

Growth of education in Odisha during Colonial Rule

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ABSTRACT : Although, the British had initiated the modern education in Odisha. But it did not progress fast. There are Several reasons for the above approach of the British towards the education in Odisha.(1) the British was quite apathetic towards the spread of higher education in Odisha. (2) although it wanted that the people of Odisha should learn English, but it never wanted to make them highly educated. It simply wanted a working knowledge of English only to create a clerical class of people as it wanted in case of India also.(3) higher education was very expensive. The British Government never wanted to spend more on education which will benefit the native people

KEYWORDS – Puspagiri,, Sanskrit *Pathsalas*, **Wood's Dispatch**, problem of language, English education in Odisha for their administrative convenience.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Historically, Odisha has been at the forefront of education and research. The ruins of a major ancient university, Puspagiri, were recently discovered in Odisha. Scholars from far away lands, such as Greece, Persia and China used to study philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and science at this famed university. Along with Takshashila and Nalanda universities, Puspagiri was among the oldest universities in the world. All three universities were mentioned by the Chinese traveler Huien Tsang, who visited India in the 7th century, but unlike the others, the whereabouts of Puspagiri university were unknown until recently. As of 2007, the ruins of this university have not been fully excavated yet. Odisha's education prospered under Hindu and Buddhist rule. However, it went into a period of decline under the Sun dynasty, after 1568. The Muslims and the Marathas, who occupied Odisha before the British, did little to spread education. Before the creation of modern Odisha, the mainstay of the education system were the Sanskrit *Pathsalas*, which existed in Cuttack, Balasore, Puri, Angul and Sambalpur, local *Chatasalis* to cater to grassroot level education, as well as advanced centers of Oriental learning

The colonialization of Odisha by the British East India Company in 1803 proved disastrous to Odisha in all spheres. It led to the collapse of the traditional education system. Yet, Odisha being one of the last Indian territories to come under the British rule became exposed much later than other parts of India to the system of education they introduced. The extremely backward state of education in Odisha was mainly due to the indifference of Company's government. There was total absence of any attempt on the part of the government to provide people with the means of education, even though vast sums were annually extended in other parts of Bengal. On the negligence of the government to develop education, Dr. E. Roer, the Inspector of Schools, South-West division said; "It is to be regretted that no new educational operations can be carried out, for Orissa is at a disadvantage situation compared with other districts. For the whole of Orissa, with an area of 52, 995 square miles and a population of 4,534,813 souls, less is expended than for the small district of Howrah with an area of 800 sq miles, and a population of 7,50,000 souls".

Another factor for the slow growth of education in Orissa was the miscalculation of the government of the province. After their occupation the Company government had treated this province on the lines of Bengal. As in the case of revenue administration, so also, in the field of education, the same kind of treatment was shown to the districts of Puri and Cuttack that were known by that time as Orissa. But this was a mistake because both the provinces were at different stages of development at that time. Their problems varied in many directions and dimensions. Bengal under the Mughals had prospered in education and the progressive measures put it in a much higher and takeoff stage. And when the Europeans came to Bengal, it gave them an opportunity to move further and modern education was inculcated throughout Bengal. Unfortunately, Orissa was joined with such an advanced province and as a result, her problems could not be properly projected. The history of

education in Orissa after the British occupation starts with the initiative taken by the missionaries stationed at Calcutta. The main aim of these missionaries was to preach the natives the words of Jesus Christ. The missionaries prepared the Oriya letters and printed the first Oriya Bible in 1804. The New Testament was translated in 1809 by Pandit Mrutyunjay Vidyalankar.

The Company Government at Calcutta gave their full support to the missionaries as they were driven by the idea of exposing the natives to modern ideas and knowledge. Though the ideas of modernizing the natives were partially correct but the practical expediency had compelled them to do this in order to hegemonies the natives and continue their economic exploitation of India. With this in view, in 1813, the Charter Act contained a clause enacting that, "a sum of not less than a lakh of rupees in each year be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of learned natives of India, and the introduction and promotion of knowledge of Science among the inhabitants of the British territory in India. The first systematic step by the East India Company was taken in 1822-23 to spread education in the Madras Presidency. The natives were shy about the western education and government desired that as far as possible the natives be associated with the spread of education. It was found that the condition of educational institutions was depressing and teachers were not well paid and there was lack of interest among the students to come to the school. The school fees varied from one anna to four annas per month and it was difficult to produce books and other infrastructure required for the school. The government wanted to open a few schools, at least in each Tahsildary. To motivate the teachers, the salary was raised from one rupee to fifteen rupees a month. But one major handicap in the growth of education was the non-availability of teachers. So in 1834, the number of schools was only three with the strength of 154, 258 and 276 in them

After the Paik Rebellion in 1818, there was a change in the attitude of the local people towards education. The English system of education was slowly accepted by the natives. There was rising hostility against the Bengalees and growing appreciation for the missionaries. The missionaries had opened a few schools and they had proved successful. The mission school in northern Orissa was opened on 1st June 1822. And after that the government took over the responsibility of fifteen native schools. between 1822 to 1823. There were four new schools in Cuttack town in 1823. The response from the public was good and there were 350 boys and 70 girls in these schools

