

NATIONAL EDUCATION MOVEMENT IN THE 19th. CENTURY

Dr. Sujit Mandal

Assistant Professor & H. O. D.
Department of History, Kalna College
Kalna, Burdwan, West Bengal – 713409.

Received Dec. 09, 2017

Accepted Jan. 12, 2018

National Education Movement took place parallel or side by side Indian Freedom Movement. The pioneers of this movement were those people who initiated this movement during the end of eighteenth century. This movement got momentum from the beginning of twentieth century. Some of them took direct part in the national liberation movement, and some other inspired Indian people in other ways, especially by their thoughts on National Education.

Why did this National movement occur? What was its nature? To find out the answers of these questions, we are to know the back of this movement.

The academic system of a nation is built up on this aims, aspiration and thoughts of the concerned nation. But the commodity hungry British rulers of India completely rejected India's own academic system and built up an academic system which had no relations with the pulse of India. Because they wanted create through this education, an English educated clergy that would contribute to their business and administrative interests. This was mentioned in the Woods Despatch of 1854. The colonial rulers of India had no intention to reform the prevailing education system based on tolls and pathsalas so as to education of modern age. Mr. Adam told that national education system must stand on its own base if it was to gain success. The rulers of India rejected all the possibilities and proposals of gradation and improvement of this prevailing education system of India. Ram Mohan Roy, Dwaraka nath Thakur lent support to the government and said the western education system must be introduced if the country was to develop. But they did not want a class of English educated community who are divorced from national tradition and culture. Because such community would not only fill the blank of the bulk of English servants but also be blind supporters of English regime in India. It was clearly mentioned in the Woods' in 1854 Despatch that through the establishment of English education system the rulers shall note that the bulk of faithful servant was created. The main purpose for the introduction of western education was to originate a community of faithful, intelligent and ethical servants for the British Rule of India. Other purpose of such education system was to supply raw materials to factories of English and create markets of English outputs. As because such system never had any link with the Indian culture, it produced a book worm and memory based Babu in the society.¹

Such education was not extended among all the people of India. Many academicians and patriots cried for extension of mass education through mother language but those all fell flat to the rulers. So many Commissions and Committees were constructed by the rulers but they seldom deviated from woods Despatch for the development and Reforms of prevailing education system were merely a text based education system.

The nineteenth century education system seldom had any practical implication. Applied subjects like Law, Medical science, engineering and some other subjects like these were limited among few of middle class polity. These men used to have government jobs after completion of their examinations. When the European educated people engaged themselves in scientific research works and expeditious and as a result of these works they brought revolutionary change in the field of industry. The Indian educated people then, used to register their names in the servants' camp of English rulers. Thus they deceived themselves from receiving the fruits of modern education.

The education system of India, as promoted by the colonial rulers, also had little arrangements for mass education. Being directed by the filtration theory they invested their capital for higher education directly keeping aside the necessity of mass education. As a result, the new education system provided little scope and that also for the rich people of the country. The vast majority of people remained in the dark of education. So the nationalist Indians started agitation against this system. The nationalists demanded mass-education for the country. Beside this, they cried for technical and vocational education, education in vernacular medium and open opportunity of education for all. The nationalists understood the need for education and engaged themselves for the expansion of education. For this they founded national schools

and colleges. When the national education movement reached the peak, Lord Curzon came to India its governor-general in 1899. Curzon introduced censorship on allotment of funds for education and contraction. During his period Boycott and Swadesi movement were started on the issue of Partition of Bengal. The teachers and students of the schools and colleges used to leave their institutions and join in the movements.

The educated people forgot the tradition and ideals of ancient India and thought that the British were the rescuers of education in India. When such an illusion began to pervade in India, the educated class mimicked the British people keeping their minds on the text of English, history, Geography, Literature etc. Thus they made themselves neither British nor Indians but an unprecedented animal after completion of their education. At this juncture of time many great educationists came forward to reform the education system. But each of these educationists was guided by their own thought and created instances on this field. They directed the education system and movement from their own point of view and placed the movement on a high alter. The people of India realised that the absence of mass education and its censorship would be harmful for the nation. But these great leaders had their own experience about this. I would like to name one of these great leaders who was the pilot of the University of Calcutta for more than two and half decades and he was Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyay. He decorated their chair as Vice Chancellor in two terms. He had the purpose of making this University as one of the best University of the world although he did not gain ultimate success. The University of Calcutta became crippled after the capital of India was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911. Now I want to discuss the contribution of few of these leaders who accelerated the education movements in India. At the same time, I would discuss the role of Asutosh in this respect.

Beside the political leaders, eminent poets, literature and social associates on such great educationist who impressed his students to be inspired by nationalist thought, was the pioneer of Indian education system-Saris Chandra Mukhopadhyay. Satis Chandra established the Dawn Society which had a glorious role in the national life of India. Saris Chandra was a close associate and class-mate of Asutosh. But he slightly differed from Asutosh as far as his thought of education is concerned. Saris Chandra based his works and directed it through political point of view. But Asutosh did not favour entry of politics in education. Saris Chandra, as the national leader of Swadesi Movement, established Bhagbat Chatuspathi for national education in 1895. Through this institution he wanted to teach Indian literature and philosophy to the countrymen. The mouth piece of this institution was a magazine named the Dawn (1897-1904). In the year 1902 Satis Chandra founded a society named 'the Dawn Society' according to the name of the Dawn magazine. After the abolition of Bhagbat Chatuspathi a few days later the Dawn Magazine was revealed in a new name 'The Dawn and Dawn Society Magazine'. Some new chapters were included in this magazine so as to introduce Indian literature and knowledge about the country to its readers. New essays about India and ideology were included in this magazine. In the earlier volumes of this magazine there were no political essays but a few days later in printed political essays.

