Indian Educational System:
An Overview of Medieval and Modern Education

Education in the Muslim Period

The beginning of the 8th century A.D. witnessed a large number of Mohammedan invasions. Mahmud Ghaznavi invaded the country and established a large number of schools and libraries in his own country by the looted wealth. Later on when the Muslim rulers established permanent empire in India, they introduced a new system of education. Consequently, the ancient system of education was greatly changed. In fact, the education of the Muslim period was much inferior than that of the Hindu period. No Muslim ruler except Akbar did commendable works in the field of education.

Aim of Education

The aim of education during Muslim period was the illumination and extension of knowledge and the propagation of Islam. The education of this period was imparted for the propagation of Islamic principles, laws and social conventions. Education was based on religion and its aim was to make persons religious-minded. The Muslim education aimed also at the achievement of material prosperity.

Organization of Education

In the Muslim period, education was organized in Maktabs and Madrasas. Primary education was given in Maktabs and Higher Education in Madrasas. In Maktabs the children were made to remember the ‘Ayats’ of Quran. They were also imparted the education of reading, writing and primary arithmetic. Children were given the education of Persian language and script. After completing the primary education, children were sent to Madrasas to receive higher education. Special emphasis was also given to the education of religious education of secular subjects, which was imparted in Madrasas.

The chief characteristics of education in Muslim period were lack of University education, neglect of Vernaculars, decline in teacher- pupil relationship and problem of discipline. Corporal punishment was started. The system of examination depended upon the will of the teacher to send the pupil to the higher classes or not. Degree was given after the completion of education. Military education was also considered compulsory in order to establish supremacy over the Hindu kings.
Organization of Islamic Education in India

- **Maktabs**

  In a Maktab children of general people were given primary education. Along with religious education they were also taught reading, writing and arithmetic. He was also taught some romantic literature of Persian e.g. *Laila Majnu, Yusuf- Julekha* etc. General practical education was also given in Maktabs. Letter writing applications and accountancy were taught in them.

- **Madrasas**

  After completing the education in a Maktab, one could come to a Madrasa for Higher Education. During the Muslim period, Madrasas were centers of higher learning. In Madrasa, along with religious objective education, practical affairs of life were also attended to. Akbar did a great deal in this direction and tried to give a practical shape also to education in a unprecedented manner. Islamic religion was compulsorily taught to all the students. But Akbar stopped this tradition. He provided study of Hindu religion and philosophy also in many Madrasas. He introduced the study of medicine, history, geography, economics, political science, philosophy, astrology, law and mathematics. He made the study of Vedanta, Jurisprudence and Patanjali compulsory for Sanskrit students. Abul fazl has described the educational system introduced by Akbar in his famous book *Ain-e-Akbari*. Law in those days was based on religious practices. So the study of religious principles was in a way education in law.

**Method**

Oral education and memorization of the assigned lesson were the chief methods of teaching in the Maktabs. Akbar encouraged writing and tried to reform the scripts. He wanted the educational procedure to be systematic. So he urged that the student should be given the knowledge of alphabets, then word-knowledge and afterwards sentence knowledge. During this period, cooperation of students was sought in maintenance of discipline. Practical education was given much importance. There was no half-yearly or annual examination fixed for students. But the students were examined from time to time in practical situations of life. Military training, development of fine arts, crafts and women education were given much importance in this period.

**A Critique of Muslim Education**

The education which developed and expanded during the long period of about six hundred and fifty years of Muslim rule in India had in it several merits as well as demerits. This education pattern cast a lasting
influence on Indian culture. The vestiges of that old educational system nurtured by the Muslim rulers are still to be found in the form of Maktabs. Although these Maktabs, the dying echoes of the old system, have no utility for the masses, yet we do get an idea of the religious significance and the peculiarities of those times from these Maktabs, which have tenaciously continued to exist in spite of various political upheavals.

The system of education of the Muslim period, no doubt, had many good points about it, but there were certain flagrant shortcomings that cannot escape a critical eye. If the education system of that age could take pride in the affection and regard between the teacher and the taught, self-dependence of student, peaceful environment of educational institutions, various means of encouraging students and integration of literary, useful and religious education, it would necessarily admit of that severe corporal punishment, religious bigotry, waste of time in learning reading and writing separately, supremacy of Arabic and Persian aloofness of students from the realities of life and lack of arrangement of education for women were the major defects of the system.

