

CHAPTER - II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Consolidation of Political Rule over India and Growth of New Classes

The monopoly of East India Company ended in 1813 and the decision in 1833 to permit Englishmen to acquire land and set up as planters in India was the beginning of a new phase of the colonial rule.¹ This phase almost coincided with the growth of Industrial Capital in England.² This new phase of exploitation by the Industrial Capital was preceded by a reorganisation of the administrative service. Lord Cornwallis's reforms in the administration and the Permanent Land Settlement in Bengal may be cited as examples.³ All these measures were directed to create a new social base for the British rule. The Permanent Settlement created a new landlord class whose very existence was now dependent on the stability of the British rule. Throwing open the Indian market to the capitalist class in England necessitated an enlarged and scientifically organised administrative system. It also created conditions for the native collaborators to play a second fiddle to the masters. Thus for the first time a need was felt to create a super-structure of education which could feed the administration

¹Tara Chand, History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol.II, (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1967), Pp.153-54.

²R.P.Dutt, India To-day, (Bombay: People's Publishing House, 1947), p.76.

³Ibid., Pp.190-91.

and also satisfy the new classes of admirers of the British rule.

It has been commonly held that the acceptance of state responsibility for education of the natives at least three decades earlier than in England, was a creditable achievement of the colonial rulers. Scholars holding this view, however, tend to ignore the fact that this decision was not born out of any liberal - humanitarian spirit but was an administrative and political necessity.⁴

Panikkar has emphasized the spirit of liberalism pervading during the nineteenth century England motivating the colonial rulers also for taking up the responsibility of education. "European imperialism in the nineteenth century, under the humanitarian impulses of the liberal movement embarked on a policy of education, welfare schemes and even political training."⁵

It seems more plausible that the consolidation of the political power of the British had prepared the ground and the administrative and political compulsions of this process created the necessity for evolving a policy on education. The response to the situation was political rather than humanitarian.

⁴See, A.R.Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1966), Pp.140-41.

⁵K.M.Pannikar, 'Asia and Western Dominance', The British in India, Imperialism or Trusteeship?, (ed.), Martin D.Lewis, (Boston: D.C.Heath and Co., 1966), p.105.

Another view that has been presented regarding the evolution of the new educational policy has emphasized the wave of enthusiasm amongst the Indians for English education.

Indeed, there are good grounds for believing that the demand of Indians for English education was a more important factor in the development of educational policy than the desire of the Government to find suitably qualified recruits for the public service or the efforts of the missionaries to employ education as a means of conversion.⁶

The evolving of new educational policy was, however, first and foremost the outcome of political and administrative necessity. The demand of the emerging elites for the new education and the support they gave to the educational policy was an indicator that they had convinced themselves of their future role in the new political situation. The clamour made for English education and the unqualified support given to it by the new classes was born out of their interest to consolidate their own position. This support was not the cause of new educational policy but facilitated its acceptance. It created the enthusiasm necessary for its rapid growth among its own class of people.

The impact of British appearance on the Indian scene, first as traders and later as political conquerors was felt most profoundly by the traditional elites. It is

⁶ H.V. Hampton, Biographical Studies in Modern Indian Education, (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1947), p.38.

significant to understand this impact as it affected and influenced the growth of new elites in subsequent years. In the process of political conquest the ruling classes of the traditional elites were overthrown but that section of the traditional elites which was culturally associated with the ruling classes started adjusting to the new masters. When the British finally consolidated their political rule they found among this group quite a few admirers and active supporters of their policy. The growth of the new classes was not the outcome of the western education system as is sometimes made out.⁷ It arose due to the policies followed in economic and administrative spheres. The process of political consolidation entailed a lot of informal contacts between the ruling class and the Indian leaders. Besides there was a large flow of Englishmen who came as missionaries, teachers, administrators and the like in the first half of the nineteenth century.

O'Malley makes this point while writing about the impact of European civilization.

Many of the early Indian leaders of thought were not the product of any system of English education, but were self-taught men, who obtained their knowledge

⁷ See, A.R.Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, op.cit., p.158.

See also, R.P.Dutt, India To-day, op.cit., Pp.250-51.

not from the instruction given in schools and colleges but from independent study. Raja Ram Mohan Ray himself did not begin the study of English till after he was 21 years of age. The members of the party of religious and social reform which he led acquired their knowledge of English and liberality of thought chiefly from their association and personal intercourse with Europeans;....⁸

It was a different matter altogether that this new class of people used education as a tool to perpetuate their own hold on events. The ruling power also did likewise. The peripheral role that education played and could play in the growth of the new class and in transforming the existing order of society is also borne out by the fact that the rise of British industrial system had practically no relation with the growth of educational system in England. "In this rise of British industry the English Universities played no part whatever....., indeed formal education of any sort was a negligible factor in its success."⁹

The ruling classes of the traditional elites made a final attempt to regain their lost position in 1857 and failed. The revolt of 1857 has been interpreted by historians with diametrically differing approaches. Some have described it as a simple sepoy revolt while a few

⁸L.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), Pp.64-65.

⁹Eric Ashby, 'On Universities and the Scientific Revolution', Education, Economy and Society, (ed.), A.H.Halsey, Jean Floud and C.Arnold Anderson, (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), p.466.

others would not feel satisfied by calling it anything less than the First War of Independence.¹⁰ In the present study we have no reason to go into this controversy. What we want to emphasize is this that the revolt had a significant bearing on the political consolidation of the empire and the growth of the new classes. On the political side India now came under the direct control of the Crown, i.e., the British Parliament, with the Secretary of State as an overlord. There was a hardening of attitude among the ruler-bureaucrat. The social distance between him and the native elite widened. The more profound impact was on the elite groups, old and the new. The traditional elites realised and were reconciled to the position that they had lost the last chance of recovery to the old order. The emerging new elite groups discovered that the political rule of the British had come to stay for a fairly long period. More than that they saw in the stability of this rule the guarantee for their own growth and consolidation. They had already supported and taken advantage of the new system of education introduced earlier. They had also realised that the growth and development of this new system of education was necessary for their own consolidation.

¹⁰(i) Sashi Bhusan Chaudhuri, Theories of the Indian Mutiny (1857-59), (Calcutta: The World Press Private Ltd., 1965).
(ii) Surendra Nath Sen, Eighteen Fifty-Seven, (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1958).

Education - The Tool of the Government

It was not just a matter of chance that the British intervened in Indian education at a particular period of their rule. The educational policy could be said to have taken a definite direction from 1835 when official seal was put on Macaulay's Minute. A lot has been said and written on Macaulay's Minute and its effect on subsequent developments on the course of Indian education.¹¹ The controversy has been stretched beyond all proportions. The development of Indian education/^{on} western lines was inevitable irrespective of whether Macaulay happened to be in the Viceroy's Executive Council as Law member or not. For that matter, even the measures taken by Bentinck as Viceroy only expedited the decision taken on educational policy.¹² Events were waiting only for an opportune time to take a definite turn and that was provided during the viceroyalty of Bentinck. The reforms introduced by Bentinck in administrative and social spheres hastened the process of decision making in educational policy. An important factor which is often not taken into account by the

¹¹(i) Nurullah and Naik, A Student's History of Education in India (1880-1961), (Delhi: MacMillan & Co., 1962), p.61.

(ii) S.N. Mukerji, History of Education in India, (Modern Period), (Baroda: Acharya Book Depot, 1966), Pp.73-74.

(iii) B.D. Srivastava, The Development of Modern Indian Education, (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1963), Pp.173-78.

¹²See, R.P. Singh, 'Notes on the Writing of the History of Indian Education', Paedagogica Historica, Vol.X, No.2, Gent, Blandijnberg, 1970, p.267.

authors of Indian education is the inter-relationship between the rulers and the newly emerged class of natives. The administrative framework had to be dovetailed to the changing political requirements. A class of natives had already emerged on the scene. Only this class could provide support to the Government in any measure of reform that it might introduce. It was only this class which could be ideologically oriented towards the policies of the colonial power. The oft-quoted words of Macaulay that the new educational policy was 'to create a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and intellect' signified that the rulers had already started looking for allies and the most reliable and dependable allies could be those who would get education and training in institutions modelled on western (i.e. British) pattern, i.e., imbued with the political ideology of the ruler. However, the limitations of the colonial rule had its inherent contradictions. These contradictions did not manifest during this period because the emerging elites were not yet prepared to think in terms of any political system outside the orbit of the British rule. Their political subjugation was explained away by them as a divinely ordained event which could and should not be challenged as its continuation was in their own interest.

