

## CHAPTER V

### THE DECLINE OF INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

In the previous chapters the various aspects of the Indigenous system of education have been discussed on the basis of the data made available. Now the pivotal problem is to examine the causes of its decline. The historical data presented in Chapter-III reveals that the number of Indigenous schools during a period of century, decreased from 448 in 1852-53 to 6 in 1936-37.

One important reason of their declining is that, "the indigenous school did not owe their existence to any origin to any organized system of education".<sup>1</sup> It will well known from hitherto discussion that master of indigenous school was the central figure and without him school was doomed. Degeneration or decline of indigenous schools was attributable to a number of factors such as masters of indigenous schools, natural calamity, public, the British Government etc.

Indigenous school was an enterprise of an individual who was conservative in his attitude. He had typical apathy towards dynamic changes of modern era, and he imbibed, contrary to the situation, a spirit of parochialism of his elders. Consequently he remained indolent and static in his technique, methods and out-looks and aloof from the modern forces. These aspects have

been showed by a number of contemporary persons associated with the field of education. "They (Indigenous schools) have been degenerating or disappearing from their own want of adaptation to necessitation of the age."<sup>2</sup> (1931-32) "There was no guarantee that any particular school will continue to exist for a given period."<sup>3</sup> There was no arrangement for providing training of masters (of indigenous schools).<sup>4</sup> "The school master was responsible to none and consequently often irregular in his work. The standard of instruction was too low. The attendant roll of pupils was low. Consequently school was closed lastly for want of pupils. "More than half the boys returned as attending school are regular in their attendance. "Most of them (indigenous school masters) are incompetent and incapable to improving the state of their schools and too idle to submit to the most easy conditions of keeping attendance book of boys attending their schools."<sup>5</sup> The break-up of indigenous school was attributed to the fact that the masters of such schools close them (schools) at once as soon as they find anything better to do. The ephemeral character of school led to decline in their number."<sup>6</sup> The school does not exist more than four months. "The itinerate (teacher) goes to village to village teaches the multiplication tables. The school disappears after an existence of three or four months and reappears elsewhere."<sup>7</sup> The teacher according to old indigenous methods and does not wish for interference or aid. "It must be understood that these schools

are often only schools in name and that they frequently have only a very short existence. 41 schools in Satara district have disappeared."<sup>8</sup>

Natural calamity was important factor in breaking up indigenous schools. At the time of famine masters closed their schools for want of adequate attendance of pupils in them. In rainy seasons and at the time of harvest their schools remained closed. During the period of visitation of epidemic such as cholera, plague, small-pox which were common in later part of the 19th century, the masters compelled to close down their schools. This influence of natural calamity had been evidenced in many reports. "Decrease in the number of schools is due to the permanent closure of many schools in consequence of plague and famine."<sup>9</sup> For instance the years 1894-95, 1895-96, 1897-98, 1898-99, 1901-2, 1903 were the years of famine and epidemic of plague. The number of indigenous <sup>school</sup> decreased during this period from 129 to 47.<sup>10</sup> Still one more evidence is that, "there was failure of crops (in 1866-67) in four talukas of this sub-division which has unfavourably affected the attendance and number of schools."

From this it will be clear that the number of indigenous school dwindled down through out the period affected by frequent terrific natural calamity. However, it could not be claimed that in a given period natural calamity was the sole factor for their decline. It is altogether possible that there

might be some other factors equally in force and it is difficult to assess the extent of effect of a particular factor in force. Notwithstanding this, it can be said, that with all other factors, the natural calamity greatly contributed to dwindle down indigenous schools.

Now a well settled fact is that half of the later part of the 19th century brought about new awakening among Indians in consequent upon the establishment of British rule, and personal contact with English people, their western culture, philosophy, new techniques of production, sophisticated means of transport, through education, Commerce, industry and political rules. This had far reaching effect on the system of education in this country. People began to accept new things, new ideology, new way of life by discarding their own; and the British Government deliberately created circumstances to bring about desired change with least resistance. In the field of education, with the advent of modern school set-up largely on new methods and concepts, people began to lose their belief in the indigenous system of education and inclined to pin their faith in new type of schools which was financed and organised by Government from its funds. They realised the stability of school. They experienced the Government school was cheap, without having any kind of responsibility on their part. With the advent of time they began to appreciate the superior standard of education in Government schools and held that the way to Government services laid through these schools.