The Muslim educational system in spite of having both merits and demerits led by its religious practice to the destruction of the old ancient Indian educational institutions also helped the expansion of Indian culture to Europe and Central Asia. This educational pattern was a veritable boon for presenting the unity among the Muslims. It was also helpful in strengthening the ties of equality and brotherhood among the neo-Muslims of India who were Hindu converts.

Thus, this education while propagating Muslim culture succeeded in unifying into a complete unit, the whole of the Muslim society. Consequently the Muslim culture went on developing in spite of being in closer contrast with the culture of India.

**Education under the East India Company Rule**

**Early European Educational Efforts**

Indigenous education was prevalent before the advent of the Britishers in India. Though the native educational institutions like Muslim Maktabs and Madrasas, Hindu Pathshalas, the Tol institutions of Bengal and those known as Agraharas of southern India were declining gradually, their importance however in fulfilling the educational needs of the Indian masses cannot be under estimated.
The European religious missionaries had started coming to India in the last phase of 15th century A.D. they mainly came for trade and commerce but in due course of time their downfall was brought about by mutual conflicts and at last only the English survived and established their empire in India. The advent of European missionaries introduced a new phase in education of the country and developed it appreciably. The fundamental aim of these missionaries was to propagate Christian religion through European mode of education. For them education was not an end in itself but a means to the spread of Christianity. At length in the year 1813, the British parliament made Indian education an important aspect of State duties by putting before the East India Company educational policy and attendant responsibilities unequivocally.

In the 19th century British rule had firmly been established in India. Consequently, English system of education was being much encouraged. This led to the downfall of indigenous education. Though the East India Company came to India for exploring business possibilities but it ultimately thought to establish its own empire in the country. Towards the achievement of this goal, at first they mingled with the Bengal politics successfully. They obtained the Diwani powers in Bengal and acquired full control over the Nawabs.

A Madrasa in 1780 at Calcutta and a Sanskrit College in 1791 at Benaras were established for pleasing the Muslim and Hindu population. Charles Grant published his famous essay- ‘Observation’ and drew the attention of the British public towards the deplorable condition of education in India. As a result in the Charter of 1813, the British Parliament made the company responsible for education of the Indian people. This Charter indirectly helped the Missionaries to preach their religion in the grab of education. This Charter brought education under the control of the administration.

There was some progress of education during the period between 1813 and 1833 in the atmosphere of uncertainty about a definite policy. The Company had many difficulties before it such as the problems pertaining to the aim of education, education for all or only to a limited group, the medium of instruction, the role to be given to the missionaries and how to spend one lac rupees annually. In 1814, the Board of Directors clarified the educational policy. The rise of liberal group in England had its impact on carving out a more liberal policy of education in India.

The Occidental-Oriental Controversy

The period of nineteen years between 1835 and 1853 had been very important in Indian education. Education saw many upheavals during this period and ultimately it was brought on a definite track. Lord
Macaulay played a leading role. He tried to close the occidental and oriental controversy. This controversy ended during Aukland’s period.

Macaulay advocated the occidental approach and laid down the educational policy accordingly. He ridiculed the oriental languages and literatures and vehemently opposed the oriental policy. Thus education in European languages, literatures and sciences was started in India. Both Bentick and Aukland supported Macaulay. Bentick issued a declaration on the basis of Macaulay’s views. The declaration decided in favour of English education as advocated by the Occidentalists. The indigenous schools got a set back, although they were allowed to continue on nominal financial assistance. But appointment of teachers in these schools came under the control of the government.

Macaulay’s views received a mixed reception from the people in the country. A section of the enlightened group criticized him as a person who wanted to tie the people in the shackles of slavery. On the other hand, another group regarded him as a guide and father of modern education in India. Macaulay’s efforts ultimately brought regeneration in the educated people and they became aware of the happenings in literature and sciences in the other parts of the world.

