

Lesson at a Glance

- The British in India established their control over the entire country. But their task was not completed with it. They felt that they had a **cultural mission**. They had to civilise the natives by giving them proper education and by changing their customs and values.
- For this it was necessary to study Indian history, philosophy and law. William Jones, an expert in law and a linguist, took this task. He began to study ancient Indian texts on law, philosophy, religion, politics, morality, arithmetic, medicine and the other sciences.
- Englishmen like Henry Thomas Colebrooke and Nathaniel Halhed were also busy **discovering the ancient Indian heritage, mastering Indian languages and translating Sanskrit and Persian works into English**.
- Jones and Colebrooke shared a deep respect for ancient cultures. Both of India and the West Indian civilisation, they felt, had attained its glory in the ancient past but had subsequently declined. In order to understand India it was necessary to discover the sacred and legal texts that were produced in the ancient time.
- Jones and Colebrooke went about discovering ancient texts, understanding their meaning, translating them and making their findings known to others.
- Several company officials got influenced by these ideas. They felt that Hindus and Muslims ought to be taught what they were already familiar with, and what they valued and treasured, not subjects that were alien to them.
- It was thought that this was the only way the British could win the hearts the 'natives', and could get respect from them.
- A madrasa was set up in Calcutta in 1781 to promote the study of Arabic, Persian and Islamic law. In 1791, the Hindu College was established in Benaras to encourage the study of ancient Sanskrit texts that would be useful for the administration of the country.
- Not all Company officials shared these views. They began to criticise the Orientalist vision of learning. They strongly disapproved

the British effort to encourage the study of Arabic and Sanskrit language and literature.

- James Mill was one of those who attacked the Orientalists. He was of the opinion that Indians should be made familiar with the scientific and technical advances that the West had made, rather than with the poetry and sacred literature of the Orient.
- Thomas Babington Macaulay, another critic of Orientalists, saw India as an uncivilised country that needed to be civilised. He emphasized the need to teach Indians the English language.
- Finally, the **English Education Act of 1835** was introduced. The decision was to make **English the medium of instruction** for higher education, and to stop the promotion of Oriental institutions like the Calcutta Madrasa and Benaras Sanskrit College.
- In 1854, an educational despatch, popularly known as **Wood's Despatch**, was sent to India. Outlining the educational policy that was to be followed in India. It emphasised once again the practical benefits of a system of European learning.
- Wood's Despatch argued that European learning would enable Indians to recognise the advantages that flow from the expansion of trade and commerce and make them see the importance of developing country's resources. European learning would also improve the moral character of Indians. It would make them truthful and honest and thus supply the company with civil servants who could be trusted.
- The British took several measures. They set up education departments of the government. Universities were established in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. Upto the mid-19th century, the company's primary concern was to improve higher education.
- Afterwards, it also took steps to improve the condition of local schools.
- In 1830s William Adam, a Scottish missionary, was given the charge by the Company to tour the districts of Bengal and Bihar. He was asked to report on the progress of education in local schools.
- Adam found that the system of education in the local schools, known as *pathshalas*, was flexible. There were no fixed fee, no benches or chairs, no system of separate classes, no annual examinations, etc. In some places classes were held under a banyan tree, in other places in the corner of a village's shop or temple, or at the *guru's* home. Teaching was oral and the guru decided what to teach.

- After the Company got **Adam's report**, it immediately took decision to improve the system of vernacular education.
- It appointed a number of government **pandits**, each in charge of looking after four to five schools. The task of the **pandit** was to visit the *pathshalas* and try to improve the standard of teaching.
- New routine and rules were introduced. Teaching was now to be based on textbooks and learning was to be tested through a system of annual examination. Students were asked to pay regular fee, attend regular classes, sit on fixed seats and obey the new rules of discipline.
- Not only the British officials but several Indians too wanted to spread education in the country. The Indians felt that Western education would help modernise India. Hence, they urged the British to open more and more schools, colleges and universities.
- At the same, there were other Indians, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, who were dead against western education.
- Mahatma Gandhi argued that coloured education created a sense of inferiority in the minds of Indians. It enslaved Indians. He felt that Indian languages ought to be the medium of teaching. Education in English crippled Indians, distanced them from their own social surroundings and made them strangers in their own land.
- With the spread of nationalist movement, other thinkers also began thinking of a system of national education which would be different from that one set up by the British.
- Rabindranath Tagore started Shantiniketan in 1901. He was of the view that creative learning could be encouraged only within a natural environment. So he chose to set up his school 100 kilometres away from Calcutta, in a rural setting. He saw it as an abode of peace, *i.e.* **Shantiniketan**, where living in harmony with nature, children could cultivate their natural creativity.

■ TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED ■

Let's Recall

9. 1. Match the following:

William Jones

Rabindranath Tagore

Thomas Macaulay

promotion of English education

respect for ancient cultures

gurus

Mahatma Gandhi learning in a natural environment

Pathshalas Critical of English education

Ans. William Jones respect for ancient cultures

Rabindranath Tagore learning in a natural environment

Thomas Macaulay promotion of English education

Mahatma Gandhi critical of English education

Pathshalas gurus

Q. 2. State whether true or false

(a) James Mill was a severe critic of the Orientalists.

(b) The 1854 Despatch on education was in favour of English being introduced as a medium of higher education in India.

(c) Mahatma Gandhi thought that promotion of literacy was the most important aim of education.

(d) Rabindranath Tagore felt that children ought to be subjected to strict discipline.

Ans. (a) True, (b) True, (c) False, (d) False.

Let's Discuss

Q. 3. Why did William Jones feel the need to study Indian history, philosophy and law?

Ans. He felt the need to study Indian history, philosophy and law because only these texts could reveal the ideas and laws of the Hindus and Muslims, and only a new study of these texts could form the basis of future development in India.

Q. 4. Why did James Mill and Thomas Macaulay think that European education was essential in India?

Ans. Both James Mill and Thomas Macaulay saw India as an uncivilised country that needed to be civilised. And for this purpose European education was essential. They felt that knowledge of English would allow Indians to read some of the finest literature of the world, it would make them aware of the developments in Western science and philosophy. Teaching of English could thus be a way of civilising people, changing their tastes, values and culture.

Q. 5. Why did Mahatma Gandhi want to teach children handicrafts?

Ans. Mahatma Gandhi wanted to teach children handicrafts because only then they would be able to know how different things were operated. This would develop their mind and their capacity to understand.

Q. 6. Why did Mahatma Gandhi think that English education had enslaved Indians?

Ans. Mahatma Gandhi was dead against English education. He argued that this type of education had created a sense of inferiority in the minds of Indians. It had made them see Western civilisation as superior and had destroyed the pride they had in their own culture. It had cast an evil spell on Indians. Education in English had crippled them, distanced them from their own surroundings and made them strangers in their own lands. What is more, it had enslaved them.

Let's Do

Q. 7. Find out from your grandparents about what they studied in school.

Ans. Attempt yourself.

Q. 8. Find out about the history of your school or any other school in the area you live.

Ans. I study in St. Peters Academy. It is the oldest one in this region. It was established by a Christian Missionary in 1980. It has created many histories by achieving so many events to its credit. The Principal is always appointed by the missionary. The man of high academic repute and administrative quality is appointed here as Principal. Teachers are also of high talent. There are five thousand students. Its students always bring high laurels to school and region by achieving bright result in Board Examinations. I am proud of my school.