This phenomenon brought about two contrasting changes in the field of education, one led to increase the number of Government schools resulting from the popularity among the public at large and the other to decrease or to break up of old Indigenous system due to neglect by them. This has been evidenced in contemporary records; and it is discovered :

"In most cases people now prefer Government schools for boys, the Government standards, the sanctioned printed books, and systematic teaching."<sup>11</sup> "The number of Indigenous schools conducted on old system is diminishing due to greater inclination of the people towards local board schools."<sup>12</sup>

"In Indigenous schools fee rates vary with the status of parents but are usually higher than those paid in departmental schools."<sup>13</sup> These cess payers pay a fee of six pies or one anna in Government school and is not under the necessity of making presents to the masters. The cess schools in villages are the property of the people aided by Government the leading members of the village are upon its <sup>committee</sup> community, the district officers, representatives of Government visit and encourage them. "There is every inducement in a village for the maintenance of cess school, hardly any for the maintenance of Indigenous schools."<sup>14</sup> Villages failed to give encouragement hardly any for the maintenance of an indigenous school. Many of the Indigenous schools are itinerant. These naturally disappeared as the number of cess schools increased. The itinerant master finding no encouragement in a village already

possessing a school."<sup>15</sup> The number of Government schools is growing because of the appreciation on the part of the people generally of superior instruction, given in the Department schools. People held that the way to the Government services lies through Government schools.

With all other factors in a given situation, the policy of discrimination of the contemporary British Government towards indigenous schools largely contributed to the gradual degeneration of their number; and it is inevitable in any country where an alien Government is in power, that old institutions, traditions, culture and values of the natives steeped in servility give way gradually to the new ones promulgated by their rulers. Such occurrence of change may either be gradual or instantic depending upon the intensity of desire of the ruler. The British Government has gradually done away with the indigenous schools of old type. They launched systematic two-pronged attack on this old system of education, one by deliberately ignoring discouraging, neglecting them and the other, which was more important in its kind, by introducing new ones in their places of superior type of a more appealing to their (natives) reasoning and of practical and useful nature to the natives. This was indeed unlike to the violent and ruthless attempts of Muslim rulers who burnt, and destroyed temples, universities and seats of learning of world importance during the medieval period in India.

It can be stated briefly that the British policy adversely affected the old system of education in four ways :

Firstly officers particularly of the education department looked down upon these schools and their masters with sense of prejudice and rivalry. Consequently it led to tarnish image of the old system of education in Government records as well as in public life.

Secondly the Government started new type of cess school having with relatively more qualified teachers; they introduced for the first time, printed books in their schools. In spite of these new things, they provided education in Government schools relatively at cheaper rate. Though they introduced at initial stage curriculum different from that of the old contemporary indigenous schools, they modified it on the basis of indigenous schools in the course of time keeping in with demand and requirements of the natives.

Thirdly, they made provision of registration of schools and introduced grant-in-aid system in education. But this was faulty and it was double standard policy. Principally it was to encourage the indigenous school to improve its lot; but in practice Education Department never became liberal in realising aim of the spread of education under the auspices of voluntary agencies on the pretext that the financial position of the Education Department was tied to the apron string of economy; and consequently gave inadequate grants to a few schools at irregular intervals.

Fourthly the number of indigenous schools also decreased due to the Government policy to make changes from time to time for smooth administration, in its district or territory. The Satara has undergone a number of changes in its geographical boundaries details of which has already been given in the second chapter. Consequent of upon geographical changes in the original district of 1848, the number of indigenous schools in existence in the ceded portion were indirectly made over to the other districts. Consequently the number of indigenous schools decreased. A number of evidences in support of above generalization can be found in contemporary records of the Education Department particularly the annual administration reports of Education Department of Bombay Presidency and the evidence cases placed before the Indian Education Commission, 1882, highlighted the British policy towards Indigenous system of education in 19th century. Some of the glaring views are given below :

"My humble opinion is that the best indigenous schools are not equal to our (Government) bad elementary school with regard to discipline, quality of instruction and the regularity of pupils who attend them."<sup>16</sup> "The revision of vernacular standards which were four years ago, were altered and modified with a great care and attention to the requirement of people, has removed the causes of complaints against Government schools and has left no room for people to think better of the indigenous schools."<sup>17</sup> "The number of indigenous schools conducted on the old system is diminishing every year owing



partly to their being brought on grant-in-aid list."<sup>18</sup> I was astonished in Satara district at the absence of registered Indigenous schools. I do not think that it has been sufficiently widely noticed that the department is ready to aid schools."<sup>19</sup> "Decrease in both the cases is primarily due to the absorption of these schools into the category of aided schools."<sup>20</sup> "They <sup>have</sup> been degenerating or disappearing from the neglect of the Government."<sup>21</sup> The decrease in the number of Indigenous schools is reported to be due primarily to the recognition of such unrecognised schools. Decrease in the number of Indigenous schools is that many of these schools are recognised.<sup>22</sup> The weight of officials influence and encouragement is exerted in favour of Government schools. Indigenous schools received but little attention from official classes.<sup>23</sup> Every town has one or more indigenous schools existing side by side with Government schools. Though such is the fact, I do not think we can devotail these Indigenous schools, as they are at present exist into a system of national education except in a small way.<sup>24</sup> "Master of Indigenous schools were reluctant to recognise their Indigenous schools because of elaborate and complicated rules under which the aid is offered. These rules may be suited to schools managed on an important system. Indigenous schools received little sympathy from Government."<sup>25</sup> "A small sum is largely allotted in the education budget of each district for aid to these schools and the Deputy Education Inspector only