Macaulay tried to impose English on Indians. But this imposition ultimately has helped them as they became acquainted with the latest developments in the world and got inspiration for fighting for their political independence, which they achieved in 1947. Thus, the Oriental-Occidental controversy ended with Bentick’s declaration.

**Downward Filtration Theory in Education**

Filtration means coming of something to the bottom from the top. Thus, the filtration theory in education meant coming down of education or knowledge from the top to the bottom i.e. from the higher-class people to the lower classes or the general people. The main aim was to educate only the high-class people in order to give them higher posts in the administration to strengthen the roots of British Empire. Also to educate the higher-class people who might undertake the responsibility of educating the general public. During the Company’s rule Missionaries were encouraged to work in the field of education and they opened a number of schools and colleges for educating children of the higher-class family.

The purpose of this theory could not be fully achieved. It could have only partial achievement in the sense that the British Government got a few educated Indians who could help in running the administration. Education became concentrated only to those who had money. However private enterprises engaged in the
field of education did a lot towards educating the people and creating in them a love for freedom. Thus, the work of national regeneration and educational expansion began.

**Progress of Education During 1835 and 1853**

There has been much activity in the field of education during 1835 and 1853 as this was a period of problems and controversies. These problems were solved during the days of Lord Auckland. Every province evinced interest in its educational venture and continued experiments in the sphere of education. By the end of this period, the government had realized that the question of the education of India could not further be postponed or avoided and that there was an urgent need of some definite plan in that direction. Along with the controversy over the issue of medium of instruction, the Orientalists-Occidentals controversy also came to a close. The Government of India, therefore, wanted to take a definite step in the direction of Indian education by framing some comprehensive plan for the purpose. Ultimately, it came in the form of Wood’s Despatch in the year 1854.

**Wood’s Despatch of 1854**

A Committee was formed in 1854 for studying the problems of education. Charles Wood was its chairman. Hence, the Despatch is famous after his name. The Despatch contained 100 principal clauses. A short summary of the major recommendations contained in the Despatch is as follows:

1. **The Aim of Education**- The aim should be impart useful knowledge to the Indian people in such a way as to raise their intellectual, moral and economic status.
2. **The Curriculum**- Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian should be included in the curriculum along with English, Western literature and science. Education in Law was also recommended.
3. **The Medium of Instruction**- The Despatch recommended that along with English, Indian languages should also be accepted as the media of instruction.
4. **Department of Public Instruction**- The Despatch recommended that a department of public instruction should be constituted in each province. The Director of Public Instruction should be the Chairman of this Department.
5. **University Education**- For development of higher education two Universities should be established, one each at Calcutta and Bombay on the pattern of the London University. The Despatch also recommended for a university at Madras and other places if a need was felt.
6. **Importance of Graded Education**- For receiving higher education, one should get education from the lower stage. The Despatch urged the Company to establish graded institutions.
7. **Expansion of general education** - Education should be made available to all. It recommended for education of the Indian people in all directions.

8. **Grant-in-Aid for Education** - The Despatch advised the Provincial Government to formulate its own rules of grant-in-aid system. The rules should be accepted for all categories of educational institutions, primary or higher.

9. **Teachers’ Training** - Despatch recommended that there should be at least one training college in each province for training of teachers.

10. **Women’s Education** - Despatch recognized the importance of private enterprises in this area and advised that they should be further encouraged and women should be given education in all the provinces.

11. **Education and Employment** - Despatch stated that the purpose of education was to develop human qualities for success in life. So education should be obtained with a wider outlook and not only to obtain services.

12. **Vocational Education** - Despatch suggested for Vocational education of the people through schools and colleges to be established for the purpose.

Thus, the Despatch contains a number of fundamental and valuable recommendations. It ushered in a new but glorious era in the history of Indian education. It has been termed as the Magna Charta of Indian Education. However, despite all virtues the Despatch is not wholly immune from certain glaring defects. Because of the Revolt of 1857, many of the recommendations of the Despatch could not be implemented.

**Educational Progress from 1854-1882**

- **Primary Education**
  
  During the period 1854-1884 primary education was neglected and the recommendations of Wood’s Despatch in its favour had no impact. The Company’s attention was primarily diverted towards university education. So primary education was neglected. The Despatch made the Company responsible for primary education.