The educational structure was thus created to subserve the political framework of the empire. If education was to

serve as a tool for serving the political interests of the rulers, it is necessary to understand those interests and also the class of people who could be operative in serving those interests. The British had been successful in providing that stability in the country which in contrast to the turmoil and unsettled conditions of the preceding years was welcomed by all sections of people barring the traditional ruling elites. The political interests of the rulers now lay in maintaining that stability on the one hand and to reorganize the administrative structure in a way that would endure the empire for a long time on the other. Thus a firm institutional character was given to the administration. But the very size of the country precluded any wholesale importation of personnel from England to man this huge bureaucratic structure. A class of people had to be created as functionaries at the intermediary and lower levels to function in this set up. From where could these be drawn? There were the traditional elites who were finding themselves uprooted. Another class of elites was emerging who had acquired power and position due to the changes introduced in agrarian relations and the introduction of British capital in the country.¹³ A section of the traditional elites and

¹³ See, Fatma Mansur, Process of Independence, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), Pp.28-29.

these new classes of elites who had come in cultural contacts with the rulers provided the field from where the rulers could draw in the new cadres. These could be called the first generation of English educated Indians. They were firm admirers of the British rule with all that it meant. Their admiration was based on certain convictions. It is well to know a few premises on which this conviction was based. The reason being that the later political developments and educational policies bore the imprint of the thinking and convictions of these people. We may enumerate a few of these.

- i) The British rule in India was an act of Providence for them. It was in the interest of the country to take it as such and derive the maximum benefit from this god - send opportunity.
- ii) Their own role was conceived as harbingers of the new era and arousing their fellow - countrymen from the slumber of ages.
- iii) The future of the country depended on emulating the political and institutional set-up of England.
- iv) Social reforms were a pre-requisite for any political advancement of the country.
- v) The country could be provided with an effective leadership only from among the rising middle class steeped in the ideology of the west. The emergence of this leadership was possible only with the rapid

advance of western education in the country.¹⁴

Education and Politics - Indian Reaction

The educational intervention by the government in 1835 ushered in a new relationship between the course of political developments and the policies followed in education. Henceforth the effects of educational policies were to be seen and judged in the crucible of policies framed for the political advancement of India within the colonial framework. Any departure from the prescribed course was considered to be a failure on the education front also and policies were reorganised accordingly. The close linking of politics and education had two dimensions in the contemporary Indian situation.

- i) From the ruler's point of view the awareness created by the new educational policy would help in the smooth functioning of the colonial rule. In the long run, it would create a generation of people who would be firmly imbued with the political philosophy of the rulers. Though continuous readjustments and changes would be necessary in maintaining the colonial rule in India, the

¹⁴See, N.V.Somani, 'British Impact on India', Studies in the Cultural History of India, (eds.), Guy S.Metraux and Francois Crouzet, (Agra: Shiv Lal Agarwala & Co., (P)Ltd., 1965), p.326.

course of political developments under the leadership of the western educated classes would never threaten or undermine the colonial structure of the empire.

- ii) From the view point of the educated classes and supporters of the new education system, the awareness created by the new education would strengthen the national consciousness and strengthen their hands in fighting the conservatism which they thought was the main enemy of the Indian progress. At the same time the newly educated class realised that this was the best means of bringing it closer to the ways and means of governmental functioning. The increasing association with the rulers would inevitably lead to a situation where they would be able to share in the governance of the country. Their reaction to the new policy was enthusiastic and positive. They envisaged of an India on its way to modernisation under their leadership. The association with the British even as a dependency was thought to be inevitable and to an extent advantageous.

The juxtaposition of the role of new education as viewed by the rulers and the elite groups resulted in two types of roles played by elites during this period. The roles were not mutually exclusive but each had its own

distinctive features. A section of the elites was absorbed in the bureaucracy and functioned as a part of the administrative structure. It had yet to fight its way to the higher echelons of that structure. It had the advantages and limitations of a bureaucracy functioning in a colonial system. Its primary aim was to run the administration in an impersonal and efficient way. As an executive wing of the colonial system it had to carry out the policies laid down by the rulers. It was not supposed to take any policy decisions. But due to the colonial nature of the Indian government, the role of bureaucracy was very significant. It was the bureaucratic administration under the Viceroy which laid down policies and was also executing them. Even after 1858, when the Company's rule was taken over by the British Parliament, the Secretary of State for India as an overlord was the head of the bureaucratic machine. The elites who got absorbed in this bureaucracy at lower rungs of the ladder had a minor role to perform and were ineffective in influencing the policy decisions. But they always acted as an allurements to the educated classes and a high water mark to satisfy their aspirational levels. There was another section of elites whose primary aim was not to be a part of the bureaucracy. But they had cast their lot with the political system introduced by the British in the governance of its colonies. They clearly

perceived the regeneration of their country within the political framework of the colonial rule. The association with England was as important for them as their own consolidation in the regeneration of India. From among this section of elites emerged the leadership who played a significant role in the social and political regeneration of the country. They may be said to have acted as the cultural carriers of British political ideas. Their implicit faith in the British political institutions like Parliament, independent judiciary etc., made them ardent champions of the new educational policy. Men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy may be said to be the representatives of this section of elites. Though he himself did not live to see the day when formal announcement of the government's educational policy was made (He died in 1833), he was the precursor of that class of educated Indians who took the lead in sowing the seeds of the western system of education in India.

A special feature of this period may be noted as it had an important bearing for the future growth of education in India. The birth and growth of the new elites was due to the political consolidation of British rule in India. The new elite was mainly drawn from the higher and middle classes. The general attitude of the higher and middle classes towards lower classes was that of contempt

and at best of indifference. The elite groups sought the support of higher classes in the movement for enlightenment of the country for which western education was thought to be an important instrument. The implication was that education should begin at the top, i.e., for the benefit of higher classes. Any talk of education of the masses or even of the lower classes was out of tune of the times. The reaction of the elite groups in favour of higher education for the benefit of the higher classes was in agreement with the prevalent opinion of the day.

In the initial stages of the formulation of educational policies, there was a concurrence of views among the government and the newly emerged elites. The policy of training upper class educated elites was a necessity imposed by the consolidation of the political rule. This was also understandable by the fact that education in England was yet outside the sphere of government activity and was the monopoly of the upper classes. In England, the government intervention came as late as 1870 when Compulsory Primary Education Act was passed. The early intervention by the colonial government in the education of India came because of the administrative and political necessity of maintaining and running the colonial rule. The idea of any form of self-government for India was yet outside the political calculations of the British Government. The reliance was on a highly centralised form

of administration and consequently an educated cadre at different levels which only an educational system geared to higher education could supply. The positive response of the educated elites helped in the successful working out of this policy. In fact they came forward enthusiastically to take a lead in building up the educational system biased in favour of higher education. They became the sole leaders of this educational movement. The policy of the government of leaving higher education to the private enterprise helped them in gaining the position of pre-eminence in the growth of education in India. The conflicts and controversies arising in subsequent years over the educational policies could be traced back to this phase of educational expansion.¹⁵

Tracing the development of western system of education in Bengal, the Calcutta University Commission (1917-19) describes the main characteristic of the growth of higher education at the secondary level in these words.

...the most striking feature of the story is that while there was a very large increase in the total number of high schools, there was, during the decade 1871-1882, an actual decrease in the number of Government schools, and even of aided schools.¹⁶

Consolidation of New Elites

The period immediately following the revolt of 1857 till the decade following the formation of Indian National

¹⁵ See, Swarna Jayaweera, 'British Educational Policy in Ceylon in the Nineteenth Century', Paedagogica Historica, Vol.IX, No.1, 1969, Pp.68-90.

¹⁶ Calcutta University Commission Report, (1917-19), Vol.I, Part I, (Calcutta: Supt. Government Printing, 1919) p.42.

