



Introduction and Expansion of English Education in Patna (1835- 1940)

Dr. Arun Kumar

Associate Professor, Department of History, Mahila College, Khagaul, Patna (Bihar)

Abstract: *The East India Company's government in its initial phase were engaged in empire building and as such it did not interfere in the social and educational affairs of the people. Education remained a private concern but some public spirited men, government officials and the Christian missionaries were engaged in the spread of education. That was true of Patna as well. The Christian missionaries working for propagation of their religion felt that starting of schools was necessary for achieving their purpose more effectively. Hence, as the number of Indian converts grew the missionaries opened a school at Bankipur in Patna for the children of the former. The school was under the supervision of a Christian lady teacher. In the beginning 20 students joined the school where they were taught to read and write and commit to memory selections from the Gospel. As the number of students increased another school was opened by them at Digha in Patna in 1819.*

Keywords: *Government, School, Education, Missionaries, Patna*

Introduction:

William Start, a clergyman of the English Church came to India and settled at Patna in 1832. His German followers opened schools at Gaya, Arrah, Hajipur, Chapra and Muzaffarpur. But these schools could not become popular because proselytisation was their chief aim. As such both Hindus and Muslims looked upon them with suspicion and hatred.

Raja Rammohun Roy and others were interested in spreading educations and this led to an opening of Anglo-Vernacular schools in Bengal and the famous Christian missionary, David Hare attracted large number of students from the very beginning. The interest of the Indians in Western education became obvious.

The British Parliament after passing the Charter Act of 1813 directed the East India Company's government in India to spend a sum of rupees one lakh every year over the revival and improvement of literature, encouragement of learned Indians and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India.⁵ But nothing positive could be done because of the storm of controversy raised by the long-drawn tussle between the 'Orientalists' and the 'Anglicists' regarding the nature of education to be imparted. The issue was settled by Macaulay's Minute of 2 February, 1835. The Governor-General, William Bentinck in his famous Resolution of 7 March, 1835 declared that "all funds appropriated for purposes of education would be best employed on English education alone."

In the wake of this *Magna Carta* of English education, the East India Company's government began to open schools where English language was taught compulsorily along with other subjects. Zila Schools were started at Patna, Arrah, Chapra and Bhagalpur. A meeting of the European officers with Tucker, the Commissioner of Patna was held on 10 June, 1835. An association named "The Patna Auxiliary Education Committee" was formed on that occasion. A sub-committee consisting of Commissioner Tucker and the European officers named Jennings, Trotter, Morris and Dick was formed for implementing the resolutions of the main Committee. An annual grant of Rs. 6000 was provided for opening schools at Patna.

In spite of the indifference and even opposition of the local people a government school was opened at Alamganj in Patna on 10 August, 1835. H.W. Clift of Allahabad College was appointed Headmaster of this school. The school had to face rough weather in the beginning because the people generally believed that it had been opened for converting the boys to Christianity. Some people also believed that products of the school would be sent to England to become slaves. It was under this cloud of suspicion that only seven students were enrolled on the first day. All of them were Bengalis. On the third day two Bihari students joined the school. Later, as a result of persuasion by the government officers more and more students turned up. In order to assuage the feelings of the local people, vernacular classes were started in this school from 18 June, 1836. In view of the increasing demand for modern education it was decided to open another Government school in a different locality. Even then people remained apprehensive with regard to the real motive of the British government. Trifling matters upset them. Matters took



a very serious turn in 1836 when the Headmaster, Clift served a glass of water with his hand and from his own tumbler to a thirsty student. This incident greatly upset the local people

The main emphasis was on the teaching of English literature and science. Vernacular teaching was introduced mainly to soften the feelings of the local people. Among the vernacular languages only Urdu was taught in the Patna School till 1838. Hindi was introduced in the following year. Provision was also made for the teaching of Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra, History and Natural Philosophy. Later, subjects like Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit were also introduced on demand of the people. Religious instruction was not imparted in this school.

However, the Patna School failed to capture the imagination of the local people, who still felt reluctant to send their children to that school. Under the circumstance, the Patna School was shifted from Alamganj to Bankipur on 17 January, 1853. Change of site failed to have the desired effect at that moment but in course of time the number of students increased. It stood to 193 in 1855.

To attract greater number of students the status of Patna School was raised to a High School or Quasi-College in 1856 by order of the Lt. Governor of Bengal. This step was taken on the basis of the recommendation of the Inspector of Schools for upgrading the school to the status of a collegiate school. Upon upgradation of this school students from any government school in Bihar, after obtaining Junior Scholarship could study here for two years and appear at the Senior Scholarship examination from the Patna High School. Among other steps aimed at attracting more students one was reduction of tuition fee and raising of funds for helping the poor students. The maximum age-limit for admission was relaxed in order to enable the students of higher age-group to join this school. A Bengali teacher was appointed in order to induce Bengali boys to join the school. After introduction of Arabic and Persian, William Tayler, the Commissioner of Patna, who was very popular among the Muslims, tried to induce them to send their children to the Patna High School. But outbreak of the Revolt of 1857 had very adverse effect and the number of students slumped down to 44 in 1857. So this school had to be closed in April, 1858.