- **Secondary Education**
  
  The number of secondary schools increased during the period between 1854 and 1882. Missionaries played a leading role in the field. Many Indians opened a number of secondary schools in Madras and Bengal.
**Higher Education**

Four Universities were opened in the country, one each at Lahore, Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. The administration was under the Senate fully controlled by the government. These universities were only the examining bodies and used to award degrees to successful candidates. Except in Punjab, English was the medium of instruction in other three universities.

**The Indian Commission of 1882**

By 1882 it was considered necessary to assess the development of education in the country and to remove the defects, which had crept into it. For this purpose Lord Ripon appointed on February 3, 1882 the Indian Education Commission under the Chairmanship of William Hunter, a member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy. The Commission is also popularly known as Hunter Commission. It was required to look into the condition of primary education alone, but it studied the problems of secondary and higher education also. The Commission gave the following suggestions for reforms in primary education

1. It should be useful to life
2. Primary school passed persons should be given preference in some services.
3. More efforts should be made for development of primary education.
4. Special primary schools should be opened in tribal and hilly areas.
5. The local boards should be made wholly responsible for primary education.
6. The indigenous schools should be encouraged.

**Secondary Education**

The Commission advised to remove the defects of primary education. English should be made the medium of instruction. The Curriculum should be divided into Literary and science on the one hand and Practical and vocation on the other. Some subjects should be included for spiritual development of students. The schools should be Indianised. The Commission pleaded for a special curriculum for women. Lady teachers should be appointed. It also laid emphasis on Muslim education. It opposed the increasing influence of Missionaries in the field of education.

**Higher Education**

The Commission recommended that the grant should be determined keeping in view the strength of teachers and students, need and capacity of the institution. The colleges engaged in higher education should
be given sufficient grants for experimental laboratories, reading rooms, libraries, equipments, science rooms, building and furniture etc.

The Commission was required to consider whether the government schools should remain under the control of the government or should they be transferred to Indian hands. Missionaries were influenced by this measure as they found the government as their rival in the field of education. The Commission ultimately recommended that the Government should withdraw itself completely from the field of education and schools should be entrusted to private enterprises. Hence the commission encouraged Indian private enterprises a great deal.

Thus, the recommendations of the Commission have a special place in the history of Indian education as it tried to give a direction to Indian education, which was in a bad shape.

**Progress of Education from 1882 to 1902**

The Hunter Commission was appointed only for primary education but it also studied the problems of secondary and higher education. The Government attached great importance to its suggestions and tried to implement the same as far as possible. Now we shall understand in brief the progress made in the field of education after the government received recommendations of the Commission.

**Primary Education**

According to the recommendations of the Hunter Commission primary education was entrusted to local bodies. But due to financial difficulties the local bodies could not do justice with primary education. The indigenous schools faded away. The government did not help the local bodies adequately for encouraging primary education.

**Secondary Education**

The condition of secondary education was better than primary education, as the government took more interest in this sphere. The high school curriculum was divided into two groups- literary and science and vocational. English was accepted as a medium of instruction and Indian languages were neglected. The number of high schools increased.
University and Higher Education

Secondary education prepared students for higher education. Thus, the development of secondary education led to opening of new colleges and universities. The colleges established by Indian private enterprises were larger in number than those started by the Missionaries. However, the Missionaries also worked hard for the development education in the country.

The establishing of Indian National Congress in 1885 led to the regeneration of national spirit in the field of education. Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, Mrs. Annie Besant and Sir Surendra Nath Banerji and Gopal Krishna Gokhale strove hard for all the development of education. Their services in the field of education will ever remain immortal in our country.

20th century is a very important period in the history of Indian education. During this period the spirit of nationalism was generated and the people successfully fought for their freedom. For the history of Indian education the early years of this century are of great importance. During 1905 and 1920 the Swadeshi movement and the appointment of Calcutta University Commission were such events, which immensely influenced the field of education.

