

CHAPTER - VI

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS AND EDUCATION

The first major challenge to British political hegemony was thrown in 1857 when the Indian feudal classes made a last attempt to restore their power. Their defeat signalled an era of consolidation of British power on a sounder basis under the direct control of British Parliament. For some years to come the British power seemed invincible and the Indian opinion had to reconcile itself with the seemingly permanent continuation of British rule. However, the period following the mutiny was not that of passive resignation to the foreign rule. It was a period of awakening of new forces in the country more formidable and enduring than those representing the old order. These new forces came under the influence of western education and adapted it for their own consolidation and growth. They were resilient enough to adopt the modern techniques of political bargaining and struggle. The challenge that was developing to the British rule was in the consolidation of these new forces which had taken to western education and had found a common meeting ground in the Indian National Congress which held its first session in 1885. The period preceding the formation of the Indian National Congress had witnessed the bitter controversy over the Ilbert Bill which was watered down in favour of the British resident community and demonstrated convincingly the inferior status of Indians in spite of their western education and the

borrowed western liberal political thought. But in spite of these bitter experiences the halo of British power and the superiority of the west could not be dispelled from the minds of the Indian educated classes. The educated classes due to their training or their narrow selfish interest continued to build up an image of the empire and for the same reason produced rational explanation for the un-British attitude of the bureaucracy in relation with Indian political opinion. It was the Japanese victory over Russia which broke this halo and came as a demonstrative proof of what even an Asian nation could achieve if left free to mould its own destiny. This event was the second great challenge to the British political power in India. It exploded the myth of white racial superiority. Describing the impact of this event O'Malley observed.

An extraordinary stimulus to Indian nationalism came not from the West but from the East with the victory of Japan over Russia in 1905....it seemed that her victory proved that Asiatic civilization and the retention of an Asiatic culture were no obstacle to the progress of a nation, provided it adopted western methods of organization. The inference was drawn that though modern European methods should be applied to the political, educational and commercial systems of India, there was no necessity for any cultural transformation or for the abandonment of Hindu ideals in religious or social life.¹

¹L.S.S. O'Malley, 'The Impact of European Civilization', Modern India and the West, (ed.), L.S.S. O'Malley, (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p.95.

The Japanese victory over Russia not only exploded the myth of white man's superiority over the Asians but also helped in restoring a self-confidence among the Indians struggling for a greater measure of autonomy within the empire. Self-confidence could only be restored by effecting changes in the attitude of politically conscious section which mainly came from the educated classes.

"The success of Japan in her war with Russia at this time began to introduce a new tone into the Bengali Press, a truculent and threatening note replacing the wailing antagonism which had hitherto been its most distinguished characteristic"²

There were no doubt, movements in the earlier period to restore a sense of self-confidence among the Indians. Especially during the closing years of the nineteenth century various influences like the teaching of Swami Rama Krishna and Swami Vivekananda inspired the Indians to search for their lost soul. The revolutionaries

² Confidential letter No.205 P. dated 25th January, 1906 from R.W. Carlyle the then officiating Chief Secretary to the Government of India, Government of India, Home Department, June 1906, Proceedings Nos.169-86.

See also, K.R. Minogue, Nationalism, (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1967), p.97. "The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 was important to all Asian nationalist feeling. Europeans had been defeated in war by an Asian power. In Curzon's famous remark, 'The reverberations of that victory have gone like a thunderclap through the whispering galleries of the East'.

used these teachings to revive the old glories and drew inspiration from the heroes of the past to organise and inspire the youth for the future. But the Japanese victory over Russia was, however, a living example before the youth and had a great psychological effect upon them.³ It set a new model of progress before them. The model was neither based on purely past traditions of the country nor was a mere imitation of the West. It was the outcome of a nation moving forward on the path of modernization with all the modern techniques of development, attuned, however, to its own genius.

The implications of the event for education were obvious. It showed in unmistakable terms the value of a national system of education on modern scientific lines. The Japanese had long moved ahead with the idea of compulsory elementary education and also created conditions in which the industrial development of the country could be sustained by a well organised system of education providing the necessary skill and leadership. The impact of this important event as far as India was concerned was felt along the following lines.

i) Emotional:- The inferiority complex developed during long years of political subordination was broken and the

³ Sedition Committee Report, (Calcutta: Supt. Government Printing, 1918), p.17. "...neither the religious teaching of Vivekananda nor the exhortations of Sri Krishna in the Bhagwat Gita would have afforded so moving a text to preach from had not the whole world, and especially the Asiatic world, been electrified and amazed by the victories of Japan over Russia...".

elites for the first time gained the confidence of standing on their own.

ii) Educational:- For the first time a need was felt for developing a national system of education which could resurrect the sleeping nationalism of India. However, due to the prevailing political situation, the issue of national education became a part of wider political struggle in the wake of anti-partition movement. Boycott, Swadeshi and National Education, all these three got interwoven into one integrated whole. The issue of national education also brought in the problem of free and compulsory primary education. The demand for free and compulsory primary education was now being heard both inside and outside the chambers of the Government.

Another demand that was getting popularity was that the whole educational system should be more and more on scientific lines and the necessary corollary was a demand for technical education.