Wood's Dispatch –A milestone of educational development: The Wood's Dispatch was another milestone in the history of educational progress in the province. This dispatch dated 19th July 1854 was to analyse the history and progress of education in the region. It offered a number of valuable suggestions and after that there were a number of changes, which brought the condition of education in this region to a higher position. In 1858-59, there were 30 schools, in 1868 the number was 63 and it rose to 95 in 1870-58. The period following Wood's despatch, schools started functioning in the remote areas of the province. A school had come at Kendrapara with 35 students; there was a school at Puri with 59 students. Similarly, schools had sprung at Bhadrak, Balasore, Mahanga, Hariharpur and other places. One obstacle in the educational system was the fee structure of the schools. Even there were cases of students dropping out of schools due to the high fee structure. Ten students had dropped at Kendrapara, 18 at Puri and with much difficulty the students of Bhadrak bore the school fee 60. The other problem in the schools was the problem of language and so the educational growth could not achieve its desired effects. The Bengalees argued that teaching in Bengali was easier because of the availability of books and other written materials in that language. As the books in Oriya language were few and printed in small number, the price of books was expensive. And it was not feasible for students to buy books at the expensive prices. Cockburn who succeeded Shore as the Commissioner suggested that books in Oriya should be published in large numbers and to be priced at a lower and affordable rate. By his pioneering efforts he brought to the notice of the Bengal government the negligence and backwardness of the Orissa province and showed the great disparity in the school system of Bengal and Orissa and particularly in the northern Orissa. Considering the haphazard growth of schools in the region he recommended a separate Inspector of schools for Orissa⁶. Cockburn also insisted on government contributions for school buildings as the dependence on exclusive private contributions was not possible in the long run. The recommendations of Cockburn greatly improved the condition of education in the province. The momentum in the spread of education being already laid down, there was a slow but steady increase in the educational institutions in the region in terms of quantity. During the year 1870-71, there were 28 vernacular schools in Balasore. The same year, Cuttack had 50 schools with 2755 students and the first girl's school at Cuttack came up. In 1881, there were 25 girls out of whom 4 were Oriyas. Later girls's schools were established at Jaleswar, Puri, Balasore and other important towns. By 1881, the condition of female education was comfortable.

Under the East India Company, Christian missionaries who took up printing the Old and New Testaments in Odia, also contributed to some growth in education. The first primary school was created in 1822 by missionaries. In Odisha the traditional education system was prevailed in the ancient and medieval period.

But the modern education was started during the British period which led to the collapse of the traditional education system in Odisha. Under the East India Company, Christian missionaries made the beginning of modern education in Odisha by printing the Old and New Testaments in Odia. The first primary school was created in 1822 by missionaries. One of the long-term impacts of the British rule in Odisha was the introduction of English education in the land. This attempt of the British put Odisha on the path of modernization through the growth of education in Odisha

The Cuttack Zilla school, Odisha's first modern school up to matriculation level, was established in 1866. It was extended to become a Collegiate school in 1868, which provided first and second year college education to Odia students. However, Odias were severely disadvantaged by having to attend Presidency College in Kolkata for B.A. degrees. This was until the collegiate branch of Zilla school was converted into a full bachelor's degree granting college under the then commissioner, T. E. Ravenshaw. This college was named as Ravenshaw College after him.

Women's education was taken up with the establishment of the Ravenshaw Hindu Girls' School in 1873. The Maharajah of Keonjhar, the Rani or Talcher, amongst other notable Odia personalities, who made contributions. Later, Reba Ray, a former student of this school and Sailabala Das became instrumental in furthering the cause of women's education, leading to the creation of the Sailabala Women's College, Cuttack.

Colonial approach towards Education in Odisha: Although, the British had initiated the modern education in Odisha. But it did not progress fast. There are Several reasons for the above approach of the British towards the education in Odisha.(1) the British was quite apathetic towards the spread of higher education in Odisha. (2) although it wanted that the people of Odisha should learn English, but it never wanted to make them highly educated. It simply wanted a working knowledge of English only to create a clerical class of people as it wanted in case of India also.(3) higher education was very expensive. The British Government never wanted to spend more on education which will benefit the native people. In 1858, when the Bombay, Madras and Calcutta Universities were established, there was not a single college by that time in Odisha. (4) the number of schools and colleges was quite insufficient in Odisha. So the rise of elite class became delayed in case of Odisha. (5) the conservative ideas regarding education of the people of Odisha was exploited by the British, So, they did not encourage the English education in Odisha. Lastly, the British did not encourage the Engineering education particularly related to agriculture although Odisha was a land having agriculture as the chief profession of the people.²⁰ These were factors which also hindered in the growth of education in Odisha.

II. CONCLUSION

Thus, the modern education in the form of English education in Odisha started during the British period. The beginning in this regard was made by the Missionaries for the evangelical purpose. In course of time, the British government took the initiative for the introduction of modern education in the form of English education in Odisha for their administrative convenience and to keep the people of Odisha silent by giving small employments and other facilities. However, the growth of education was not as progressive as it has been seen in case of other parts of India. With the end of the British rule in India, English education grew in Odisha.

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