Swadeshi Movement and Education

The Indian National Congress strove hard for generating the spirit of national consciousness and freedom. This movement was influencing each section of Indian society and the education. The sole purpose of the Swadeshi movement was to discard foreign goods of all types and to use in their place the things that are prepared within the country. The capacity to produce the needed materials could be developed only through vocational education. For this the leaders urged that the efforts in the field of education should be diverted towards industrial and vocational channels. Thus was established the National Council of Education at Calcutta which tried to give the desired direction to education. This council made a comprehensive scheme of education from the primary to the university stage.

Due to efforts of Gopal Krishna Gokhale and others primary education was declared compulsory in several provinces. Laws were framed in each province for this purpose. After the Delhi Darbar and declaration of George V hope became stronger for the development of secondary and higher education. But because of the outbreak of the World War I, the progress was checked. Baroda and Bombay placed better example before the country for the development of primary education.
The Calcutta University Commission 1917-1919

In 1917 the Calcutta University Commission was appointed in 1917 under the chairmanship of Sir. M.E. Sadler. The Commission was appointed for the reforms of Calcutta University. The recommendations of this Commission improved the condition of Calcutta University and general nature of higher education in the country. Secondary education was accepted as the foundation of university education. So the Commission gave a number of suggestions for its improvement. Some important recommendations for the improvement of secondary education were as follows:

1. Only an intermediate passed candidate should be admitted to universities.
2. Intermediate colleges should be established as a necessity.
3. Subjects useful for practical life should be compulsorily taught in intermediate classes.
4. A Board of High School and Intermediate Education should be established in each province. This Board should be made independent of the existing education department.
5. Mother tongue should be the medium of instruction in the intermediate college.

The commission also gave suggestions for administration, functions and organization of the university. It also emphasized women education, Teachers’ Training and Vocational education. The recommendations of the Commission were regarded much ahead of the time. They were patterned on the Oxford and Cambridge universities. Inspite of many shortcomings the utility of the recommendations of the Commission cannot be denied. Due to the suggestions of this commission a number of new universities were opened in the country. Of these the Universities at Patna, Lucknow, Aligarh, Agra, Dacca, Delhi, Nagpur, Hyderabad and Mysore may be mentioned.

Lord Curzon

Lord Curzon had been the most magnificent Viceroy of India. His days were important for the development of primary education. The number of primary schools doubled with ten years (1902-1912). The government grant was raised by 50%.

After the Montford Reforms the power of the Central Government alone to determine the educational policy ended. The Provincial governments were also given enough power. National movements were at their peak during this period. The Simon Commission was sent to India and it appointed the Hartog Committee to examine the position of education in the country. It gave suggestions for reforms of education at all levels. Both primary and secondary education developed much during this period. Number of colleges and
universities increased and many national institutions were opened. Research and Honours courses were started in universities. Some provision was also made for technical education.

**Development of Education (1937-1947)**

After 1937, the conditions were changed again due to the introduction of the Government of India Act, 1935. Due to this introduction Indian Ministries were formed in the various provinces and the Central Government again started to take active interest in educational affairs. The Central Education Department was now called Central Ministry for Education. Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad was made the first Education Minister of the Government of India. The interim Government took special interest in educational matters and many new departments and schemes were started. As a result the University Grants Commission, Central Advisory Board for Education, the Central Bureau of Education was established.

Three plans were made for primary education- Basic Education Scheme, Vidya Mandir Scheme and the Voluntary School Scheme. Secondary education became out of approach due to high cost of living. Four new universities were opened. Hence their number became 18 in the country. Abbott and Wood were invited to reorganize vocational education in the country. The report gave many important suggestions such as Organization of Vocational Education Council, to consider vocational education at par with literary and science education, to open vocational schools separately etc.

In 1937 Congress ministries were formed in many provinces of India, according to the Government of India Act, 1935. Mahatma Gandhi was the leading figure of the Indian political scene. He was conversant with the deplorable condition of education in the land. For improving the condition he advocated a scheme for primary education, which is popularly known as Basic Education Scheme. His main objective was to make the foundation of the educational edifice strong.