Education as an Instrument of National Reconstruction

The Japanese victory over Russia was a signal for stimulating the public opinion for making education as an instrument for national reconstruction. The educated classes, which were in the forefront of the nationalist movement saw in this event a means to enlighten the masses for the need for 'Swaraj' and education as a necessary condition for political awakening. The event was highlighted

in the native newspapers with great fervour and a call was given to awaken the spirit of Indian Nationalism through education.

'Hindustan (Lahore), of the 29th November 1907, says that the progress achieved by Japan has electrified other Asiatic countries and filled them with the belief that they also can advance. This feeling actuates the natives of India too, and a complete change has come over the country during the past 2 or 2½ years. A demand for 'swaraj' is being made in all parts of the land, and the highest judicial tribunal in Bengal has decided that there is nothing seditious in this demand. After contending that natives are fit for 'swaraj' the paper says that 'our' constant efforts should be to spread education and ideas of liberty among the people. It is by this means alone that the country can advance and the educated can hope to win over the masses to their side....Promising young men should be sent to America, Japan, Germany, England and other countries in order to acquire proficiency in every branch of knowledge.... In conclusion, it says that all patriotic natives should spread education and the 'swadeshi' movement in the country with the help of Government, thereby ensuring the nation's progress and the attainment of 'swaraj'.⁴

It was not a mere coincidence that the movement of 'swadeshi' and 'boycott' as a protest to the partition of Bengal was launched in the same year in which Asian arms triumphed over the European. Japanese victory was looked upon as a triumph of the resurgent nationalism, education being the most potent instrument in awakening this spirit. The parallel was not hard to draw. India must be awakened

⁴Government of India, Home Department, Selections from the Native Newspapers published in the Punjab, 1907.

to her nationalism through the spirit of swadeshi and a national system of education must be developed and spread widely to bring out her dormant spirit.

First World War and its Consequences for the Growth of Education in India

To understand the effect of the first world war on the development and growth of education in British India, it is necessary first to analyse the forces at work affecting the educational policies. It is also well to understand at the outset that the war did not create these forces. They were already there. The main effect of war was to accelerate the processes that were either dormant or waiting to gather the necessary momentum for their impact to be felt on institutions and events.

We will first give a brief analysis of the political forces at work before the advent of the war which were affecting the major direction of educational policies.

Political Awakening:

The liberal leadership of the Indian National Congress had compromised with the government and were reconciled to the Morley-Minto reforms. The undoing of partition of Bengal and the Imperial grants released for the growth of primary education had assured them of their own bargaining position with the government. Their own position in the field of higher education was

unchallenged. They had been able to show their parliamentary acumen in the Legislative Council through various reform proposals and especially the bill on compulsory primary education. It was serving a double purpose. Through espousing such measures as the introduction of free and compulsory primary education they wanted to convince the public opinion that the battle for the amelioration of masses could be fought in the precincts of institutions created within the constitutional framework of the empire. At the same time it was a convincing proof that the educated classes had sufficiently developed to share the responsibilities of a representative type of government.

The ascendancy of liberals in the politics of the country was, however, not a true index of the political developments that were taking place beneath the surface. The radicals had been forced out of the Indian National Congress and various repressive measures taken by the government had bereft them of proper leadership. But all this had not been able to prevent the escalation of political awakening among a larger section of the population. It was the effect of this political awakening which influenced mainly the educational appraisal by the government. A significant aspect of the political awakening was the beginning of labour movement which could take organised form due to the growth of Indian Industries during and after the war years. The political awakening which was

so far confined mainly to the educated classes had now three components which singly or in combination were affecting the course of developments in other directions as well. These three components were growth of the labour movement, stirring among the masses and the turmoil among the educated classes. The debates in the Legislative Council had their own academic value but were of little consequence in affecting any major shifts in the educational policies. The political considerations that were weighed in allotting Imperial grants for the growth of primary education and the Government of India Resolution on Education in 1913 bear testimony to the influence of political awakening outside the liberal perimeter in influencing these decisions.⁵

The period preceding the first world war was marked by a general awareness about the need for education for any scheme of advancement. A few years ago this educational awareness was confined to the upper and middle classes. Now the lower middle classes were also hankering after the western system of education. However, this awakening was still confined to mainly urban areas and it was mainly centred around more demand for higher education. The reason for this was not far to seek. The political developments in the preceding years were mainly confined

⁵ See, Chapter IV, Pp. 283-91.

to the urban areas and it was here that the pressure for educational expansion was most acutely felt. The growing demand for higher education among the lower middle classes aggravated the acute competition for jobs. This not only defeated any measure taken for restricting higher education but made the educated classes more eager to run after higher education and hold on to their entrenched positions in this sphere. Higher education was not only a passport for getting into the administrative structure but also a status symbol. The model of achievement for the lower middle classes was that of the middle and higher classes. Education, wrongly or rightly was considered by them as the best instrument of achieving the status of the middle and higher classes. From economic as well as social point of view higher education was considered a must by the politically awakened classes.

