 28.56.¹¹⁸

The scheme of introducing free and compulsory education in India, and the unplanned locations of schools in the past resulting in unequal educational facilities, called for an inquiry into the existing state of rural education. The Government of India, therefore, carried out the first All-India educational survey between 1957 and 1959. Only the state of West Bengal did not participate in this survey, hence, the statistics furnished in this survey report did not include those relating to that state. The main objectives of this survey were to identify and enumerate every distinct

¹¹⁷Ministry of Education, Education in India: A Graphic Presentation, op. cit., p. 22.

¹¹⁸UNESCO, The Needs of Asia in Primary Education, op. cit., p. 20.

habitation¹¹⁹ and to collect necessary information about them, to enumerate existing primary, middle and high schools and also the habitation served by them, and to plan locations of new schools.¹²⁰

The report of this survey was found to be the most authoritative single source of information and factual and statistical data on rural education in India. The practical value of this survey was evident from the fact that its Report constituted a basis for the schemes of educational expansion embodied in India's Third Five Year Plan.¹²¹

The survey disclosed that there were 840,033 rural habitations in India. It also reported that all but 533 or 0.07 per cent of these habitations, had less than 5,000 people. About 3.25 per cent had a population of below one hundred, over 81 per cent had population less than 500, 13.54 per cent of these habitations had less than three hundred population.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Habitation was defined as a distinct cluster of houses or population center not attached to any village.

¹²⁰ Ministry of Education, Report of the All-India Educational Survey, op. cit., p. 1.

¹²¹ International Bureau of Education, International Year Book of Education, 1961 (Geneva, International Bureau of Education, 1962), p. 175.

¹²² Ministry of Education, Report of the All-India Educational Survey, op. cit., p. 163.

The figure of 300 was found to be the minimum population mark justifying even a primary school.¹²³ Similarly, 12.56 per cent of 1,500 was considered a minimum for operating a middle school.¹²⁴

The average area of rural habitation was found to be 1.30 square miles against 2.1 square miles per village. The reports also observed that an average of these were 75 rural habitations in every 100 square miles.¹²⁵ The survey reported that 27.6 per cent of the total habitations had one or more schools in them. The remainder or 72.74 per cent, or over half a million habitations, were found to be without schools. However, a good many of the "school-less" habitations had less than 100 people. Further analysis indicated that schools in 27.6 per cent of the habitations were in a position to provide primary educational facilities to about 60 per cent of the total rural population.¹²⁶

The survey also reported that out of 840,033 habitations in rural India, 104,727 or 12.47 per cent, had in-

¹²³Ibid., p. 17.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 23.

¹²⁵Ibid., pp. 175-179.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 199.

dependent¹²⁷ primary schools located in them, 492,899, or 58.67 per cent, were served by group¹²⁸ schools, and only 23.57 habitations were served by peripatetic teacher schools. Thus, 599,985, or 71.42 per cent, habitations had some access to educational facilities. About 241,048, or about 29 per cent, had no educational facilities nor were they served by any kind of school within walking distance¹²⁹ of the children. It, however, did not mean that schools located in 71 per cent of habitations were equipped with adequate educational facilities to cater to the needs of all the children. This figure only indicated the percentage of habitations which could have access to schools.

In terms of population, about 83.10 per cent of the total rural population was served by various types of schools,

¹²⁷Independent school was defined as a school so located in a habitation that its advantage could not be taken by the smaller habitations situated within walking distance.

¹²⁸Group school was a school which not only catered to the needs of the habitation in which it was located, but could also serve the adjoining smaller habitations within walking distance.

¹²⁹Walking distance for primary school children: a distance of one mile between the pupil's home and a school. For middle school children: a maximum distance of three miles between pupil's home and a school.

while 16.90 per cent had no access even to primary education facilities.¹³⁰

The Survey, attempting to enumerate schools by the levels of instruction offered rather than by their nomenclature, reported that there were 250,171 rural primary schools and 17,624,349 pupils attending these schools. This number consisted of 73 per cent boys and 27 per girls. Even though the percentage of children in the age group six to eleven of the total population was found to be 12.5, only 7.59 per cent were actually enrolled in primary schools.¹³¹ As for the number of teachers engaged in primary classes, their number was 513,013, only 12.1 per cent of them were female teachers. The teacher-pupil ratio was found to be 1:34.¹³²

Reporting on the middle school stage of education, the survey disclosed that 26,267 or 3.13 per cent of the total habitations had schools for the age group eleven to fourteen. Another 396,542 or 47.20 per cent, were served by middle school facility in the vicinity or within a walk-

¹³⁰ Ministry of Education, Report of All-India Educational Survey, op. cit., pp. 247-268.

¹³¹ Ibid., pp. 378-384.