Congress in 1885 can be termed as a period of the growth and consolidation of new elites. The formation of the new elites had started in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Until the revolt of 1857 they may be said to be passing through their formative stage. During this period they seized all opportunities of the modernizing influences inevitably attached with the British rule. They were the ardent supporters of any social reform measure undertaken by the government. The abolition of Sati during Bentinck's viceroyalty may be cited as an example. But until 1857, their influence was limited to only that section of society which had broken away from the past and had begun to appreciate the liberal posture of the western bourgeois society as distinguished from the rigid compartmentalization of the feudal system. The process of regeneration had started among them due to their informal and formal contacts with the rulers, missionaries and a few enlightened individuals who came to India from time to time. But their influence was operative in a small circle of admirers. They could not act as leaders of a well organized movement. The feudal elements who had been displaced from positions of power were still influential. They made a last attempt to regain their lost power in 1857 and failed. It was after the failure of the revolt of 1857 that the new forces representing the educated classes

started making concerted efforts to come together and consolidate their position. It was obvious that in the initial stages they could not gather on an all-India basis. Their efforts were naturally confined on a regional or local plane. The maturation period of the new social forces may be said to begin with the year following the 1857 revolt till the formation of Indian National Congress in 1885. It was during this period that western education played a significant role. The recommendation of Wood's Despatch in 1854 for starting Universities in three principal cities was brought into effect in 1858. Calcutta, Bombay and Madras became centres of higher learning. It may be recalled that a few measures taken by the government for safeguarding their rule also helped in the maturation of the new social forces. Among the measures thus far taken, the most important were the establishment of Universities in 1858, the High Courts and the Legislative Councils between 1861 and 1863. All these measures helped in providing wider opportunities to the new social classes. They opened new avenues of leadership for the educated classes and created an awareness of the historic role they were destined to play in the changed circumstances of the country. We will now recount the attempts made by the newly emerged classes to come together and make serious moves of extending their influence. The initial moves were on a local or regional basis. In 1838, the landed

gentry of Calcutta formed 'The Landholders Society' for protecting their own interests against the government's policy of acquiring rent-free lands. In 1851, the British India Association was formed. It represented the upper class landholders and the rising middle class. For the first time in 1853, they put forward a demand for elected representatives to the Legislative Councils. In 1852, 'the Bombay Association' was formed and in 1853 it petitioned the Parliament for reorganization of the Legislative Councils, admission of Indians in higher services and establishment of Universities.¹⁷ It may be recalled that the famous Wood's Despatch was issued in the year 1854 and it recommended the establishment of Universities in three principal cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

The middle class ascendancy in Indian politics appeared a little later. With the establishment of the Indian Association in 1876, it was clear that the professional groups had come to occupy an important position in the political configuration that was taking place in the country. The middle class ascendancy had important

¹⁷ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, (1885-1935), Vol.I, (Allahabad: Congress Working Committee, 1935), Pp.13-14.

See also, R.P.Dutt; India To-day, op.cit., Pp.256-58.

consequences for the direction taken by political events and education in subsequent years. The air of suspicion after 1857 and the posture of racial superiority taken up by the British officials had also its impact on the thinking of middle classes. They became conscious of the inferior status they were put in in spite of their education and attainments.

The consolidation of new elites representing mainly the professional classes during the last quarter of the nineteenth century was linked up with the general policy orientation of the British towards India. Though the policy vacillated between the strong arm rule of Lytton and the liberal stance taken by Ripon, the underlying current being a tacit reliance on the emerging new social classes. A lurking suspicion was expressed from time to time but it was outweighed by the confidence in an orderly progress of the colony under the leadership of the newly emerged classes. The growth and consolidation of this class was not yet seen as a challenge to the stability of the rule.

...for even at the end of the nineteenth century,... the humanitarian ideal of educating the Asian people and of encouraging them to develop at least those skills which were necessary for the more effective discharge of the white man's mission, was pursued without any sense of fear.¹⁸

¹⁸K.M.Pannikar, 'Asia and Western Dominance', The British in India, Imperialism or Trusteeship? (ed.), Martin D.Lewis, op.cit., p.106.

There were a few aberrations in this general policy like the repressive measures of Lytton to curb the freedom of the press by enacting Vernacular Press Act, Arms Act etc. But the major pattern was set in by Ripon by his policy of decentralisation in local affairs and his educational policy. In 1882, he issued the resolution on local self-government. The Indian Education Commission was also set up in the same year. Both these events are of special significance in the history of political developments and education in India. Whereas the one talked of political education of the masses so that they could appreciate the functions of the local bodies, the other placed reliance on the educated classes for the expansion of higher education. Both these measures were in substance meant to gain the confidence of the newly emerged classes which had been shaken to some extent by the policies pursued by their predecessors. The policy of allowing some freedom of action at the local-body level was primarily meant to pacify the middle classes who had started demanding representation at the provincial and central level. It was also a recognition of the strength of the middle classes.

The Education Commission of 1882 recommended a shift in emphasis from a system of public control to private enterprise as the best means of implementing the educational policies of the government. This decision has been interpreted in different ways by authors of Indian history

and education. One view is to interpret this laissez-faire policy in education as a part of the laissez-faire policy followed in economic sphere when British Industrial Capital was given a free access to the Indian market by ending the monopoly of East India Company in 1813. The new economic policy was now directed to the development of India as a market for the rising British machine industry.¹⁹ Some scholars have interpreted this decision as the outcome of the thinking on the part of British rulers and have condemned the creation of middle class. The consolidation of this middle class had now created a demand on their part for an equal share in the administration of the country. Anil Seal holds that the decision of the government to withdraw more and more from higher education was received badly by politically conscious educated sections of the country. Their suspicion was that this policy would hamper the growth of higher education and come in the way of the political consolidation of the middle classes. He cites the letter of Wacha to Naoroji dated 17th July 1888 which we quote below.

The Government of India has just published a Resolution which may be considered the death knell of higher education in the country. It distinctly instructs all administrations to retire gradually from higher education as private enterprise makes head....This is

¹⁹R.P.Dutt, India To-day, op.cit., Pp.84-107.

the first effect of the Indian National Congress. Educated natives must be less in India. So say the Government. It is they who agitate. Let us diminish their number. As well may they try to stem the Atlantic. They cannot put back the hand of the dial. In fact the result will be that it will give natives greater stimulus to promote higher education. It will teach them greater self-reliance.²⁰

It was thought that a second look at the educational policy was politically necessary to put a curb on the growth of the middle class. The withdrawal of the government from the sphere of higher education and shifting the emphasis to primary education would limit the growth of higher education and consequently that of the middle classes.²¹

We however, hold the view that this decision was primarily based on a policy of reliance on the educated classes. Leaving the growth of higher education to private enterprise was surely not a policy of distrust towards the politically conscious educated classes. The government policy of gradually withdrawing from higher education was laid down in the Wood's Despatch of 1854 and reiterated more concretely in the Education Commission Report of 1882. The policy of casting doubt on the educated classes as a dependable political ally was a later development when

²⁰ Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p.20.

²¹ B.B.Misra, The Indian Middle Classes, Their Growth in Modern Times (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), Pp.282-84.

political demands became more concrete and pronounced. It was only during Curzon's viceroyalty that these contradictions came into the open.

The advent of British Industrial Capital in India was a nineteenth century phenomena and was not a special feature of the seventies or eighties when the shift in educational policy was propounded. The creation and growth of the middle classes in Europe was the outcome of the Industrial revolution. In India, the destruction of the old social order came in the wake of India being reduced to a colony of the British. The birth and growth of the middle classes in India was thus not the direct consequence of the economic transformation of the old order. It was the consequence of the old social order being shattered by the new economic policies introduced by the British on the one hand and the administrative and political compulsion of the empire on the other. The British even if they had wanted to prevent the creation of the middle classes would not have been able to do so without endangering the very basis of the colonial structure.

The controversy regarding the effect of western system of education on the stability of the empire started from the day the new educational policy stood ratified by the government. Men like Munro, Trevelyan and Macaulay, ardent supporters of the new educational policy, foresaw the growth of an educated class championing the demands for a

representative form of government.²² What they could not foresee was the first major shake up in the empire due to events that led to the revolt of 1857. The controversy regarding the effect of new education, however, did not cease with the changes in the political set-up introduced after the revolt of 1857. Only new dimensions were added to this controversy. The rapid growth of the middle classes in the sixties and seventies of the nineteenth century and the expansion of higher education added new strains in the relationship between the newly emerged classes and the rulers. One thing was however certain. The clock of western education could not be set back. The government could only try to limit higher education to certain classes of people whom it considered as politically dependable allies. Another diversion could be the education of the masses who were yet out of the political calculations of the rulers as well as of the newly emerged classes. Thus education now began to occupy the central position in the political controversies of this period. "Education, according to Lord Lytton, must translate the motives of the Government to the people."²³

²² Sir Philip Hartog, 'Education in India', The Year Book of Education, (London: Evan Bros.Ltd., 1932), p.637.