The story was different in case of primary education for masses. The demand for free and compulsory primary education was very much on the cards since the beginning of the twentieth century. The demand had become more vocal since the Indian National Congress put forward this demand in its annual resolutions. The bill introduced by Gokhale in 1910 and again in 1911 in the Legislative Council had extended the demand and made it an issue of lively debate among the enlightened public opinion and the government. The political leadership was demanding the

immediate implementation of the programme of free and compulsory education. The government had also accepted this demand in principle but did not think the objective conditions favourable for its immediate application. It is important to note in this connection that the demand for free and compulsory primary education did not grow out of any mass political awakening. The political movements had yet been confined to the educated classes. So the demand for the education of the masses did not emerge as an integral part of the political demands formulated for the upliftment of the masses. For instance, the political demand for more representation in the Legislative Bodies was concerned with a tiny minority having property, education and social standing. The demand for Indianisation of services was again directly connected with higher education. But the education of the masses was linked to creating a sense of loyalty to the empire and appreciate the path of political advancement as laid down by the educationally advanced sections of society. It was subordinated to the larger political interests of either the rulers or the classes dominating the nationalist movement. Its avowed political objective was to create an active feeling of loyalty towards the empire, an aversion to violent form of struggle and an enlightened cooperation for participation in the reform schemes.⁶

⁶ See, Chapter III, Pp. 129-31.

To have a better understanding of the effect of war on these political and educational forces at work and consequently on the educational development of the country, it is also necessary to understand the changed position of Britain and the British empire.

In the nineteenth century the supremacy of the British as a world power was unchallenged and a well recognised fact. This supremacy was due to a number of factors like her early industrialisation, naval power, control of vast colonial empire and her financial strength.⁷ Though Britain came out successfully through the ordeal, her old time supremacy was melting away due to the rise of United States of America and Japan as two non-European powers and the faster rate of industrial growth in a few European countries like Germany and France. The undermining of the supremacy of Britain as a world power had important consequences to the colonial structure of its empire. Canada, New Zealand and Australia were already self-governing dominions. Colonies like India which were still trying to acquire the status of self-governing dominions within the empire were aroused to a new pride and strength by the part it played in the war. Though the booming of guns was in distant lands beyond the frontiers of India, its echo accompanied the soldiers returning from the war

⁷ See, Ramsay Muir, The Political Consequences of the Great War, (London: Thornton Butterworth, Ltd., 1932), Pp.215-17.

front in thousands. They now acted as carriers of new ideas they had imbibed and new experiences they had undergone.

As in the early nineteenth century, the educated classes had acted as cultural carriers of western system of thought and institutions, so in the twentieth century, the illiterate peasant mass which had gone to war fronts as sepoys brought home a different picture of the European society. The difference was that the former was clothed in the intellectual verbosity of the educated while the latter was a bare matter of fact live experience. Another difference was that the message of educated classes could but reach to a select few while the verbal message of the demobilised soldier was carried to remote corners of the land and to the peasant folk of their own stock. In a way the mass of the population was thus made more receptive to the political ideas that were till now the exclusive preserve of the educated classes. The operational base of the national movement was thus widened.⁸ The attitude of the people who came in contact

⁸ cf. Michael Edwardes, The Last Years of British India, (London: Cassel, 1963), p.41.

"The end of the war had brought back the old administrators - To Indians, no longer convinced of their inferior position, it seemed that the worst features of the British occupation came back with the old administrators...To the apprehensions of the educated classes was now added a further dimension of unrest, this time amongst those who had previously been unaffected by the nationalist struggle."

with Europe and its people during the war years also went a radical transformation. The image of western superiority which had been built over long years of cultural contact with the west and was first eroded by the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905 got demolished beyond repair. In Percival Spear's words, "The war's most important effect on India was a mental revolution, after which independence became merely a question of when and how."⁹

The attitude was strikingly different in pre-war years when a permanent connection with British rule was considered inevitable as well as desirable.

One of the arresting features of Indian political activity up to the first World War, distinguishing it from some revolutionary movements in other areas of Europe and Asia and reminding one of the American experience, was the Indian's desire not to terminate the system known as British rule but to increase the advantages for themselves under that system.¹⁰

The political and educational demands that were put forward during the post-war years can be understood better by one grasping the significance of this radical

⁹ Percival Spear, India, A Modern History, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1961), p.337.

See also, Edward Thompson and G.T. Garratt, Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India, (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1966), p.605.

"From the Indian standpoint the war had finally killed the idea of European superiority, and roused new ambitions and new hopes."

¹⁰ Charles H. Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1957), p.58.

shift in the attitude of the educated classes due to the intervention of war. However, the change in attitude was not sudden, as if by a magic wand. The forces that effected this attitudinal change were in operation long before the start of the war. The war ignited the mines already laid earlier.

The effect of the First World War on India was profound. It brought some knowledge of the outside world into many Indian homes for the first time and men began to ask themselves whether, if they were fit to die for this freedom of which they had just come to hear, they were not also fit to govern themselves. A new ferment had been set up, and when Edwin Montagu laid himself out to disturb the pathetic contentment of the masses, he was merely canalising an existing stream.¹¹

The demands for political and educational reforms were accumulating during the war years. The force that gave rise to these demands and helped in heightening the political and educational awakening got strengthened due to factors inherent in the successful ending of war in favour of Britain and her allies. The political image projected by the victorious countries was that of a new order in which people would not be denied their right

¹¹Percival Griffiths, Modern India, (London:Ernest Benn Ltd., 1957), p.66.