**The Sargent Report on Education**

At the end of the Second World War, a new educational scheme popularly known as the Sargent Scheme was submitted to the Indian Government. John Sargent who was then the Educational Adviser to the Government of India was asked to draft such a memorandum as might contain an outline of the plan for post-war educational expansion. The Central Advisory board of Education accepted this memorandum during the course of their meetings in 1943 and 1944. The memorandum was based on all these reports, which had been published by the sub-committees appointed by the Board for the different aspects of education. The Report is of great historical importance as it contains a detailed account of education from
nursery stage to University level. To the credit of this report, it must be admitted that all-round development of the child has been its major goal. In a way it is the first report of its kind, which seeks to examine and study the entire national education so comprehensively and minutely.

**A Critique of the Educational System under the British Rule**

Before we discuss education in free India, it will be appropriate to make an assessment of the system that existed during the pre-independent days. Political changes in a country have their repercussions on the social, cultural, economic and educational life of the country. This was the reason why after the establishment of the British rule in India, the old Indian educational system changed to a considerable extent.

The English system of education, inspite of doing some harm to country was not altogether devoid of good points. It was through this system of education that Indians grew conscious of their pristine glory. The English scholars made a study of ancient literature of India and brought its hidden richness to light. Indians became acquainted with their literary treasures and the contact with Western knowledge and science and the information made available by the inventions and discoveries inspired the Indian scholars to revive their past glory.

It was but natural for the system to have some shortcomings. As is abundantly clear from the dispatches and declarations of the company that the system was to be utilized as an instrument for strengthening the British rule in India. It was for this reason that the development of individual or society had no place in this system, which failed to make progress both in quality and quantity. Thus, English education, which was patterned on the British model and was imposed on Indians, had no chance for success. The system however, gave birth to a new class of intellectuals in India, which in its feelings and aspirations was much closer to the English. This system, during the 175 years rule of British in India, could educate only 15% of the people.
Women Education: From Ancient times till Pre-Independence period

An attempt has been made to describe in brief the status of women education from the Vedic Age to the pre-independence era in India.

Vedic period

The history of the most of the known civilizations show that the further back we go into antiquity, the more unsatisfactory is found to be the general position of women. Hindu civilization is unique in this respect, for here we find a surprising exception to the general rule. The further back we go, the more satisfactory is found to be the position of women in more spheres than one; and the field of education is most noteworthy among them. During the Vedic Age women were given full status with men. They were honoured and respected in society. Therefore, women education was at its peak at that time. In those days there have been many great women who due to their deep scholarship and penance were regarded as Women-sages. There is ample evidence to show that women were regarded as perfectly eligible for the privilege of studying the Vedic literature and performing the sacrifices enjoined in it down to about 200 B.C. Women were then admitted to fulfill religious rites and consequently to complete educational facilities. Women sages were called Rishikas and Brahmavadinis. Some of the Rishikas the Rig Veda knows are Romasa, Lopamudra, Apala, Kadru, Ghosha, Juhu and many others.

Later Vedic Period

Many changes were introduced in women education during the post-Vedic period. This led to the fall of women education. Now the women were deprived of the social and religious rights. They were not allowed to participate in social functions. They did not enjoy the same status as in Vedic age. Ultimately the position of women fell down so low that the birth of a girl was regarded as accurse on the family. But an upward trend again appeared during the Upanishadic period. Now the women were given social and educational rights again. Many women became Acharyas in Ashrams. The name of Gargi and Maitreyi may be cited as an example. Besides spiritual knowledge the women were also attracted towards learning music, dance and fine arts.

Age of Sutras and Epics

In the period of Sutras too women were not prohibited from receiving education. They studied and were well versed in Vedic literature. Women teachers were called Upadhyaya and Acharya. Women seem also to have been admitted to military training, as indicated by the word Shaktiti used by Patanjali, which
means a female spear-bearer. Again we come across in the Epic age too many illustrious examples of women of profound learning and unquestionable high moral character. Sita in Ramayana is the most glorious example. These women were fully conversant with the Vedic knowledge. It is said of Kunti that she had acquired thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the Atharva Veda.

It must however, be observed that no major distinction was made between the educational system applicable to men and that of women. Since the Upanayana ceremony was an essential condition to the recitation of the Vedic hymns, women too were not absolved of the imposition of the ceremony of initiation. They studied following all the necessary regulations of brahmacharya. Study of the Vedas was the prescribed course of education for women but the extent of their study was restricted only to those hymns, which were necessary for the Yajna or other ritualistic operations. The age of Upanishads produced many learned women philosophers.