²³ Quoted in Dr. Vijay Chandra Prasad Chaudhury, Imperial Policy of British in India, (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1968), p.325.

Analysing the close relationship between education and political developments during the eighties of the nineteenth century, the Calcutta University Commission (1917-19) remarked.

...political ideas can never be separated from intellectual movements; and the generation after 1882 was to see the influence of the new currents of the educational system.²⁴

It is in the context of these new dimensions that the government policies and thinking should be judged and understood.

Dr. Chaudhury has explained the policy of seeking new allies by the rulers due to a reversal of role by the middle classes as leaders of the masses in Indian politics.²⁵ The policy of seeking a readjustment with the native aristocracy and the resurrection of the nobility as the 'natural' leaders of the people has been given, as another argument for supporting the 'role reversal' theory. Another important development that has been cited is the government declaration in 1870 that the public expenditure on education should be mainly on the development of elementary education for the mass of the people.²⁶

The analysis of the role of the middle classes and the explanation given for the vacillation in the policy

²⁴ Calcutta University Commission Report, (1917-19), Vol. I, Part-I, op.cit., p.50.

²⁵ Dr. Vijay Chandra Prasad Chaudhury, Imperial Policy of British in India, op.cit., p.370.

²⁶ Loc.cit.

See also, B.B. Misra, The Indian Middle Classes, Their Growth in Modern Times, op.cit., p.282.

of the government suffers on two major counts.

- i) The middle classes had not yet assumed the leadership of the masses. They were still struggling to consolidate their own position.
- ii) From the point of view of the rulers one may notice that they had not yet been completely written off as undependable allies. Enough channels were yet open for meeting the rising aspirations of this class.
In fact, very few had been tried so far.

The consolidation of the middle classes during this period had placed them at the centre of political developments. Any change of policy in political and educational sphere had necessarily to reckon with their growing influence. The futility of adopting a policy to check the growth of the middle classes was realised by Ripon. His policy of local self-government and private enterprize in education were directed towards channelising this rising force into streams that would sustain the empire rather than endanger it. The alienation of this class was an act of political folly to Ripon. He thought that local bodies and education would be legitimate openings for their rising aspirations and ambitions. The resolution on local self-government stated that,

...the extension of local self-government was not meant primarily to improve the administration but

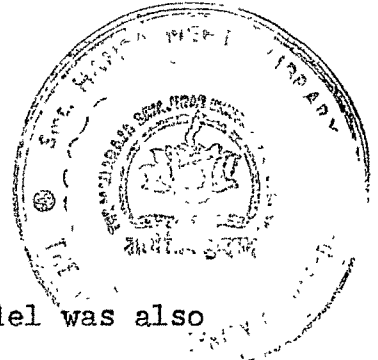
rather to foster the political education of that growing class of public-spirited men whom it would be bad policy not to utilise.²⁷

The policy of entrusting primary education, sanitation, roads etc., to local bodies and higher education to the private enterprise was a sort of safety-valve for the rising political aspirations of the middle classes. But to the middle classes, the local self-government interested them as the prelude to the reform of the legislative councils, not as an alternative to it.

The period of the consolidation of the new elites is a very significant period in the history of India. It marked the beginning of a period of political activity on an all-India basis. It also brought the inherent contradictions between the imperial system of government and the native interests into the surface. These contradictions were on the economic as well as on the political fronts. During the earlier phase of the consolidation of new elites, religious and social reform movements occupied their first attention. Higher education was confined to the upper and middle classes only. The craving for English education created the necessary stimulus for the rapid expansion of higher education and gave an opportunity to the upper and middle classes to take the lead in this sphere. The expansion of English education and the consequent rising of new aspirations created a new situation. The existing political system was incapable of meeting these rising aspirations of

²⁷Resolution of the Government of India, 18 May 1852, P.P.1883, LI,25-32, quoted in Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, op.cit., p.156.

the new classes. The policies initiated by Ripon in constituting the district and municipal boards and leaving higher education to the private enterprise were an attempt to resolve the contradictions developing between the rulers and the new elites. But the Ilbert Bill controversy disillusioned the native leaders. The sense of defeat on this important issue made them realise their inferior status in the existing political framework. However, it had a positive side also. It galvanised the elite groups scattered in the wide expanse of the country to come together on a common political platform. They realised that their regional or local groupings were now a hindrance to their own growth and further consolidation. Another factor which made the rulers realise the gravity of the situation was the expanding frontier of English education. After 1870, there was a considerable expansion of higher education. This growth could no longer be confined to upper and middle classes who were the sole beneficiaries of English education in its earlier phase of development. The lower middle classes had also started making a dent in the armoury of the upper and middle classes. Political consciousness among the lower middle classes was a potential danger for the British rule as well as the upper and middle class elite leadership. The new generation of western educated class had grown in conditions of political stability and free



from the fear of an internal chaos. Their model was also the upper class elite but they could not compete with them. The upper classes had already entrenched themselves at different levels of the power structure. English education could not imbibe among them the same spirit of constitutionalism and liberalism which the earlier elite groups had acquired. This cleavage between these two classes was yet in a very nebulous stage.²⁸

It was under these circumstances that the Indian National Congress was founded in the year 1885. The official patronage given to it was the recognition of the fact of consolidation of the new elites. It is well to recount the conditions which finally led the new class of elites to assemble on a common political platform. We will mention those which we think had some bearing on the shape of political developments and educational policies in subsequent years.

- i) Regional organizations had already prepared the ground for the growth of an all-India organization. These organizations had now outlived their utility and were proving a hindrance to the growth and consolidation of the new elites.

²⁸cf. Michael Edwardes, The Last Years of British India, (London: Cassel, 1963), p.24.

"After 1870, there was a considerable expansion in English education among what can only be described as lower middle-class elements, and, for them too, there was little chance of employment,... It was upon these people that westernization had a destructive effect."

- ii) Political consciousness had grown sufficiently large to warrant an all-India organization.
- iii) The existing colonial structure was unable to resolve the contradiction between more education and less job opportunities. In its economic policies it continued to follow a policy of discrimination against Indian businessmen. This led to a fraternity between the educated classes and the business classes. This alliance was of profound significance for the future course of political and educational developments in the country.
- iv) The new class of elites and also the rulers had realized the danger of political ideas spreading amongst the lower middle classes. The inherent danger was a deflection from the path of non-violent reform to that of a violent revolution. Only the political consolidation of the new class of elites on an all-India basis could prevent this situation from developing.

The consolidation of new elites on a common political platform was the beginning of a new phase in the history of political and educational developments in India. It laid down the direction of political movement for the future and indicated the direction that the political leadership would take in future towards the development of education in India. Advancement of India by constitutional methods on

British model and within the empire was adopted as the political creed of the Congress.²⁹ The development of higher education (secondary and collegiate) under the influence and leadership of the educated classes was to be the main plank for the educational development of the country. The stresses and strains that later arose between the Congress and the Government and within the Congress were due to the challenges thrown up at these two premises.

It is interesting to know about the composition of delegates attending the early sessions of the Congress. The various interests represented in the Congress partly explains the nature of political and educational demands put forth in its various sessions.

In fact of the total of 13,839 delegates who attended the various annual sessions between 1892 and 1909, as many as 5,442, or nearly 40 per cent, were members of the legal profession. The other important groups were those of the landed gentry with 2,629 delegates, and of the commercial classes with 2,091. The rest of the total was made up of journalists, doctors, and teachers, with a very small number representing other professions.³⁰

²⁹ Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series, (1885-1910) (Madras: G.A.Natesan & Co., 1935), Sessions 1885 to 1900, Pp.1-424.

Also, K.Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1885-1920), Vol.I, (New Delhi: by the author, n.d.), (Resolutions passed in Congress Sessions 1885-1899), Pp.1-133.

³⁰ B.B.Misra, The Indian Middle Classes, Their Growth in Modern Times, op.cit., p.353.