See also, J.F.C.Fuller, India in Revolt, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1931), p.111.

"In no Asiatic country were the influences of the war more strongly felt than in India, for during the years immediately preceding its outbreak India was ripe for revolution. At first agitation paused; a halt which penned up the floods of enthusiasm only to release them with greater force once the dam of pseudo-loyalty to Great Britain was broken down."

of choosing their own way of life. Democratic principles of Government were emphasized. All this was bound to have an influence on the forces operating in India on the political and educational spheres. In the political sphere, the expectation was now of India as a self-governing dominion within the British empire. In the educational sphere the expectation was now of greater control by the natives in determining the educational policy, continued expansion of higher education, provision of technical education on a wider scale and the universalization of primary education.

The constitutional changes proposed in Montagu-Chelmsford Reform fell far short of the political expectations. There were other developments like the Sevres Treaty imposed on Turkey which alienated the Muslim population and the repressive measures to contain the radical elements culminating in the Amritsar massacre. All these developments after the war led to an erosion of confidence in the British intentions and justice.¹²

¹²See, V. Chirol, India, (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1930), p. 166.

"The war which had begun by restoring concord and goodwill between the ruling and the subject race in a great common effort, failed in the end to draw them together, as many had hoped, in the consciousness of sacrifices borne and victory achieved in common. Its aftermath plunged them into fresh conflict, with a fresh intensity of racial feeling."

Ibid., p. 325.

"President Wilson's 'self-determination' exploded like a shell loaded with dynamite, and the noise of it reverberated nowhere more loudly than amongst Eastern nations."

The post-war educational developments had two components. The first was the outcome of rising educational expectations due to the involvement of larger sections of population in economic, social and political activities. The other was a process of disillusionment with the existing system of education to cope with the rising political expectations. The educational reforms proposed in the University Commission Report of 1919 and measures taken for the expansion of primary education were to strike a compromise between these two components.

The period following the first world war is a turning point in the history of India both from the point of view of struggle for independence as well as the growth of representative institutions. On the one hand the political movement enlisted the support of general masses and could not proceed without their actual involvement. On the other hand, the constitutional reforms introduced and the transfer of education to the provinces under the charge of elected representatives provided an opportunity for the first time to push ahead schemes of educational reforms. It became necessary both as a political exigency and a desire to get over the backlog to introduce schemes of mass education. Nearly every province passed a Primary Education Act. Sir John Sargent reports the heightened activity for mass education after World War I.

Up to the end of the First World War, in spite of Gokhale's effort and pious exhortations from many quarters, elementary education had been left very much out in the cold, but when the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms transferred the education of Indian children to the care of Indian ministers, it seemed that at least the lower stages might come into their own.¹³

The general awakening in the post war period and the enlisting of masses in the movement were factors which could not be overlooked without disastrous consequences both for the government and the political leadership. The government policy was to nullify the effect of political movement by the introduction of constitutional reforms and wean away masses from the radical influences. The political leadership now wanted to broadbase the movement for bringing in more pressure on the government. At the same time they wanted that their leadership of the movement should not be challenged. They wanted to have full control over the events so that at no stage they get overpowered by them.

Cultural and Social Effects:

The growth of political consciousness and consequent educational awareness after the war had its repercussions on the cultural and social plane. Till the greater part of the nineteenth century, the intellectual life of India had only one communication

¹³ John Sargent, Society, Schools and Progress in India, (London: Pergamon Press, 1968), p.45.

channel open to it. It was confined to England and other western influences were inaccessible to it. This sheltered intellectual life was broken in the first quarter of the twentieth century, the major causal factor being the war which broke down the national boundaries and sent intellectual cross currents across many a national frontiers. There had been individual contacts of Indian intellectuals with their counterparts in the West but the effect had been only marginal. The effect of war was in widening the cultural horizon and its direct impact was felt in a growing discontent with the state of affairs in the existing educational system of the country. There was a heightened expectancy about rejuvenating the educational system with what had been observed and heard about the educational systems in the West. An awareness grew that the educational system unless it is geared to the needs and environment of the people cannot rejuvenate the nation. Mere importation of western ideas was incapable of building up a national system of education. The growing demand for mass education went deeper into the country touching even the remote rural areas.

One of the causes assigned for the remarkable educational progress of the Punjab after the Great War was the return of sepoys who, as the

head of the Education Department said, had seen life and the world and were determined that their sons should receive the benefits of education.¹⁴

The quinquennial review (1917-22) reporting about the effect of war on the educational growth at different stages remarked, "In India, while attendance at colleges was not directly affected by the war, there is some evidence that attendance at primary schools was actually stimulated."¹⁵

The post-war period had the unique feature of a number of currents and cross-currents criss-crossing the national scene. The major events were the victory of Britain, the constitutional reforms and the launching of the non-co-operation movement. Each of these factors had its impact on the direction of educational growth. Though sometimes mutually pulling in opposite directions as far as educational growth was concerned, their general effect was in heightening an educational awareness,

¹⁴L.S.S. O'Malley, 'General Survey', Modern India and the West, (ed.), L.S.S.O'Malley, op.cit., Pp.578-79.