¹³² Ibid., pp. 398-400.

ing distance of about three miles, 471,227, or 49.67 per cent of the habitations did not have any educational facilities at the middle school level.¹³³ However, middle schools were to be efficiently operated in a habitation with a population of 1,500 or more. Seen from this point of view, it was observed that 3,532 or about 42 per cent of habitations within the minimum population of 1,500 were without any middle schools. Similarly, out of 5,593 habitations having populations between 2,000 and 5,000, which was well above the minimum, 2187, or 39.10 per cent, did not have access to middle school facilities.¹³⁴

As for the number of middle schools, the survey reported that there were 32,508 such schools in rural areas within an enrollment of 2,475,854. This consisted of about 83.74 per cent boys and 16.21 per cent girls. It was further observed that percentage of boys in age group eleven to fourteen to the total population was 6.86, and that for girls 6.76, but only 1.59 per cent of the population in that age group was actually enrolled. Thus, more than 75 per cent of

¹³³ Ibid., p. 415.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 410-411.

the children in age group eleven to fourteen did not attend middle schools. The survey reported the number of middle school teachers to be 125,092 and teacher-pupil ratio of 1:20.¹³⁵

It was further observed that the number of schools offering elementary education facilities in rural India was 282,679. However, 88.5 per cent of these were primary schools and only 11.5 per cent were middle schools. The number of pupils in both stages of elementary education was a little over 20 million. About 74 per cent of these pupils were boys and 26 per cent were girls. Also 87.68 per cent of these were receiving instructions at primary school level and the remaining 12.32 per cent were in middle schools.

The report of the survey did not confine itself to presenting the current picture of elementary education in rural India, but it offered proposals for establishment of new schools. According to these proposals, 45,324 habitations with a population of 24,192,289 and another 188,664 habitations with population of 34,339,501 would be served by the proposed independent and group schools, respective-

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 427-431.

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 279-287.

ly.¹³⁶ Another 13,606 habitations having a population of 1,233,337 would be served by peripatetic teachers.¹³⁷

It appeared that if these proposals were acted upon, 812,617, or 96.7 per cent of the total habitations would have access to educational facilities. The survey, however, admitted that it would not be possible to provide educational facilities to all habitations even after new schemes were carried out. It stated that 27,356, or about 0.70 per cent of the total population, would not have access to any school. However, out of 27,356 habitations left out, 26,373 would have populations below 200.¹³⁸

In terms of levels of instruction offered, 96.74 per cent of all habitations would have access to primary school facilities, thus leaving 3.26 per cent of such habitations without such facilities.¹³⁹

As for the middle school age, 748,098 or 89.05 per cent of all the total number of habitations would have such educational facility either in the habitation itself or within

¹³⁶Ibid., pp. 279-287.

¹³⁷Ibid., pp. 311-317.

¹³⁸Ibid., pp. 490-491.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 355.

a distance of three miles. However, 10.94 per cent of the habitations would not have access to middle schools even after planning.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 425.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
IN INDIA

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT
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ABSTRACT

This report covers the developments in elementary education in India from 1813 to the present. This period is divided into four parts, namely, East India Company (1813-1900), British Crown Rule (1900-1921), Indian Control of Education (1921-1947), and, Education in Independent India (1947 to the present).

Education was the privilege of Brahmins, mercantile classes and petty officials for almost a century (1813-1910). Education was a luxury rather than a necessity and female education was unknown. No public schools were created to take the place of indigenous institutions. The East India Company, however, provided a small sum for education of the upper classes and supported the theory of "Downward Filtration" which was given up later in 1954 in favor of mass education. The Mutiny of the Indian soldiers in 1857 led to the abolition of the East India Company and India came under the direct control of the British Crown.

In order to meet the educational needs financially, a higher tax rate on land was tried, but very little of the resulting revenue was spent on education. In 1882, the Indian Education Commission suggested expansion of elementary education, but still discouraged compulsory education. In the

beginning of the twentieth century, only three per cent of the boys and almost no girls were in school. Qualitative education was supported instead of quantitative education, but still only six per cent were literate as late as 1912. A bill for compulsory education did not go through as late as 1917. The number of primary schools rose by 66 per cent with nearly doubled enrollment by 1921.

Education came under partial Indian control during 1921-1947. The compulsory education bill passed in 1917 took years to be fully put into effect. Also, at that time British government was focused on winning World War II, hence, education failed to receive proper attention. According to plans, the compulsory education was to be achieved in a period of 40 years. The political unrest, the world wide depression of the thirties, World War II, hampered any hope of rapid expansion of education in India for many years to come.

India gained her independence in 1947, and thus the control of education was passed on to the native leaders. Floods, epidemics, shortage of food, communal riots, and rehabilitation claimed the immediate attention of the Government, and therefore education again failed to get priority in the Government's plans. The deficiencies in the educational system, coupled with economic reasons, led to the problem of wastage and stagnation.

It was not until 1951, when the number of schools rose by 64 per cent and the enrollment jumped by 97 per cent and the direct expenditure on education was 140 per cent of that in 1947, and by 1952, 27 per cent of the students were girls.

The Five Year Plans helped considerably to improve the education in India. In 1962, the enrollment improved by 60 per cent in primary and middle schools. The literacy rate in 1962 among the 6-12 year olds was 60 per cent and was expected to reach 80 per cent by 1968. The literacy rate among 11-13 year olds and 14-17 year olds were 22 and 12 per cent, respectively, in 1962, and were expected to reach 30 and 15 per cent, respectively, in 1968.

A number of recommendations such as dividing the elementary education into two to three cycles, correlation and integration of subject material, bilingual media of instruction, effective school-community relations, higher spending on elementary education, and more youth organizations, etc., are also included.