The shifting of the Patna School from Alamganj (to Bankipur) caused great inconvenience to the local people. A meeting of the noted citizens of that area was held on 12 January, 1854 and it was decided to start a branch school in the Patna City area. Since that area was inhabited by businessmen and traders, a sum of Rs. 3000 was immediately raised. The money was given to the government for constructing building for the proposed school. The Patna Branch School was opened on 1 June, 1854 with an initial strength of 42 students. By 30 April, 1855 the number of boys rose to 236.

After the closure of Patna High School, the Patna Branch School was elevated to the status of Zila School in November 1861 and given the name Patna School. It was converted into a collegiate school in August 1862.

The Commissioner of Patna, who took keen interest in the spread of education felt that absence of trained teachers was one of the reasons for this fact. So he hoped that better class of trained teachers would be available from the Normal School which had recently been established at Patna. The Normal School taught a large number of students although it did not receive any aid from the government. It was also a training school for teachers. In spite of Sir Charles Woods' concern shown in his famous Despatch of 1854, female education was nowhere attempted in Bihar except in Patna town among the more intelligent sections of the people. Those enlightened gentlemen formed two small schools for the purpose of imparting instruction to girls, one in the house of a Muslim gentleman, and the other belonged to certain respectable Bengali residents of the city. The latter, named Bengali Girls School was opened in Bankipur in 1892, which later on became Bankipur Girls High school. It happened to be the only school for Indian girls besides the Convent for European and Native Orphans established in 1853 in the same locality which later on was known as ST. Joseph convent High school. A major landmark in the field of higher education was the establishment of Women's college at Patna in 1940. It was the first college exclusively for women in Patna.

St. Michael's High school located in Patna was founded in 1858 by the first Bishop of Patna Dr. Anastasius Hartmann. It began as a boarding school for poor and orphan boys. St. Xavier's High School was founded in 1940. It is the oldest Jesus school in the city of Patna.

A major leap in the field of education was taken with the establishment of Patna College on 9 January, 1863. It was the only college in Bihar and fourth in the entire country. As the oldest and best institution of higher university education in Bihar, Patna College has played a highly significant role in her modern history and new Bihar has, to a very large extent been the creation of its alumini. The College has turned out to be the mother of several leading educational institutions in the State, such as Patna Law College (1909), Bihar College of Engineering (1886), Patna Science College (1927) and in some ways also the Medical College set up in 1925 at Patna. College of Arts and crafts was set up in Patna in 1939. With the establishment of Patna university in 1917, a new chapter was unleashed in so far in imparting higher education in Patna was concerned. But the education of masses during this period seems to be neglected by the Indian as well as the missionaries which is evident from the fact that the literacy rate in India was less than 16 per cent.



REFERENCES:

1. Datta, K.K. *Unpublished Correspondence of Judge-Magistrate of Patna*, p. 418.
2. William, Rev. B. *Recollections of Northern India*, p. 202.
3. Diwakar. R.R. (Ed), *Bihar Trough the Ages*, p. 716.
4. *Parliamentary papers*, vol. IX (1831-32), p. 18.
5. Chicol, V. *India, Old and New*, pp. 79-80
6. Jha, J. S. *Education in Bihar*, p. 104.
7. Headmaster Clift's letter to General Committee of Public Instruction dated 14 April, 1835.
8. Clift's letter to C E. Trevelyan, dated 14.8.1836.
9. Arrow's letters to S. Davies, dated 8 January, 1836, Central Committee Correspondence, Vol. 21.
10. S. Davies' letter to the General Committee, dated 26 Nov. 1838.
11. Statement of Headmaster Clift, dated 26 Nov. 1838.
12. Educational Proceedings of the General Department, No. 24, dated 10 Sept. 1838.
13. Jha. J. S. *op. cit.* p. 311.
14. Letter of R.B. Chapman, Inspector of Schools, to the D.P.I. dated 21 August, 1856.
15. Court of Directors Despatch No. 96. dated 1 Oct. 1856.
16. General Department (General Branch) Proceedings No. 87, dated 25 March, 1858
17. *A History of the Patna College*, pp. 18-21.
18. *Bengal Past and Present*, vol. LXII, p. 105.
19. *A History of the Patna College*, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-21
20. Report on the State and Progress of Education in Patna Division for the year 1863-64, para 12, no. 146 of 1 June, 1864.
21. Report on the Progress of Education in Patna Division during 1867-68, paras 8 and 30. No. 278 of 16 Sept. 1868.
22. *The Friend of India*, vol. I, 1818, p. 250.