The author cites the following figures to substantiate the claim for rapid growth.

The number of pupils in schools rose from 5,57,000 in 1920-21 to 1,198,000 in 1926-27.

¹⁵Progress of Education in India, 1917-1922, Vol.I (Calcutta: Supt. Government Printing, 1923), p.13.

especially in rural areas. This was quite understandable as hitherto the vast mass in rural areas was to a large extent unaffected by the modernizing process that education had initiated in urban areas. For the first time a sizeable section of the rural population had been compelled by the force of circumstances to come into contact with the wider world. It took pride when it saw that its children could as well participate successfully in tasks which hitherto it thought were the exclusive preserve of the privileged in urban areas. War-service, participation in elections to provincial assemblies and local bodies, coming forward in large numbers to contribute their share in the national movement were all unique events to many and could not but have an abiding impression.

The spread of educational awareness in rural areas, however, also created the problem of adjusting education to the environment and the solution was sought in developing a Vernacular system of education for rural areas. It was hoped that the system of Vernacular education would inhibit the growing demand for higher education on western lines among the rural population. But this was a fond hope. The elite that was emerging in rural areas was as averse to Vernacular education as the elites in towns. The classes which had previously

been almost immune from political influences were affected by various factors arising out of the war. A few of these factors were rapidly rising prices, demobilised soldiers, organised labour movement and so on. All these factors had a cumulative effect on the emergence of elites at different levels in rural and urban areas. Thus a number of elite centres grew representing a cross section of population in rural and urban areas. It could be said that a polycentric development of elite groups was taking place in this period which later exercised considerable influence in the growth of the nationalist movement.

Challenge to Domination of Classes:

The growth of political consciousness due to the war created conditions not only for a challenge to British supremacy but also came as a challenge to the upper class domination. The soldiers who returned from the war front and represented all classes and castes got rid of many inhibitions which in the past acted as mental and psychological barriers. The demolition of these mental barriers gave them the necessary stimulus to assert themselves in the political and cultural life of the country.

A significant development since the war has been a growing consciousness among the intermediate castes in the Hindu system of their natural rights as citizens, and the deep resentment that has been displayed against the political and intellectual domination of the Brahmins...¹⁶

This, however, created further tensions in the rural areas where the soldiers returned after the war. They discovered that they were now misfit in the social structure which was still bound by rigid caste rules. But in spite of the existing social resistance, on the whole it had a positive effect on the general awakening of the lower castes. They realised that their own elevation depended on adopting the same instruments by virtue of which the upper classes had occupied positions of power in every activity of life. Education as an instrument of levelling up with the upper classes was now considered an important constituent of progress. The advantage, however, was taken by a small section among the lower classes and helped in the growth of elites among them. They adopted the same models of progress as the upper class leadership had earlier done. The struggle was directed against the upper class monopoly but the aim was to gain a share in the privileges so far enjoyed

¹⁶ Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. I,
(Calcutta: Government of India, Central Publication
Branch, 1930), p.37.

by the upper class leadership.

Effect of Bolshevik Revolution

Another important event which was a direct consequence of war on the European scene was the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917. It was a far reaching event not only for Europe but the entire world. For India which was a colonial dependency, it had a special significance. On the political front, it changed the balance of power in Europe and decidedly against the Imperial England. It weakened the capacity of England to hold India on pre-war basis and hastened the process of political reforms introduced after the war. Of great consequence was the effect on the nationalist movement. The radical elements in the national movement were searching their way to find a modus vivendi for the struggle for independence. The Russian Revolution gave them confidence that the military power of an Imperial country like Russia could be overthrown by the organised revolt of their own people. India had lessons to draw from this experience. Revolutionary groups in India were also working in their own way to overthrow the British power but so far the main direction of nationalist movement had been on constitutional lines and no mass movements had been built on a country-wide basis. The classes which were spearheading the movement till now were imbued with western liberalism built up through a long process of western education. However, with the

spread of education among a larger section of population, it was no longer possible to maintain the liberal flair in politics. The younger generation was specially getting disillusioned with the slow process of reforms and looking across the frontiers for alternatives. The success of Russian Revolution was a concrete example of what could be achieved through the organised power of the people. At this moment in Indian politics Mahatma Gandhi gave a decisive lead by launching the non-co-operation movement. It was a call to the masses for direct action but at the same time prevented the nationalist movement from taking to violent revolutionary path.

The Russian Revolution had some distinct effects on the course of Indian nationalist movement and the educational thinking.

- i) Due to the deepening political consciousness in this period, it gave an ideological orientation to the movement. The slogan of independence was getting concrete meanings in terms of programmes and policies affecting a broader section of population.
- ii) The importance given to education in the bolshevik programme of reconstruction of the country, had its implications for the Indian leadership in recognising national education as an important item of political programme.

- iii) It also gave further radical orientation to the students who were now an active constituent of the nationalist movement. The reforms in the educational policies were directed to combat any revolutionary tendencies growing amongst the younger generation participating in the nationalist movement. The political necessity of mass education was also emphasized in this period to curb the radical tendencies from taking firm roots among the masses.