The object of the Dawn Society was to break conservative defective and texts based education and teach the young people of India with an improved form of education. The chief objects of this magazine were to provide the youth with moral education and build character and love for the country. It also had the purpose of teaching how to sacrifice self for the sake of country. Regular classes were held in this society. The students of this institute were divided into small groups and used to be taught by skilful and eminent teachers. The students here were allowed to build up and express their own views.

The secretary of this society Satis Chandra had an object of to making the youth independent. For this, students of the society were taught with mechanical education. For the earnest effort of this society art exhibitions in Calcutta were held. Satis Chandra wanted to make this society a progressive institute for national education with art, culture, history, philosophy, and for this it was built as an independent platform of various discussions, to him the prevailing education system was contrary to the national interest. To make the people aware of this he used to print new and fresh essays in every edition of his magazine. The national education movement led by him had objects to make people loyal to the mother-land, to inspire them with national and culture and tradition and provide education for all the people of the country irrespective of race and caste. According to him the promotion or demotion of a nation depends on the infrastructure and essence of education. Therefore he wanted to construct and develop the Dawn Society keeping in minds all these objects. As a success of national education movement The National Education council was formed and the Dawn Society was absorbed in it in 1906. Later on Satish Chandra became its chairman.

The Dawn Society had a far reaching impact on youth of this country. In the protest of the Participation of Bengal, its member directly took part in the movement. It had an indelible effect for Boycott of the alien commodities, foundation of domestic industries and foundation of national education institutions for the

people it preached the concept of love for the country and education for all the people of the country. Dawn Society is a bright instance in the history of the national education movement.

Vivekananda was one of the pioneers of the national education Movement. But his service to the nation and role for education movement differed from one another. He steered through the ways of spiritualism. Though he was one of Asutosh's Vivekananda class-mate for a long time, his name was omitted in Asutosh's diary. But he mentioned Vivekananda's name in 'The future of Indian literature.' Here Vivekananda was described as one of the modern leader of India.

Vivekananda defined education as "Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man." His theory of education if analysed, implies two things (a) perfection or greatness and (b) manifestation. In his philosophy of education he tried to synthesise individualism with socialism. He also spoke of spiritualism to synthesise with social consciousness. He wanted education for all; when speaking of mass education he wanted education in mother tongue.² He also wanted to develop spiritualism through education. In his concept of education he expected that it would be expanded through moral development, respect and honour which are found in spiritualism. He was in favour of teaching Sanskrit because he thought that the main part of Indian thought was rooted in the language of Sanskrit. Though he spoke of educating Indian literature, he admitted teachings of western knowledge and science.

Though Vivekananda was contemporary to Asutosh their ways of thinking differed from one another. Yet both of them thought of human life and welfare of man by acquisition of knowledge and wisdom.³ After returning from America Vivekananda uttered 'I have nothing to do with the non-sense of politics...Education is the panacea of all evils. Educate Educate Educate That is what is wanted.'⁴

The way of Asutosh took part in the education movement was differed from Vivekananda. Asutosh did not what religion to enter into the premises of education. Nor did he thought in the line of individualism to be concerted with socialism. But both of them conformed in their thoughts otherwise. Both of them abandoned politics. While taking part in education movement and expansion of education.⁵ Such view of Asutosh was expressed during convocation speech of Calcutta University in 1910. "I earnestly call upon teachers who hold it to be their duty to figure as active politicians out of school or college hours, to reflect on the special responsibility incident to their station in life, in the present circumstances of the country. Men of this type are not safe guides of the young... Let not the noble band of instructors of our youth forgets that they are priests in Temple of learning."⁶

Asutosh and Rabindranath represent a sparking likeliness, so far as their concepts of education are concerned. Both of them wanted education for the good of the nation and education in mother-tongue. So to say they were contemporary. In 1892 expressed his view in an essay 'Sikshar Herfare' Printed in the British magazine. Same views were expressed by Asutosh while raising his proposal to the Senate which was supported by Bankim Chandra.

In the year of 1901 Rabindranath formed 'Brahmacharyshram' as a resident in Bolpur Santiniketan in the middle of ancient 'Gurugriha' where his students would be taught in an ambience of nature to build their character. Rabindrenath did not favour existing pattern of education. He said 'Education means learning not for organs, not for knowledge, but for perception, which is to be taught in our school'. Beside he wanted mother-tongue the medium of education.⁷ Rabindranath spoke of freedom of education. He acknowledged teaching in English along with mother language in his essay. He did not favour politics to be mingled with education. Such expression of his view is founded during Non cooperation movement which he did not support. He thought Boycott is contrary to education. He favoured Filtration theory. If one stratum is educated, the other stratum would be educated by them. Eminent educationist G. Ramachandran commented 'Tagore wanted the boys and girls to be fearless, free and open minded, self reliant deep in the soil of India but reaching out to the whole world in understanding, neighbourliness, cooperation and material and spiritual progress. Both Asutosh and Rabindranath were conformed to the issues of alienation of politics, mother-tongue as the medium of learning, freedom of education and Filtration theory.

Referances:

- 1) Calcutta University Convocation Address, 12th March 1910.
- 2) Calcutta University Convocation Address, 2nd March 1907.
- 3) Calcutta University Convocation Address, 26th December 1913
- 4) Hundred years of the University of Calcutta. Vol. 1
- 5) Dugupta R.K, Sir Asutosh Mukherjee Annual Lecture. 1980.
- 6) I.B. Report File No. 80G/28, W.B.S.A.
- 7) Proceedings of the Faculty of Arts and Science. 8th April 1922.