The predominance of professional and literary classes in alliance with landed gentry and commercial classes determined the attitude of the Congress towards political and educational problems. The attitude of the professional and literary classes had been formed over long years of association with the rulers and shaped in the institutions wedded to the western ideals of political growth. The attitude may be described as liberalism, loyalty to the Crown and a firm faith in the constitutional advancement of the country. It continued to dominate the deliberations of the Congress till 1904 or so.

Jawaharlal Nehru has described the general character of this class of professional and literary men in these words.

The British had created a new caste or class in India, the English educated class, which lived in a world of its own, cut off from the mass of the population, and looked always, even when protesting, toward its rulers.³¹

Congress Attitude Towards Education

The Indian National Congress was the only all-India organization which could claim to speak on behalf of the educated classes whom it represented. Since its inception in 1885, it had started taking up the issues vitally affecting the educated classes. The major interests

³¹Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India, 4th ed., (London: Meridian Books Ltd., 1956), Pp.413-14, quoted in Gunnar Myrdal, Asian Drama, Vol.III, (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1968), p.1641.

represented in the Congress were people in professions, landed gentry and the commercial classes. For instance, in the first two sessions of the Congress, the main demands formulated were,

- i) appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into the working of the Indian administration,
- ii) abolition of the India Council,
- iii) admission of elected members in the Legislative Council, and simultaneous examinations for the I.C.S. and the raising of the age of candidates.³²

At least ~~two~~ of these demands were concerned vitally with the interests of the educated classes who were now aspiring to get into important positions at various levels of administration. Howsoever, the government may have denigrated the Congress as representing the microscopic minority in the country, it could not discard the public opinion created by the Congress through its deliberations in its annual sessions, petitions, press and other similar means. After all it was the sole body which represented the advanced sections of the society and was gradually extending its influence on other classes also. In all major policy decisions in the political and educational sphere, the opinion of this organisation

³² Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series, (1885-1910), op.cit., Pp.12-20.

had to be taken into account. Depending on the various phases of political developments, there were points of convergence and divergence between the policies enunciated by the rulers and the Congress. Accordingly the government policies were either reinforced or opposed. The implementation of policies and the shifts in policies were also influenced by the stand taken by the Congress on each issue.

We will now give an analysis of the programme and policies of the Indian National Congress on education from 1885 to 1904. The analysis is based on the resolutions passed by the Congress in its annual sessions and the presidential addresses delivered in each session. The analysis of educational policies has been presented here against the background of political developments and the Congress attitude to them.

The Congress session of 1885 in Bombay started with a pledge of loyalty to the British rulers. A few of the utterances of loyalty to British rule give an idea of the attitude formed among the early beneficiaries of the system of western education. W.C.Bannerji in his presidential address in 1885 stated, "...that there were no more thoroughly loyal and consistent well-wishers of the British Government than were himself and the friends around him."³³

³³Ibid., p.3.

Elaborating the great benefits that the British rule had brought to India, the president stated that, "...she had given them the inestimable blessings of Western education."³⁴

The main political demand put forward was for widening the basis of the government and the proper and legitimate shares of the people in it. The meaning of the term 'people' was confined to the educated classes as in concrete terms the demand was a larger share in the civil administration to the educated classes and an effective participation in the functioning of the government. This attitude was further reflected in the 1836 session, when Dadabhai Naoroji stated that, "It is to British rule that we owe the education we possess,..."³⁵

He then cited the testimony given by Bartle Frere in 1861. This testimony and the despatch of the Government of India in 1880 to the Secretary of State are important from the point of view of the attitude of the government towards the educated classes. We quote both these.

And now wherever I go I find the best exponents of the policy of the English Government, and the most able co-adjutors in adjusting that policy to the peculiarities of the natives of India among the ranks of the educated classes.³⁶

³⁴Loc.cit.

³⁵Ibid., p.7.

³⁶Testimony of Sir Bartle Frere, quoted in Ibid., p.8.

The despatch of the Government of India, dated 8th June, 1880 stated thus about the issue.

To the minds of at least the educated among the people of India - and the number is rapidly increasing - any idea of the subversion of British power is abhorrent from the consciousness that it must result in the widest anarchy and confusion.³⁷

To allay any fears among the rulers about the educated classes becoming disenchanted with the British rule and to reemphasize the loyalty of the educated classes, Badruddin Tyabji in his presidential address to the 1887 session of the Congress expressed his opinion that it was only among the educated classes that one could find truly loyal and devoted friends of the empire. He further tried to establish that the western education of the natives had been able to create among them an appreciation of the enlightened rule of the British and also a strong pillar of support.

...we the educated natives by the mere force of our education, must be the best appreciators of the blessings of a civilized and enlightened Government and therefore, in our own interests, the best and staunchest supporters of the British Government in India.³⁸

The organisation of the educated classes who had emerged as the new elites, on an all-India basis on a common

³⁷Ibid., p.9.

³⁸Ibid., p.25.

political platform, helped in the crystallization of opinions in the Congress to certain vital issues affecting the political and educational developments in the country. The political aspect was related to the path India was to take for its political growth. The issues concerning educational development of the country were those of mass education and higher education. We will first analyse them separately and then see how these were interlinked.

Political Aspect:

The role of the Congress leadership visualised for itself in the political advancement of India was of vital significance in determining its attitude to other social problems. Its general attitude is summed up by what Surendranath Banerjea said in his presidential address to the Congress session in 1895.

To England we look for inspiration and guidance.
To England we look for sympathy in the struggle....
England is our political guide and our moral
preceptor in the exalted sphere of political duty.³⁹

But there were also signs of contradictions which appeared within the Congress organisation itself. A radical group was slowly emerging. This group had started casting doubts on Congress methods of sending petitions and issuing proclamations. It was thought necessary to reassure the

³⁹Ibid., Pp.251-52.

government regarding the loyalty of the Congress and the educated classes in general. C.Sankaran Nair in his presidential address of 1897 remarked.

I deem it superfluous to proclaim our loyalty to the British Throne or Constitution, or to add that we have not the slightest sympathy with any speech or writing which would regard a severance of our connection as a desirable consummation.⁴⁰

The affirmations of loyalty, however, did not prevent the government from taking certain measures which were detrimental to the interests of the educated classes. The control and direction of policy at higher levels was to be entirely in the hands of Europeans recruited for 'Indian Service'. The re-organisation of the educational services in India, contained in the resolution of the Government of India in the Home Department, dated the 23rd July 1896 was resented very much by the educated classes. This measure lowered the status of Indian members in the higher ranks of administration. Their pay was also reduced from two-thirds to virtually one half of their English colleagues. For the first time they were excluded from certain of the higher appointments in the department.⁴¹ The Congress

⁴⁰Ibid., p.337.

⁴¹Ibid., Pp.344-45.

recorded its strong protest against such administrative and legislative measures which casted any doubt on the loyalty and trustworthiness of the educated classes. It was again emphasized by A.N. Bose in his presidential address in 1902 that, "The educated classes of India are the friends and not the foes of England, her natural and necessary allies in the great work that lies before her."⁴²

As has been pointed out earlier, the growth of radical groups in the national movement was causing alarm to the government as well as the Congress leadership dominated by the liberals. The government had started a reappraisal of its educational policy of leaving the growth of higher education to the private enterprize which in practice meant the leadership representing the educated classes. There was a misgiving in the official circles regarding the role played by the educated classes in the changed political circumstances. The educated as a class were appearing as an unreliable and undependable allies for safeguarding the colonial structure. The liberal leadership of the Congress on its part wanted to assure the government that it was equally opposed to any departure from its well known position of loyalty to the empire. Equally strong was its assurance of adhering to constitutional

⁴²Ibid., p.365.

path and opposing any revolutionary tendencies. Surendranath Banerjea proclaimed that they were 'friends of reform' and 'enemies of revolution'. This assurance was not addressed to the people of the country but to the government so as to allay any fears about the bonafides of the educated classes. The chairman of the Reception Committee to the Congress session of 1899, Bansilal Singh eulogised Bentinck and Macaulay for the greatest gift of education to the Indian people. He emphasized that the educational policy of the government had,

...created a considerable class of men, filled with your ideas and aspirations, conversant with your manners and customs, attached to your rule by every tie of duty and interest, who are desirous of acting as interpreters between you and the people.⁴³

The creed of the Congress was described as,

...a sincere desire to support and sustain the Government by the co-operation of the people, to strengthen the hands of the Government by fair criticism, to help the Government by keeping it informed of the views and aspirations of the people.⁴⁴

Educational Aspect:

The opinion of elite groups represented by the Indian National Congress had crystallised on two main issues of education, viz., mass education, and higher education.

