



History of Free and Compulsory Education in India

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Abstract- Free and Compulsory Education is the basic and important foundation of good citizenship and a fundamental instrument to awaken the person to cultural wealth and social values in preparing the person for future and professional training in, and helping him to adjust to the social environment. Further basic education nourishes intellectual advancement to develop neither dignity of a person without which there is neither intellectual excellence nor pursuit of happiness. Free and compulsory education is an extraordinary tool of empowerment of every individual. Education is essential Instrument for the promotion and protection of all human rights. However, too often at both the national and international levels not enough is done to providing basic education to all and ensure the effective implementation of the right to education. Achieving the right to basic education as a fundamental human right is one of the biggest development challenges faced by the international community presently.

Keywords- Education, Instrument, intellectual, cultural

1. INTRODUCTION

Free compulsory and Universal Education is considered a strong Pillar of Democracy, not only because all citizens will, thus, have equal opportunities to enrich themselves with the cultural wealth, but also because they will become creative and productive member of a democratic society. Another democratic aspect of basic education is that it seeks to eradicate the undesirable difference existing between cultures life of the village and the city in our country.* Free and Compulsory and universal education constitutes a very important part of the entire structure of education. It is at this stage that the child starts going to a formal institution and formal education starts. The education which he receives there provides the foundation of his Physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and social development. Sound elementary education gives a fill up to sound secondary and higher education.†Elementary education deserves the highest priority not only on grounds of social justice and democracy, but also for raising the competence of the average worker and for increasing national productivity.‡

2. VEDIC AND POST VEDIC PERIOD

The tradition of education has been very old in India. We have a very effective education system in ancient period. Education in Indian in the Vedic, and more particularly in post-vedic period was very well planned

and organized. There were in that age elementary schools and also higher seats of learning called ashrams.§ Maharsihi Manu had declared the importance of education some thousands of years ago. Regarding the necessity and prevalence of free and compulsory education in ancient, the observation of Manu is of great significance and it can fairly be presumed that free compulsory education must have prevailed in the society to a considerable extent and its implementation must not have been treated perfunctorily. Manu observes that both the state and society should make it compulsory upon all, to send their children (both male and female) to school after the completion of the fifth or eight year it should be made a penal offence to keep a child at home after that age.** With the formal ceremony of *Upanayan* the guru or the teacher accepted his pupil. The normal age *Upanayan* was 8 for a *Brahman*, 11 for a *ksatriya* and 12 for a *Vaishya*. The guru's home was the school where the pupils lived for the whole period of education as a member of the family. Thus a residential feature was seen in the education imparted in ancient India. No tuition fees were charged but pupils used to render personal manual services. In the early vedic schools, education was confined to young *Brahmans*.†† The *Brahmanical* educational institutions and the curriculum existing in them, during the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries, had its roots in the Vedic period. Primary education was imparted in the *Pathsalas*. It was the custom to send the child to the *Pathsalas* for his Primary education at the age of five. Most of these



Pathshalas were maintained by teacher who was known as *Gurus*.^{††}

In later vedic period the rigidity of caste system made access to education restricted. Towards the end of ancient period two types of schools were developed the *Tol* or *Pathsala* and network of indigenous elementary schools. The *Tols* were seats of higher learning including secondary education. They imparted instruction through Sanskrit and provided traditional classical learning.^{§§}

In addition to these institutions of higher learning, time also grew up large networks of elementary schools which provided instruction in the three R's to children, mostly boys of the upper casts and richer landlords and agriculturist.^{***}

3. DURING MUGHAL EMPIRE

With the advent of the Muslim period another system of education was imparted into the country, Viz, Muslim education. The *Maqtabas* Corresponded to the Hindu *Pathshalas*. It was imported by learned *Moulvis* with the help of monitors or older and more advanced pupils. It consisted in *Maktabs* (Primary educational institution) in the teaching of reading and recitation of such Portions of the *Quran* as Mohammedans needed to know by heart of their daily Prayers and devotions.^{†††}

It is significant to note that though the Hindus and Muslim had separate institutions of learning there was some kind of commonality in both system of education.^{†††} For instance both kind of institution received pecuniary assistance from rulers, chieftains and opulent or religious citizens. Both of them were staffed by learned teachers some of whom were authors of repute. In both instruction was mostly given gratis no regular fees was charged. Both institution of learning were medieval in character. The Chief object of both the classical institution was to produce *Moulavis* and *Pandits*.^{§§§}

4. COMPULSORY EDUCATION DURING BRITISH PERIOD

The East India Company was established in 1600 mainly for commercial Purposes. During the early years it paid little attention to education, which continued to progress under the Patronage of Missionary organizations. William Adam, a missionary, estimated in 1835 that Bengal and Bihar had 100,000 schools, roughly two schools for every three villages and that there was a school for every 400 persons.^{****}

The syllabus of elementary schools was not very ambitious rather it was modest and comprised only the three R's and account.^{††††} The methods of instruction were often Crude and the punishments harsh. Schools had no buildings of their own and were held in a mosque or a temple or under a tree. The most distinct feature of these schools was the monitorial system under which the senior students were required to teach the junior students.^{††††}