Thus, we note that women were highly respected and honoured in the post-Vedic period. They had fullest extent of freedom to develop their personality.

**Buddhist Period**

Women education during the Buddhist period was at its lowest ebb, as the women folk were despised in the sense that Lord Buddha had regarded them as the source of all evils. So he had advised during his lifetime not to admit women in monasteries. But after the insistence of his dear pupil Anand, Buddha had permitted about 500 women for admission in the Vihars with many restrictions and reservations. Strict rules were enforced for women monks. The first two years was their probation period. The women monks were not allowed to meet any male monk in loneliness and their residence was arranged separately at a distant place. They were not given any permanent post in the Sangh. It was believed that a woman’s place was the home and her primary responsibility was to bear sons and ensure the continuity of the family lineage.

**Muslim Period**

The 11th century saw the emergence of Islam, which created hopes of promoting the interests of the oppressed groups, but it also introduced certain values and practices, which did not help to enhance the status of women or emancipate them from their bondage. Purdah system has been a part of Muslim culture since long. During the Muslim rule in India, this system was observed quite strictly. There was no arrangement from the Government for female education. Therefore, girls were not allowed to go to a Madarsa for receiving higher education. However, they were allowed to go to a Maktab for primary education. So the
girls could learn only reading, writing and arithmetic. But there have been exceptions. Even during the Muslim period, there have been some very learned women who have made unique contributions to the development of literature. The empress Nurjahan was learned and very well carried the State administration. Education of princesses’ arrangements was made in the palace. Carefully selected Ustads taught music to them in the palace.

**Women Education in the Modern Period**

The modern period began with the onset of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The British came to India in 1600 A.D. For nearly 200 years in their East India Company incarnation there was no real effort made to address questions of social inequity or social oppression. Social evils such as sati, suppression of widows, denial of the right to education for women and child marriage flourished unchecked. With the dawn of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century an era of change began and it was during this period that many efforts were made both by the British rulers and progressive sections of Indian society to put an end to social evils.

The Modern age can be classified into two periods. The British period and the period after Independence. Woods’ Despatch of 1854 advocated the cause of women education and gave suggestions for encouraging the same. The dispatch recognized the importance of private enterprises in this area and advised that they should be further encouraged. It suggested that women should be given education in all provinces.

The Indian Education Commission of 1882 gave the following suggestions for women education:

1. **Education in special subjects**- The Commission said that the curriculum for girls should be different from that of boys, because of the different nature of their life duties. They should be given education in subjects useful in their life.

2. **Education by Local Boards**- The local boards should be made responsible for women’s education. In its absence the Government should take over the responsibility for the same.

3. **Women Teachers**- The Commission recommended that only lady teachers should be appointed in girls’ schools.

4. **Inspectress**- Inspectress for girls’ schools should be appointed.

**During 1905-1920** the Calcutta University Commission gave some suggestions regarding women education. It advocated that a Board for women education should be constituted for preparing useful curriculum for women education. Women should be given education in medicine and teachers’ training. Also
that co-education should be started in universities and women should be encouraged to benefit themselves by the same.

After India became independent, the Constitution of India conferred equal rights on women and men with a view to abolish gender discrimination. The Government of India implemented a number of laws for liberating women from oppressive social customs. Improved access to education has helped many women overcome the obstacles to their illiteracy. An increasing number of women are now getting opportunities for not only acquiring skills but also enhancing their income earning capacities.

Though significant improvements have taken place in the position of women following independence, women continue to suffer from problems such as illiteracy, violence and ill health. A change in attitude is what is required if there has to be an overall improvement in the position of women.

**Commercial and Vocational Education from Ancient times to Pre-Independence Age**

The ancient Indian education was not merely theoretical but was related to the realities of life. The ancient students received a valuable training in the occupations of animal husbandry, agriculture and dairy farming by tending his teacher’s cows and serving him in diverse ways. Higher Education was thus not inconsistent with manual labour. Life served as a laboratory for the educational experimentation from where many noble traditions were developed.