⁴³K. Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1885-1920), Vol. I, op.cit., p.133.

⁴⁴Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series, (1885-1910), op.cit., p.393.

We will now discuss how the stand taken on each issue was a direct consequence of the political thinking.

Mass Education:- As early as 1891, P. Ananda Charlu in his presidential address to the Congress session gave a call to educate the masses. It is interesting to note the purpose behind this call for the education of the masses. To quote, "Let us impart to our people, our convictions that they should cease to look upon the British rule as the rule of a foreign people."⁴⁵

The avowed object was to bring the masses in line with the political thinking of the educated classes regarding the desirability of any development within the colonial structure. The government had taken up the position at least theoretically, that the first claim on educational expenditure was that of primary education. 'You who have had and who appreciate high education ought to maintain it yourselves.' The Congress took up the position that higher education should not be starved on the plea that primary education had to be financed and given the first place in the education budget. W.C. Bonnerjee expressed his views on this issue in the 1892 Congress session, "I do not understand for a moment why it is necessary to starve high education in order that primary education may be provided for and protected."⁴⁶

⁴⁵Ibid., p.93.

⁴⁶Ibid., p.110.

There was some apprehension in official circles that the spread of western education among the masses would release the forces which would finally demand political rights as the educated classes were now doing in their own class interests. The Congress thinking on the other hand was that the wider and deeper spread of education would be the remedy not the cause of any misgivings about the continuation of British rule.

The question of mass education was again taken up in the Congress session^{of}/1903. The influence of the radical elements had been on ascendancy during the preceding years and their ideology was especially popular among the younger elements. The radicals also had a wider appeal. They were not concerned with the niceties of the political sophistication - a characteristic of the older generation of the western educated elites. The difference we are pointing out was not just that of emphasis on certain aspects of the problem. It was more fundamental. The position taken up by the liberal leadership was that of reforms within the colonial framework. Any major educational reform was to be seen in the light of its effect on the stability of the empire. Lal Mohan Ghose, president of the 1903 Congress session spoke thus about this issue.

Do not let us forget that wherever the masses of the people are steeped in ignorance there is always a double danger, firstly of their being entirely apathetic towards all questions affecting the welfare of the country and secondly of their being liable to be excited beyond reasonable bounds by unscrupulous or fanatical agitators.⁴⁷

In the process of consolidation of the new elites, two main contradictions had now appeared. The first was the contradiction between the new elites and the rulers. Latent in the earlier phase, it now came to the surface due to the growing strength of the elites. The government could not now take their support for granted. The rulers were also getting apprehensive of the rising aspirations of the elites which could not be satisfied within the existing political system. This propelled them to search for new allies. They were not prepared to accept the claim of the elites to represent the masses. The elite claim that by virtue of its education and position its opinion should be considered that of the widest section of the population was pooh poohed by the government. It started calling the educated classes as 'microscopic minority.' Its policy on mass education was a part of its general policy of winning the widest support. The aim was to prevent the influence of educated classes from percolating downwards. But indirectly it was an admission

⁴⁷Ibid., p.652.

of the fact of rapidly increasing influence of the educated classes on the people. The elites on the other hand wanted to push their claim as the sole representatives of the public opinion in the country. They wanted to resolve the contradiction between them and the rulers by an assurance of political loyalty to the empire. To back up their claim of representing the masses they now took issue with the government on the question of mass education. In the Congress session of 1903, the question of free and compulsory primary education was also discussed. The government's contention that the scheme was premature and would be unpopular was countered by the argument that this was always the case in the initial stages wherever compulsory education was introduced. The argument was supported by citing the case of England and Japan. To leave no room for any doubt about their loyalty to the empire, they wanted to doubly assure the rulers that their demand for mass education was motivated by their desire to strengthen the foundations of the empire. The motive was, "...to ensure the contentment of the people and to enhance their loyalty and affection for the Government."⁴⁸

At the same time they wanted the government to acknowledge their claim to represent the masses.

⁴⁸Ibid., p.656.

"...opinion always percolates from the higher to the lower strata of society, the ideas of the educated minority today are bound to be shared by the masses tomorrow,..."⁴⁹

The resolution passed by the Congress in its 1903 session finally reiterated that whatever may be the stand of the government it would take up the question of mass education in its future policies on education.

Another contradiction that was developing in this phase of the consolidation of elites was between the leadership representing the liberal strand in the political movement and the new emerging group of radicals. The justification for mass education was sought in warding off the growing danger of radicalism spreading to the masses. The argument was that an illiterate mass would be more prone to the ideology of the radicals. Education, even if imparted at the elementary level would prevent them falling a prey to the propaganda of the radicals. On this issue the stand taken by the liberal leadership of the Congress and the government converged. The later political developments again reflected this convergence of ideas between the rulers and the liberal leadership of the Congress.

Thus the position taken by the elites on the question of mass education was based on two political considerations.

⁴⁹Loc.cit.

- i) To assert their own leadership among the masses.
- ii) To prevent the radicals from extending their influence among the masses.

Quantitative Growth of Mass Education:- The period of the consolidation of new elites and their later development till 1902 or so was marked by a halting growth and stagnation in the field of mass education. During the closing years of the nineteenth century there was almost a complete arrest of progress in primary education. While there was an increase of 275,000 and 361,000 in enrolment at the primary stage during the period between 1837-88 and 1891-92 to 1891-92/to 1896-97 respectively, the enrolment was practically stationary during the period 1896-97 to 1901-02. The loss was mostly in the provinces of Bombay and Bengal while U.P. recorded gain.⁵⁰ It is noteworthy that the losses were in those provinces where the new elites were politically more numerous and better organised. The quinquennial review (1897-1902) has analysed the causes of this arrest of growth in primary education. After giving such natural causes as famines and plague epidemic it points out to the deeper causes of this stagnation.

⁵⁰Progress of Education in India, (1897-1902), Vol. I,
(Calcutta: Supt. Government Printing, 1904), p.451.

Now it has to carry education, improved in methods and standards to meet modern ideas and requirements, to the scattered and distant hamlets, to the poorer raiyats, to the landless labourers, to the ignorant low castes, and to the wild Jungle tribes.⁵¹

To expect educational awareness to spread in remote areas and among the lower rungs in society in that period was going too ahead of times. Even in more populous urban and rural areas, there was a large section which was deprived of any type of education and it was here that the educated classes could have played a significant role in the advancement of primary education among the masses. In spite of many limitations, they had some representation in the local boards and municipal committees. But the expenditure on primary education through local funds did not increase and there was a decline during the period 1898-1902. The government in spite of its proclamations did little to remedy the situation. "...the most striking, as well as least satisfactory feature is the comparatively small increase of expenditure on primary schools."⁵²

However, in the field of primary education for the masses, the political developments in the closing years of the nineteenth century had aroused an awakening

⁵¹Loc.cit.

⁵²Ibid., p.455.

which was to grow in later years. The contribution of elite groups was significant in this context.

Higher Education:- The leadership of the Congress was drawn from the upper classes, mostly urban, and their interests were primarily confined to the expansion of higher education of which they were themselves the product and which they considered as the greatest boon of the British rule. Surendranath Banerjea in his presidential address to the Congress session in 1895 remarked.

We are indebted to Professor Oxenham for his defence of High Education. We are not in favour of High Education vs. Primary Education. We are in favour of all Education, high and low.... High Education does not benefit the recipients alone. It benefits the whole community; for if John Stuart Mill is to be accepted as our authority in these matters, the ideas of the educated classes filter downwards and become the ideas of the masses.⁵³

The initiative for the expansion of higher education had passed almost completely in the hands of the new elites, especially in the eighties of the nineteenth century. The 1882 Education Commission had approved the policy of leaving higher education to private enterprise. Any curb on this initiative was taken up by the elites as a challenge and fought with all the resources at their

⁵³ Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series,
(1885-1910), op.cit., Pp.245-46.

command. The challenge came when Curzon initiated measures to bring education within the political scrutiny of the government. The first curb was imposed when the government prohibited the managers and teachers of aided institutions from taking part in political movements or attending political meetings without the consent of the Director of Public Instruction.⁵⁴

The measure was intended to prevent the leading elite groups from wielding influence in the educational institutions. This was naturally resented by the elites and a resolution was passed in the fifteenth Congress in 1899 recording its protest.⁵⁵ It was feared that this measure will restrict the private enterprise in the field of higher education. Another equally injurious effect would be the withdrawal of able and influential men from the cause of education. A far more powerful challenge came when the report of the Universities Commission was made public in 1902. There was already a restiveness in the air regarding the future course of political developments in the country. A cloud of suspicion was already hanging between the government and the leadership of the Congress. Within the Congress, a

⁵⁴ K. Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1885-1920), Vol. I, op.cit., p.135.