Mostly these schools catered to the education of well-to-do classes. The scheduled castes students were not admitted. Likewise the education of girls was totally neglected. The indigenous schools did not receive any Patronage at the hands of the British. As a result they languished and disappeared completely by 1900.^{§§§§}

We thus find that the system of indigenous education suffered from many limitations. Firstly, it was not democratic, because even in the elementary schools children of higher castes only were admitted. Untouchables and girls were excluded from them. Secondly, the method of teaching was not satisfactory. Thirdly, teaching equipment's were crude and out-dated. Lastly, their organization had no standard pattern. The Time-table, hours of study, rules of admission and mode of examination depended solely on the discretion of the teacher. The schools were essentially medieval in character because their curriculum was predominantly religious. The schools bore communal character.^{*****}

The earliest attempt for enforcing compulsory Primary education was made by William Adam in 1938. Captain Wingate the erstwhile Revenue survey Commissioner in Bombay Proposed to introduce compulsory education after collecting a cess during 1852. The enactment of the compulsory Education Act, 1870 created a strong consciousness for the need for compulsory Primary education in India. A number of Indian leaders demanded for universal Primary education in the country. The Government of Bombay even appointed a committee in 1906 to examine the feasibility of enforcing universal primary education but the committee rejected the proposal. The Maharaja of Baroda, however, introduced compulsory Primary education in a part of his State.^{†††††} In March, 1910, Gopal Krishan Gokhale moved a resolution in the central imperial legislative council for the establishment of free and compulsory primary education in India. He pleaded the universal, free and compulsory education was essential for development of the country and that the Government should provide adequate funds for the purpose. Gokhale's Bill was, however, opposed by all the officials and some of the



non-officials. Although it was defeated, it generated an awakening in the country for universal education.****

Under the British regime the first Act of Compulsory Education was passed in Bombay during 1918. Since it was moved by Vithalbhai Patel, It was also called Patel Act for the then Bombay municipality. It was ment mainly for children in the age-group 6-11 in the rural areas it authorized the municipality to levy cess and did not bind the provincial Government of finance the scheme. This Act of compulsory Primary education was followed by similar Acts. In Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madras and so on.*****

During the period 1921-47 there was phenomenal progress in the legislation of compulsory education. By 1946-47 as many as 176 rural areas composing of 11,779 villages were brought under the Compulsory Primary Education Act. Mahatma Gandhi moved the Resolution on Basic Education at Wardha Congress Conference in 1937 and appealed that a National Policy be adopted for free and compulsory primary education for all children in the age-group 6-14. This provided a fillip to the movement for legislation of compulsory education in the country, but was of no satisfactory result mainly due to the then Government Policy of consolidation in place of expansion and resignation of popular ministries in the provinces. In 1944, the Post-War Plan of Education Development did visualize free and compulsory education for all children in the age-group 6-14 during a period of 40 years. *****

5. COMPULSORY EDUCATION AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Long before independence it had been abundantly realized that “an alien Government, however well-intentioned, can never frame a programme of national education that will serve that nation’s needs.”***** The National Government, therefore, took two momentous decisions. The constitution, laid down as a directive principle of state policy: “The state Shall endeavor to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of the constitution for free and compulsory education for all children till they complete the age of 14 years.”***** The Government also accepted Basic education as the national Pattern of education for all the children of the age-group 6-14 years. All the efforts in the sphere of compulsory education after independence have generally aimed at achieving these educational goals which were set for the country. The five year plans laid emphasis on provision of free and compulsory education and there was unprecedented expansion of education for the children in the age group 6-14.

As far as 1993 the supreme court of India declared education as a fundamental Right of the children. In order to fulfill the goal of universal elementary education, constitution Eighty-Sixth Amendment Act, 2002 was passed. The Amendment includes: 1) Article 45: Provision for Early childhood care and Education of children below the age of six years, 2) Article 21-A: Right to Education: The State shall provide free and compulsory Education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years and 3) Article 51: clause “K” has been added in 51A fundamental Duties. The Right of children to free and compulsory education Act or Right to Education Act, which passed by the Indian Parliament on 4 August 2009, describes the modalities of the provision of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India under Article 21 A of the Indian constitution.

6. CONCLUSION

Education in India in the Vedic, and more Particularly in post-vedic period was very well planned and organized. There were in that age elementary schools and also higher seats of learning, *Maths*, *Tols* and *Viharas*. During the Medieval Period, Muslim education was imparted in the country. Maqtabas (Primary school) and Madrassaha (Institution of higher learning) became the seats of leaning. Education made progress during the period of Akbar. During the British Period education was first ignored, then violently and successfully opposed then conducted on a system now universally admitted to be erroneous. Under the British regime the first Act of compulsory education was passed in Bombay during 1918. The Parliament has adopted the Right of children to free and compulsory education Bill, 2009, which envisages provision of free and compulsory education to children in the 6-14 years age group with the Lok Sabha approving it with a Voice Vote on August 4, 2009. The Rajya Sabha has passed it on July 20, 2009.

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