A general reorientation of educational policy and reestablishment of religious and moral values among the pupils was emphasized during this period. The official view was that this policy if followed in schools would rehabilitate in the pupils a respect for the existing value-system and check foreign influences especially the impact of the bolshevik revolution which the rulers thought was threatening to undermine the very foundations of an ordered society.

...new dangers have arisen which render still more urgent the demands for some readjustment of the policy hitherto pursued. The great war has set on foot world-wide movements which are threatening to loosen the very foundations of society....in some quarters they have assumed a sinister form and seek to destroy the moral and religious sanctions on which civilisation has been built. It is necessary in the changing scheme of things to hold firmly by these steadying influences which make for ordered development and have helped to guide humanity through perilous waters in the past.¹⁷

¹⁷ Government of India, Department of Education, July 1920, Proceedings Nos. 27-53.

The role of education was to help in harnessing all those forces which would exert a steady influence on the rising generation. This was considered important in view of the imminence of political change after the war and the revolutionary upheaval in Russia.

The time has come when obstacles can and should be removed against the inculcation of the national faiths among the student class, whose minds, unsettled by the teachings of an alien civilization, are apt to break away from tradition before they have acquired the constructive elements which such teachings can afford.¹⁸

Thus, education was now expected to exert a steady influence, inculcate national faiths and acquire a constructive approach. To what extent education fulfilled or could really cope with the task depended very much on understanding the political framework in which it was operating or was expected to operate. The colonial system of government was still existing and the political reforms were just imperfect imitation of the responsible form of government. Under those circumstances, exerting a steady influence was nothing but the maintenance of status-quo in the existing order of things. Restoration of national faiths was really going back to about a century when the government committed itself to a secular

¹⁸Ibid.

form of education. Education as it existed was totally inadequate to perform the command task of creating the necessary climate for political reforms. Rather it were political reforms which could create the necessary climate for any radical departure in educational policies or any decisive change in the emphasis placed on various aspects of educational development. The policy of consolidation in higher education and expansion in mass education was now coloured with the political motivation of keeping in check any signs of revolutionary tendencies among the youth.

Imperialism Disintegrates: Lessons for India

The imperialist system had hardly recovered from the economic crisis of the thirties when another crisis much greater in magnitude than the former was found developing within it. The crisis was basically of looking for new markets for sustaining the economic structure at home. But it was a shrinking world market especially after world war I when a large part of Europe had opted out of the orbit of imperialism. The matter came to a head when one group of imperialist states represented by Germany, Italy and Japan sought to redistribute the colonies by resorting to force. The other group which resisted this forced redistribution was represented by Britain, France and U.S.A. However, there was an important difference between the system of governments in the

states represented in these two groups. While the former were having a fascist form of government the latter group of states had preserved the democratic form. It is important to bear this difference in mind to understand the policy changes introduced by the imperial rulers in their respective colonies. Though the simmerings of the conflict were felt in Europe long before the actual outbreak of war, the major political impact in India was felt only after Britain entered the war theatre. In spite of the provincial autonomy granted by the 1935 Act and representative governments functioning in the provinces and an elected legislative assembly at the Centre, India was declared a party to the war without taking into confidence the will of the country as represented by the elected bodies. Without going into details, it is enough to state that the illusion of political advancement created by the so-called responsible governments was shattered. The limitations of constitutional advancements within the imperialist structure was proved beyond doubt when the elected representatives were not consulted on the most important decision of declaring India a belligerent country. It also, brought home the truth that how the restraints put by the political system leave very little scope for pushing ahead schemes of social and economic advancement. The popular ministries which had taken many schemes of educational and

social development had to abandon them due to their resignation on the issue of making India a war partner of Britain.¹⁹

Though India was drawn into the war unwillingly, it could not escape the multiple effects that war brought in its wake. The overall effect after the war ended was the weakening of British Imperial power which hastened the independence of India. But what we are more concerned here is the internal convulsions brought in by the war which affected the educational panorama of the country. The effects were clearly visible in the reframing of educational aims, change of emphasis in educational planning and future policy projections.

The major issue that came up was the broader question of the right of a nation to follow its own way of life without any external pressures. Should the nations go down in the face of fascist onslaught or should they stand up to preserve their way of life? How the educational system of a particular country could be made use of in instilling the ideas of democracy, freedom

¹⁹ Progress of Education in India, 1937-1947 Decennial Review, Vol. I, (Delhi: Central Bureau of Education, Ministry of Education, 1948), Pp.73-75.

The decennial review reports the launching of Basic Education schemes in a number of Provinces which were interrupted due to the resignation of Provincial Ministries in 1939.

and equality among the young generation? The way education had been made use of in Germany in attuning the young minds to the fascist ideology was a harsh truth. All these issues started worrying the educational policy makers in India. Though India was yet under the political subjugation of Britain, there was little doubt left among the rulers as well as the ruled regarding India gaining Independence in not too distant future. The educational system as it existed then was considered to be ill suited to prepare the young generation to play its role effectively in the changing international context. Its aims were too narrow to bring in a consciousness of taking intelligent decisions regarding the issues of democracy, self-determination, freedom of choosing one's own way of life etc. Even though India was not independent, had not achieved democracy and was not in a position to exercise its free will, these important considerations started exercising a deep concern among the educated classes. How these issues were exercising the minds of educational planners will be clear from the following remarks.

