8th – Impact of British Rule on India Part-2 (Civilizing the Native, Educating the Nation Part A)

British in India wanted not only territorial conquest and control over revenues. They also felt that they had a cultural mission: they had "civilize the natives", change their customs and values.

How the British saw education as the Tradition of Orientalism: In 1783, a person named William Jones arrived in Calcutta. He had an appointment as a junior judge at the Supreme Court that the company had set up. In addition to being an expert in law, Jones was a linguist. He had studied Greek and Latin at oxford, knew French and English, had picked up Arabic from a friend, and had also lea rant Persian. At Calcutta, he began spending many hours a day with pundits who taught him the subtleties of Sanskrit language, grammar and poetry; soon he was studying ancient Indian texts on law, philosophy, religion, politics, morality, arithmetic, medicine and the other sciences.

Jones discovered that his interests were shared by many British officials living in Calcutta at the time. Englishmen like Henry Thomas Colebrook and Nathaniel haled were also busy discovering the ancient Indian heritage, mastering Indian languages and translating Sanskrit and Persian works into English. Together with them, Jones set up the Asiatic society of Bengal, and started a journal called Asiatic researches.

Jones and Colebrook came to represent a particular attitude towards India. They shared a deep respect for ancient cultures, both of India and the west. Indian civilization, they felt, had attained its glory in the ancient past, but had subsequently declined. In order to understand India it was necessary to discover the scared and legal texts that were produced in the ancient period.

So Jones and Colebrook went about discovering ancient texts, understanding their meaning, translating them and making their findings known to others. This project, they believed, would not only help the British learn from Indian culture, but it would also help Indians rediscover their own heritage, and understand the lost glories of their past. In this process the British would become the guardians of Indian culture as well as its masters.

Influenced by such ideas, many company officials argued that the British ought to promote Indian rather than western learning. They felt that institutions should be set up to encourage the study of ancient Indian texts and teach Sanskrit and Persian literature and poetry. The officials also thought that Hindus and Muslims ought to be taught what they were already familiar with, and what they valued and treasured, not subject that were alien to them. Only then, they believed, could the British hope to win a place in the hearts of the "natives"; only then could the alien rulers expect to be respected by their subjects.

With this object in view a madras a was set up in Calcutta in 1781 to promote the study of Arabic, Persian and Islamic law; and the Hindu college was established in Banaras in 1791 to encourage the study of ancient Sanskrit texts that would be useful for the administration of the country.

"Grave Error of the East" Criticism of Education By British

From the early nineteenth century many British officials began to criticize the oriental's vision of learning. They said that knowledge of the east was full of errors and unscientific thought; eastern literature was non-serious and light-hearted. So they argued that it was wrong on the part of the British to spend so

much effort in encouraging the study of Arabic and Sanskrit language and literature.

James mill was one of those who attacked the orient lists became sharper. One of the most outspoken and influential of such critics of the time was Thomas Babington Macaulay. He saw India as an uncivilized country that needed to be civilized. No branch of eastern knowledge, according to him could be compared to what England had produced." Who could deny", declared Macaulay, that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India an Arabia". He urged that the British government in India should stop wasting public money in promoting oriental learning, for it was of no practical use.

With great energy and passion, Macaulay emphasized the need to teach the English language. He felt that knowledge of English would allow Indians to read some of the finest literature the world had produced; it would make them aware of the developments in western science and philosophy. Teaching of English could thus be a way of civilizing people, changing their tastes, values and culture.

Following Macaulay's minute, the English education act of 1835 was introduced. The decision was to make English the medium of instruction for higher education and to stop the promotion of oriental institutions like the Calcuta, Madrasa and Benaras Sanskrit College. These institutions were seen as "temples of darkness that were falling themselves into decay". English textbox now began to be produced for schools.

Education for commerce: In 1854, the court of directors of the east India Company in London sent an educational dispatch to the governor- general in India. Issued by Charles wood, the president of the board of control of the company, it has come to be known as wood's dispatch. Outlining the educational policy that was to be followed in India, it emphasized once again the practical benefits of a system of European learning, as opposed to oriental knowledge.

One of the practical uses the dispatch pointed to was economic. European learning, it said, would enable Indians to recognize the advantages that flow from the expansion of trade and commerce, and make them see the importance of developing the resources of the country. Introducing them to European ways of life, would change their tastes and desires, and create a demand for British goods, for Indians would begin to appreciate and buy things that were produced in European. Wood's dispatch also argued that European learning would improve the moral character of Indians. It would make them truthful and honest, and thus supply the company with civil servants who could be trusted and depended upon. The literature of the east was not only full of grave errors. It could also not instill in people a sense of duty and a commitment to work, nor could it develop the skills required for administration.

Following the 1854 dispatch, several measures were introduced by the British. Education department of the government were set up to extend control over all matters regarding education. Steps were taken to establish a system of university education. In 1857, while the sepoys rose in revolt in Meerut and Delhi, universities were being established in Calcutta, madras and Bombay. Attempts were also made to bring about changes within the system of school education.

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What Happened To The Local Schools? The report of William Adam

In the 1830s, William Adam, a Scottish missionary, toured the districts of Bengal and Bihar. He had been asked by the company to report on the progress of education in vernacular schools. The report Adam produced is interesting.

Adam found that there were over 1 lakh pathshalas in Bengal and Bihar. These were small institutions with no more than 20 students each. But the total number of children being taught in these pathshalas was considerable –over 20 lakh. These institutions were set up by wealthy people, or the local community. At times they were started by a teacher (guru).

The system of education was flexible. Few things that you associate with schools today were present in the pathshalas at the time. There were no fixed fee, no printed books, no separate school building, no benches or chairs, no blackboards, no system of separate classes, no roll- call registers, no annual examinations, and no regular time-table. In some places classes were held under a banyan tree, in other places in the corner of a village shop or temple, or at the guru's home. Fee depended on the income of parents: the rich had to pay more than the poor. Teaching was oral, and the guru decided what to teach, in accordance with the needs of the students. Students were not separated out into different classes: all of them sat together in one place. The guru interacted separately with groups of children with different levels of learning.

Adam discovered that this flexible system was suited to local needs. For instance, classes were not held during harvest time when rural children often worked in the fields. The pathshala started once again when the crops had been cut and stored. This means that even children of peasant families could study.

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