Though the Rigvedic education was essentially religious and philosophical in character there was arrangement for secular educational and vocational education for the masses. The agriculture, trade and commerce were in a fairly developed state. The people would receive training in diverse arts and crafts for material gain. Also there was training in handicrafts. The Rigveda refers to sea-borne trade and to stone-built cities known as Pur. Thus, we can safely conclude that the secular social and practical form of education was in existence during the Rigveda era.

In ancient India secular vocational training was essentially a practical and useful education. There was complete absence of formal paraphernalia of education required in modern times; education was imparted by the father to his son according to practical and direct method. People would undertake industrial occupation and carry it on, being inspired by religious sentiments as in other walks of life. These industrial
activities not only involved and served their economic interests, but on the other hand, spiritual factor too was an important ingredient therewith.

Vocational education was not ignored during the Buddhist system of education. The monks of a Vihar were taught spinning, weaving and sewing in order that they meet their clothing requirements. They were taught architecture as well. Education in architecture enabled them to build up new Vihars or repair the old ones. The householders were given vocational education in agriculture, animal husbandry, sculpture, architecture, painting, music and medicine.

The major part of Mohammedan rule in India passed through warfare and political chaos and uncertainties; but such times were interspersed by peaceful intervals. It was during these intervals when literature, arts and architecture made appreciable progress. The Mohammedans adopted popular Hindu handicrafts in the sphere of crafts of a general nature. Some of the handicrafts reached culminating point in the artistic beauty. Ivory-work, jewellery, embroidery, muslin, shipbuilding, manufacture of chariots and ammunitions of war etc. were the main industries, which were followed both for art and earning livelihood. The training in these industries was hereditary and traditional i.e. apprentices were trained at home or in the workshop from generation to generation. Technical training or vocational knowledge was diffused by the system of apprenticeship.

Wood’s Despatch of 1854 during the East India Company Rule, suggested for Vocational education of the people through schools and colleges to be established for the purpose. So arrangements were made for the same and the public got an opportunity to be self-dependent. Actually speaking, there was no real vocational education as advocated by Despatch. The purpose of vocational education remained to enable Indians to get some services and not to become self-dependent.

Vocational education was deplorably ignored during the British rule in the country. The British government thought that vocational education to Indians would ultimately adversely affect their trade prospects. So it was profitable for it to neglect it. Moreover, vocational education entailed heavy expenditure, which the Government was not prepared to incur. The Indian people too did not show enough enthusiasm for it. Their major attention was on receiving higher education for procuring good Government service. Only one Agriculture College was being run in Bombay in 1882 and there was no other vocational institution in the country.
The Calcutta University Commission 1917 observed that the students in India were especially interested in literary subjects. Since there was no provision for vocational education so it was not possible for youths to understand its importance. It however, suggested that vocational education should be started at the intermediate stage. The measure would facilitate the beginning of vocational education at the university stage. According to the recommendations of the Hunter Commission some sort of vocational education was also started in high schools.

The absence of adequate and proper vocational education was being felt in India and the public was raising its demand for it since long. Therefore, the Government of India invited Abbott and Wood to India in 1936-37 to prepare a plan for vocational education in the country. On the basis of its report the Sargent Report of 1944 was published. The Sargent Report presented a more detailed plan of vocational education than the Abbott Report did. It was felt that:

1. Vocational education should be organized according to the needs of various vocational areas. No vocational area should be considered less important.
2. Vocational education should be considered at par with literary and science education and its standard should be raised.
3. Skillful workers engaged in small industries should also be given proper vocational training.
4. In each province a Vocational Education Advisor’s Council should be established for developing healthy relationship between vocational educational and various vocations.
5. There should be two types of schools for vocational education- junior vocational school after class VIII and senior vocational school after the class XI.
6. The vocational schools should be established near vocational centers.
7. Part time classes should be opened for persons engaged in various vocations.
8. In certificate to be awarded after passing a vocational course, there should be a clear mention of the quality of work done by the candidate during the period of vocational training.

Thus, the Sargent Report is of great historical importance, as through it the British Government took up the totality of education within its purview of reforms and for giving a proper framework to vocational education.