A new orientation has to be given to the policy of education which may help to create the right type of citizen. The aim of education in the present age should be more specifically defined as there has been a great retrogression in the sphere of education during the last few years in some of the countries of the West. Democracy is threatened with destruction and militarism and chauvinism have been intensified in recent years. If democracy recedes into the background and there is a triumph

of the forces of reaction the world will relapse into barbarism....People are being taught to love war and to eschew the path of peace and co-operation. International understanding is becoming more and more difficult.²⁰

But the political climate in India was not favourable to create the right type of citizen. Indian educated opinion by and large was undoubtedly aware of the issue involved in the war. But their own state of political subjugation prevented a positive response against the fascist ideology. When Japan was at the door steps of India, the reaction among the educated classes was that of subdued joy at the humiliation of the British.²¹ However, the educational system could not be blamed for not arousing enough anti-Japanese or anti-fascist feelings among the people. The reaction of the people was mainly negative born out of a long period of political subjugation. Any set of circumstances or forces weakening the British imperialism were found to arouse a sense of satisfaction. The limitations of the educational system to develop an anti-fascist and pro-democratic attitude among the people were obvious. It was circumscribed by the political framework in which it was functioning. The call to preserve the democracy, principle of self-determination and freedom did not fit in with the colonial status of India.

²⁰Report of the Primary and Secondary Education Re-organization Committee, (Allahabad; Supt. Printing and Stationery, United Provinces, India, 1940), p.10.

²¹cf. Michal Edwardes, British India, 1772-1947, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1967), Pp.250-52.

Effect of War and Educational Planning:

The effect of war on the educational thinking in India was clearly marked in the following two directions.

- i) It was realised that no piecemeal reform in the educational system would be worthwhile. What was needed was a thorough reorganization of the educational system. Need was felt to evolve a national system of education with the perspective of India on the threshold of independence. The post-war educational development plan was an attempt in that direction.²²
- ii) It was also realised that the policy of isolationism followed in India was no more tenable in the changed international context. Any new educational plan for India would henceforth have to take into consideration the currents sweeping across the countries in the neighbourhood or far across India. The type of citizen that a country was building for itself could not now remain the sole concern of that country as events in Germany had proved.

Even before the outbreak of war, attention was being paid to the problems of practical and vocational education. But this was mainly due to the growing unemployment among

²²The post-war educational development plan prepared by the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1944 is a major educational document prepared during British rule in India. The setting in which it was prepared and its main recommendations relevant to the present study have been discussed in Chapter VII of this thesis which deals with educational planning for the future.

the educated youth heavily biased towards a literary form of education. Just before the outbreak of war, the whole question of technical and vocational education was studied in Wood-Abbot Report. The main recommendations of this report have been discussed in Chapter III. But the outbreak of war delayed the implementation of the recommendations of this report. However, the urgency of technical personnel during the war continued to attract the attention of the government. In 1940, a committee on Technical Education surveyed the conditions in Bengal and suggested a number of reforms. The Central Advisory Board of Education also continued to evince keen interest in the problem of technical education. The most common recommendation emanating from the deliberations of these committees was the importance of organised and systematic provision for practical training in all stages of education. But it was during the war years that the great deficiency in technical education showed the lopsided development of education in the country. We quote from the decennial review of 1937-47.

The great paucity of facilities for training in different technical subjects was shown up cruelly during the war years. There was insufficiency of technical and scientific personnel, both in quality and quantity. Existing institutions had neither the equipment nor the teaching staff necessary for filling up the gaps. It was recognised that immediate steps must be taken to train a sufficient number of persons to man the many new institutions which would be

necessary if adequate facilities for scientific and technical education were to be provided within the country.²³

The post-war educational development plan in India also realised the necessity of maintaining the industrial spirit created during the war years. The provision of a supporting structure of technical education was considered to be a must to ensure a smooth industrial development. We quote from the report of Central Advisory Board of Education emphasizing the close linking of education to industry.

If the fillip which the war has given to industrial development is to be maintained and consolidated, it is difficult to think of any country where a real partnership between education and industry is more essential or where it is more important to help the small business or the cottage industry, to increase the supply of skilled craftsmen and competent executives, to convert abundant raw materials to the service of the country which produces them and above all to check the flow of potentially creative intelligence through academic channels into the slough of unemployment.²⁴

To analyse the effects of war which forced the re-examination of educational policies the following factors could be taken into account.

²³Progress of Education in India, 1937-1947, Vol.I,
op.cit., p.172.

²⁴Post-war Educational Development in India, Report of the
Central Advisory Board of Education, (Delhi: Manager
of Publications, 1944), p.38.