⁵⁵ Loc.cit.

schism had started. A radical wing under the leadership of Tilak and Aurobindo Ghose had emerged. Under these trying circumstances the Congress met at Ahmedabad in 1902 with Surendranath Banerjea in the chair. This Congress session is important as far as the Congress attitude towards the new educational policy was concerned. We will discuss it in some detail. The foremost question that was agitating the minds of the leadership was the report of the Universities Commission. Surendranath Banerjea in his presidential address remarked.

I do not remember any proposal, emanating from responsible authority, which has more profoundly stirred the hearts of the Indian community, or has caused deeper alarm, or evoked more strenuous opposition than the Report of the Universities Commission.⁵⁶

The cause of this deep alarm was the apprehension that higher education would be seriously handicapped if the recommendations of the Commission were implemented. The exhortation was made that,

...nothing should be done to check the spread of that system of education which has produced such splendid results in the past and which is fraught with infinite possibilities of progress for future generations.⁵⁷

⁵⁶Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series, (1885-1910), op.cit., p.543.

⁵⁷Ibid., p.545.

Criticism of the University Commission by the Congress:-

The main line of criticism regarding the constitution and the procedure followed by the Commission was the non-representation of Indian public opinion. The inclusion of Guru Dass Banerjee at a later stage was due to the protest made by the educated classes. The representative character of the Muslim member who was there from the beginning was not accepted by his own community. The interests of the private unaided colleges and provincial representatives were also not included in the Commission. The composition of the Commission and the procedure followed pointed to a mistrust on the part of the government towards the educated classes.

The following recommendations were in conflict with government's past educational policies flowing out from the Wood's Despatch of 1854 and the Education Commission of 1882.

- i) The fixing of a minimum rate of college fees by the syndicate.
- ii) The abolition of the 2nd grade colleges.
- iii) The abolition of law classes.

The government did not support all the recommendations of the Commission and held that so long as efficiency is maintained, it would not interfere with the 2nd grade colleges and law classes. Still the main tenor of the recommendations was to narrow the popular basis of higher

education and to restrict its area. The strongest protest from the Congress leadership was on this restriction as it directly hit their class interests. Representing mainly the educated middle classes, their source of strength lay in closely guarding the vantage positions they had acquired in the affairs of the country - in civil services, in education and in political affairs. Their perpetuation depended to a great extent on the control they could exercise on the institutions imparting higher education. To quote Surendranath Banerjea,

We cannot accept a policy which would deprive our great middle class who are far from being well off, from whom come our intellectual classes who, with their keen hereditary instincts, have from time immemorial furnished the intellectual leaders of the community, to be deprived of some of those opportunities of high education which they now enjoy.⁵⁸

The basic position taken by the Congress regarding the recommendations of the University Commission and the policy finally enunciated by the government was on the following lines.

- i) That the government has made a departure from the policy enunciated in the Education Commission of 1882. The private initiative in education so much encouraged by the Education Commission of 1882 was curbed in the new policy.

⁵⁸Ibid., p.552.

- ii) Efficiency in education was desirable. But the circumstances of India were such that European standards of efficiency could not be applied here. Instead of applying many standards for efficiency like buildings, curriculum, hostels etc., the university examinations were sufficient criteria for judging the efficiency of an institution.
- iii) The fixing of a minimum rate in all the institutions would be detrimental for the spread of education and would hit the middle classes and the poorest sections of society.
- iv) For efficiency, the status and level of teacher should be raised. Even diffusion of education will help raise efficiency by raising the general cultural level of the population.
- v) Curriculum need not be burdened further with more additions of subjects.
- vi) Teaching of English should be more efficient but not by raising the pass marks as suggested by the government.
- vii) Government should take the responsibility of establishing an advanced study centre at each university for providing teaching in the university for higher classes.

- viii) Universities should be allowed to maintain their autonomous status.⁵⁹

It became clear by now that the government would not relent much on its policies regarding the reconstitution of university syndicates and of having a greater control over private institutions. The position taken by the Congress also hardened a little though the stage of confrontation had not yet arrived. In the 1903 Congress session two main principles regarding education were laid down.

- i) The education of the people should be as much as possible in the hands of the people.
- ii) The popular control over educational institutions should not be lightly interfered with.

Emergence of Sectarian Elites

The two decades following the revolt of 1857 had witnessed the rise of new classes in India represented mainly by the educated and commercial classes and the new landed interests. Their consolidation on the national level had finally culminated in the formation of the Indian National Congress. The emergence of this new elite had ushered in a political consciousness which for the first time transcended the provincial and regional

⁵⁹Ibid., p.558.

"...nothing should be done to interfere with the diffusion of high education among the great middle class."

boundaries. But this new elite though national and secular in its approach represented predominantly the upper caste Hindus.⁶⁰ These new classes had taken the maximum share in economic, political and educational opportunities provided in the post - mutiny period. The Muslims by and large had not taken the advantage of the newly created opportunities.⁶¹ Many reasons have been assigned for the non-participation of the Muslim community in the awakening that was taking place in the political and educational panorama of the country. The main argument propounded is the non-participation of Muslims in the educational renaissance that had taken place during these years. The appearance of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan on the scene and his strong advocacy for the new education is considered to be primarily responsible for the resurgence of Muslims giving birth to new elite groups among them.⁶² But the sequence of events leading to the emergence of elites among the Muslims can be understood better if they are seen in the following contexts.

⁶⁰ See, Dorothy Norman, Nehru, The First Sixty Years, Vol.I, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965), p.20.

⁶¹ See, Valentine Chirol, Indian Unrest, (London: MacMillan & Co., Ltd., 1910), p.119.

⁶² S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, Muslims in India, trans. Mohammad Asib Kidwai, (Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1960), p.96.

- i) The qualitatively different composition of the Muslim community in different regions of the country was one factor. The difference was marked in upper India and the provinces comprising Bengal and Assam. Whereas in the former they mainly represented the landed aristocracy and feudal lords, in the latter they were tenants. Higher education was yet beyond the pale of lower classes, Hindus and Muslims alike. The talk of religion being the main obstacle in their progress to higher education was a far-fetched conclusion. It was their economic backwardness which prevented them from making any headway in moving ahead to the colleges and universities. The landed aristocracy which enjoyed the privileges under the Nawabs and Sultans was still trying to recover from the initial shock of displacement from the positions of power. So the attempt had to be directed at bringing together the landed aristocracy from all parts of the country. Education became the meeting ground to bring them together on a common platform.⁶³
- ii) The emergence of the new elites, predominantly Hindu and their consolidation in the Indian National Congress had made a material difference in the then

⁶³ See, Moin Shakir, Khilafat to Partition, (New Delhi: Kalamkar Prakashan, 1970), p.24.

existing situation. Political demands were now getting priority over all other demands. The justification given was the stage of maturity reached by the new elites through a process of education and training that they had received under the patronage of the rulers.

Muslim elites in their own interests could foresee that their own consolidation and growth depended on the policy of separatism in politics. They wanted to keep their separate identity. In competition with the earlier elite groups, they would either have to merge their own identity in the larger group or to lose the battle altogether. The other course was to keep their identity as a separate community and choose another platform to safeguard their own interests. It was here that the role of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was most important. His appeal for adopting the western system of education was directed at the emerging elites among the Muslims. So also his opposition to the participation in the Indian National Congress was specifically concerned with the same group. He firmly believed that in the consolidation of the emerging elites among the Muslims, the support of the rulers was essential. So, he advocated loyalty to the British empire. All his efforts in the field of education were motivated by the desire to prepare a strong elite group which could provide leadership to the community. The fight he took up with the orthodox Muslim opinion was essentially a part of the

struggle going on between the obscurantist forces dominated by rigid religious dogmas and the newly emerging groups among the Muslims. In this struggle, western education found an important place in the scheme outlined by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan for the consolidation of elite groups among his own community.⁶⁴ The emergence of elites among the Muslims was marked by a heightened activity on both political and educational spheres. In the educational sphere the first major outcome of the policies initiated earlier in the sixties was the establishment of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in 1877. But it is wrong to assume that no efforts were made till the formation of Muslim League in 1906 towards the political consolidation of the Muslim elites. Opinion among the politically conscious upper class Muslims had started crystallising in favour of a separate political organisation. As early as 1878, i.e., before the birth of the Indian National Congress, Amir Ali started his National Muhammadan Association. He believed that the regeneration of Muslims on as a community/economic, social and political spheres was

⁶⁴See, M.S.Jain, The Aligarh Movement, (Agra: Sri Ram Mehra & Co., 1965), p.181.