Mass Awakening:- The most direct effect was on soldiers who mainly came from peasant stock. As usually happens with any cataclysmic event, the war uplifted the peasant-soldier from a tradition bound setting to a new life. It started a process of re-valuation. This re-valuation was in all aspects of his life. On the economic side he learnt quite a few new trades and modern techniques of industry. On the social side he discovered that the gulf that separated him and the privileged was after all not an unbridgeable one. Education on modern lines could do that to some extent. This incidentally brought home the truth among the educational planners that the policy of training an elite without an expanded educational base was harmful in the new context. The awakening among the peasant-soldier also nourished a sense of pride in him. The battles fought by him on equal footings with soldiers of independent countries restored a faith in him regarding the destiny of his own country and the place he had in its fulfilment. But this sense of achievement and heightened expectancy did not find a fertile soil in the then existing conditions in India. Though there was a spurt in industrial expansion in India during war years due to the increasing demand from the war front, the foundations for India's industrial advancement had not yet been laid. Without a solid base of industrial

advancement technical education could not make much headway.²⁵ The soldiers who had seen first hand the marvels of technology could not find an opening for them or their sons for that type of education on return home. This created a sense of frustration and the only alternative was to fall back on the literary-biased educational system. This extra-pressure on literary education created problems which the existing educational system was not able to resolve.

Intellectual Fermentation:- The war broadened the mental horizon as it forced the intellectuals to think about the national issues in a wider perspective. The issue of independence was no more an isolated national issue but was seen as part of the broader international struggle for the preservation of peace, democracy and freedom. An awareness grew among a section of the intellectuals that radical social and economic changes could be brought about only if basic transformations are effected in the political system. But there were considerable barriers for any effective transformation to take place. The

²⁵ See, Barbara Ward, 'Modernization Begun but not Completed', The British in India Imperialism or Trusteeship? (ed.), Martin D. Lewis, (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1966), p.60.

"Technical and scientific education - the essential modern pendants to the old classical training - expanded hardly at all. At independence, the number of students graduating in engineering and technology was still only about 3,000 a year."

barriers were on all fronts - economic, political and social. Economically India was still an agrarian country with a poorly developed industry which still lacked any potential for the rapid industrialisation of the country. The material conditions of peasants and workers were hardly conducive for their cultural growth. Politically India was not an independent country. Though it was clear to every body that Britain was now incapable of holding India any longer, the political uncertainties of the period created a climate of suspicion and mutual bickerings among the contenders of political power. On the social plane, communalism, regionalism and casteism were still too powerful to allow the growth of an image of common Indian nationality. All these barriers became too apparent at the close of the war. The enlightenment due to war brought the urgency of removing these barriers for a full and rapid development of the country on all fronts. However, India was not yet sufficiently developed to absorb and accommodate the growing enlightenment which was the after effect of war. There was a considerable stirring on all these sectors. A spurt in industrial development was noticeable due to the demand of war materials and created more openings for the Indian enterprenuer class. Protracted negotiations started for transferring political power to the Indians. Forces of social conservatism also received a set-back due to the disturbance of customs and a resurgence of backward classes and women.

A few of the crucial issue in education which were linked up with mass awakening and intellectual enlightenment came into focus in the post-war period. These may be briefly stated as follows.

- i) The value of a national system of education was realised especially during such national crisis as war. It became clear that a universal and popular education must be provided to produce a conscious citizenry. The defence of a country could no longer be left as the sole concern of a professional army. The country had simultaneously to be defended in factories, farms and other work-centres. All this needed a well-balanced national education system. Its deficiency was acutely felt during and after the war.
- ii) Value of education for the ordinary soldier was also realised and the deficiency of the existing system of education was most acutely felt in this sphere. The demand for a technical personnel was felt during war years. The education as it existed then was not geared to meet this demand.
- iii) Education in order to be instrumental in the transformation of society had to fit in the overall plan of national development. The lop-sided development of education became too clear to go unnoticed even to an uncritical

eye during and after the war.

The overall effect of war on the educational system of the country was to expose and pinpoint its weak spots and bring a sense of urgency for recasting and restructuring it in accordance with the future set-up of the country.

This chapter focusses attention on major international events during 1904-47 which influenced the political developments in the country and consequently the educational policies. Three major events stand out in this period, viz., the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905; first world war and the bolshevik revolution in Russia and the second world war. All these events mark a significant phase in the history of education in India. It is significant that the first movement for an alternative system of national education started in 1905 as a part of the broader movement for swadeshi and boycott. Though political demands were yet limited and narrow, education for the first time was viewed as an instrument of national reconstruction. The political awakening generated during and after the first world war brought educational awareness among the lower middle classes in urban areas and the peasants in the rural areas. The political expectation was now of a self-governing country within the empire. The post-war reforms

introduced dyarchy in the provinces and the heightened educational awareness found some outlet in the educational schemes initiated in the provinces. The bolshevik revolution in Russia initiated a process of left movements in the country. The importance of giving an ideological orientation to the nationalist movement was realised. Education from now on was regarded as an important ingredient of the wider political movement. However, the danger of bolshevism spreading among the youth was stretched beyond all proportions by the rulers. The emphasis on moral education was expected to exert a steadying influence on the students and counter the growth of radicalism among them. The second world war brought the deficiencies of the existing system of education to focus and built up a new political framework for initiating post-war educational policies. The new framework was based on freedom, democracy and equality.