"...separate political regeneration of the Indian Muslim was sought to be brought about by means of education. Lord Curzon frankly stated that Sir Sayyid showed a profound political insight in laying emphasis on education, for through education alone the Muslims could equip themselves with weapons, which would enable them to recover any portion of their lost ascendancy in India."

only possible with the help of the government. To achieve this end he thought that, "Muslims needed a political organization of their own. So when he was invited by Surendranath to join the Indian Association, his refusal was logical enough."⁶⁵

However, it was only after the coming together on a common political platform of the nationalist elites that consciousness dawned upon the Muslim elites to seek a common national platform. It was provided by the Muhammadan Educational Congress formed in 1886, just a year after the establishment of the Indian National Congress.

It is important to note that Muslim elites chose their first common platform as educational. It was a clever and well calculated move of the elite leadership among the Muslims to maintain their separate identity. With the Indian National Congress on the scene as a meeting ground of the western educated elites, there was the possibility that the emerging Muslim elites would also identify themselves with this mainstream of nationalism. The first task of the votaries of sectarian elites was to keep away their co-religionists from the Indian National Congress. The Indian National Congress from its very first session had started demanding more say in the administration of the country. The main emphasis was on getting more

⁶⁵ Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism,
op.cit., p.311.

representation in the higher administrative services. The claim for this was sought to be justified on the ground of higher education they had received on western lines. The Muslim leadership realised that their identification with this elite group would hamper them in their fight for privileged positions in the administration. It would be a fight on unequal footing. So the first step for the consolidation of their own position was to gather on an educational platform. Whatever may be the educational outcome of the Muhammadan Educational Conference, its impact on the political scene was to prevent the major section of Muslim elites from joining the Indian National Congress. But this was the negative side of the outcome of the conference. The positive side from the viewpoint of the emergence of sectarian elites was their growth and consolidation.⁶⁶ The period from 1885 to 1905 may be said as the period of the consolidation of the Muslim elites. Curzon's educational policy, particularly his university reforms and the partition of Bengal brought the elites centred around the Indian National Congress in direct confrontation with the government. On the

⁶⁶ cf. M.S.Jain, The Aligarh Movement, op.cit. p.80.

"The one solitary and grand achievement was in the political sphere where it had successfully mobilised Muslim public opinion against the Indian National Congress."

Mr.Jain has emphasized this as the main outcome of the Educational Conference. In our opinion the consolidation of Muslim elites was the major achievement of the Conference.

other hand these policies gave sufficient time and opportunity to the Muslim elites to consolidate their position and gain sufficient strength to come together on a common political platform and form their own political party. The formation of Muslim League in 1906 was the resultant of these developments. However, before the formation of Muslim League, it is interesting to note a few developments in the educational field. These developments show that in the process of consolidation of Muslim elites, the educational plank was being used to justify a separatist outlook. The note sent by Nomshere Ali Khan Eusofzi, Pakullah, Mymensingh, on Muhammadan Education in Bengal, dated 21st September, 1901 stated.

Our priests were shocked to see the great revolution that western education wrought out amongst the Hindus and were apprehensive of similar disasters amongst the Mahommedans. But in this they were sadly mistaken and have now been undeceived.... We know that Islam blends religion, education and law together having their common origin in the holy Quoran.... Here is a problem which nothing short of establishment of a Mahommendan University can solve.⁶⁷

Education was thus a most handy instrument to consolidate the position of Muslim elites before they could gather sufficient strength to unite on a common political platform. The partition of Bengal gave the necessary stimulus for that.

⁶⁷ Government of India, Home Department, October 1901, Proceedings No.9.

Two contradictory positions were taken regarding the real motive behind the establishment of the Muhammadan Educational Conference. The official attitude was characterized by a sense of restraint leaning more towards that of approval and approbation. The decision to keep away from politics was naturally appreciated. This stand was supported by the Anglo-Indian Press. Contrasting the formation of Indian National Congress and the Muhammadan Educational Conference, the Pioneer of 4 January, 1889 reported.

...the one flying the banner of magnificent political projects...the other bent on education, on setting right affairs within the house, lamenting the falling off of their people and learning and elaborating schemes for self-sacrifice and self-help... The Muhammedans at Lahore subordinated Politics to Education, and no speeches of a political character were made.⁶⁸

Another view is that the Muhammadan Educational Conference was only a smoke-screen to plan and execute the political consolidation of Muslim elites.

In a sense the Muhammadan Educational Congress was already a mirror image of the Indian National Congress. The one had been formed from the nuclei of educated men in the coastal provinces; the other was spreading outwards from its base in upper India. Once again the advanced sections of a community were seeking to redress the balance by purporting to speak on behalf of their more backward members in other regions.⁶⁹

⁶⁸Quoted in Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, op.cit., p.337.

⁶⁹Ibid., p 336.

M.S.Jain also expresses similar views when he writes that,

Truly speaking, it would not be farther from truth to assert that in founding the educational conference, Sir Sayyid was influenced, to a large extent, by the Indian National Congress - its programme and methods. Almost similar objects were at the back of the mind of the founder of the conference. It was founded in order to provide a common platform for the Muslims of various provinces to come together. The object was to formulate a centre of public opinion for the entire Muhammadan 'nation' and then to spread those ideas among the community. The conference was founded to create communal consciousness and solidarity among the Muhammadans.⁷⁰

The establishment of the Muhammadan Educational Conference should, however, be seen in the context of the rise and consolidation of the elite groups among the Muslims. To what extent it took up the educational problems of the community or for that matter whether it confined itself to only educational problems was of secondary importance. Similarly, whether its primary aim was to provide a political forum in the garb of education was not the central issue. The central issue was the consolidation of Muslim elites. The emphasis on educational and political problems was influenced by the effect it would have on the growth of elite groups.

The Conference, in the first two sessions, did not come out with any concrete programmes of educational

⁷⁰M.S.Jain, The Aligarh Movement, op.cit., Pp.87-88.

development. The main reason for this silence could be attributed to the immediate necessity of keeping the educated Muslims away from the Indian National Congress. The raising of any concrete issue on political or educational matters might have raised controversies jeopardising the sense of unity among the participants. The aim was to keep intact the front that was to function as the rallying ground of sectarian elites. This aim was achieved to a large extent.

This chapter focusses attention on the growth and evolution of educational policies in the nineteenth century British India in relation to the political consolidation of the British rule. The educational system was institutionalised and developed as a sub-structure to serve the political and administrative necessity of the empire. The consolidation of the British rule and the emergence of the new classes brought contradictions which appeared on two fronts, viz., between the newly emerged classes and the rulers and within the classes. The first contradiction started a rethinking about the policies towards education and the second contradiction brought home the political importance of education both for the rulers as well as the Indian political leadership. The controversy about higher education and mass education also assumed political importance as the national movement assumed an all-India character. However, the demand for

education of the masses did not grow out of any pressure built up by the mass movements. It came into surface during the period of contradictions between the rulers and the political leadership as represented by the Indian National Congress. During the earlier phase of the national movement, the liberal leadership dominating the political movement saw in the spread of mass education a sure guarantee of loyalty towards the empire. The rulers also saw the political advantages of mass education as an effective check on radical ideology from spreading among the general population. The main accent of political demands formulated by the Indian National Congress in its earlier phases was seeking positions of power within the colonial framework and helped in the growth of higher education. This period also saw the growth of sectarianism among the Muslims. The educational platform chosen by the Muslim elites was a deliberate policy of maintaining a distinct ideology in opposition to the mainstream of the national movement. The seeds of separatism in education were sown in the period of the consolidation of Muslim elites.