distributes this small sum to a few of the best of them."<sup>26</sup> Generally the masters of the Government schools and the Deputy Educational Inspector looked upon them as rivals and wish to see their school closed."<sup>27</sup> Little sympathy and encouragement these schools receive from the offices of Education Department."<sup>28</sup> The disappearance of indigenous schools may be ascribed to greater cheapness of Government schools their greater prestige and their greater utility."<sup>29</sup> "The Government schools are more useful and their system of education is better."<sup>30</sup> The schools of the department are becoming yearly more popular. Prejudices which formerly existed such as that history and geography are useless have disappeared, or are disappearing. They (indigenous schools) are dying out before the advent of cess schools.<sup>31</sup>

Statistical data could be regarded to show one of the causes of decline in indigenous schools. Though the statistical data as such could not materially affect to bring about increase or decrease in the number of indigenous schools, they had influence over the investigator to reach a certain conclusion on the basis of figures whatever he has been provided with. What happened during the whole period of the 19th and 20th century of the British rule is that Education Department highly relied on the available statistical data on the indigenous schools, to present their position year after year with occasional caution note such as the number of



indigenous schools mentioned by them in the annual reports from time to time could not be taken as exact for they were based either on the 'hearsay' reports or consolidated data from the annual returns received from some (not all) indigenous schools. From this it follows three possibilities. In reality the number of schools might be the same, it might be less or it might be more than that of the previous year. Of the three possibilities there is sufficient reason to hold view that in majority of cases, the data on the indigenous schools have been underestimated which led to show unnecessarily a glaring downward trend in the number of such schools. This statistical fallacy, i.e. the gap between the actual number of schools and the number mentioned in the reports led to make believe that there was decrease in the number of indigenous schools. A number of evidences could be found in contemporary reports of the D.P.I. to support this generalization.

Before attending to further discussion on this issue, it is pertinent, in the first place, to point out some instances of doubtful nature of statistical data so presented in the reports and elsewhere, on which cursory remarks have already been made in the pages gone and secondly to deal with reliability of the quantitative aspect of the data at length.

To begin with, the most glaring instances of doubtful nature could also be found in the Rose's survey report of Satara District (1855). The elaborate statistical data presented in the survey report led some one to make believe that

they might be fairly correct. But it is an illusion. The Rose Report showed that in 1855 the district of Satara had as many as 197, Indigenous schools with 4145 pupils in them. By contrasting these figures with that of 1852-53, it could be found that the number of schools in the Satara District was 448 with 7616 pupils in them. The averages of decreases in the number of schools and pupils during the period of three years work out to be 84 and 1155 per year. <sup>respectively</sup> Further the Survey Report is silent about the existence of indigenous schools in some municipal towns, where people are more educationally conscious. All the information required by the Survey was not collected. For instance, the number of towns and villages in existence in the district of the time was highly relevant without which mere figures of schools have no meaning at all. But this column in the Survey paper remained blank. While mentioning a figure of population of Satara at the end of March, 1855, the Survey Report failed to make any comment on its source and its validity - estimated or actual.

In its annual administration report of 1874-75, the Education Department has shown that in the district of Satara the number of Indigenous schools was 146 while in its earlier report of 1870-71 figure for the schools was 219; that gives yearly average decrease of 24 schools during the span of three years - By the year 1877-78 the number of schools decreased to 105 <sup>from</sup> 178 of 1875-76 giving average of decrease of 37 school. In 1883-84, the number of schools decreased to

37. From 145 in the year 1981-82, the decrease being 54 schools. Again the following year (1884-85) the number of schools swelled from 37 to 122 that accounts for an average growth at 85 schools. Thus there is reason to believe that some of the reports of Education Department showed abnormal rise or fall in the number of indigenous schools. The slight fall or rise in the number of schools would have been natural. But abnormal rise or fall in their number leads to hold a view that the statistical data presented in the reports do not show true position of educational level in the district of the time. However, in absence of some other reliable sources on this aspect, it is altogether difficult to assess the exact extent of the abnormal rise or decline in the number of schools. From the hitherto discussion it is clear that the statistical data used by the Education Department was inaccurate, inadequate, full of ambiguity. The omission of information was also one of flagrancy of the statistical data. The discrepancies in the statistical data attributed to a number of factors such as itinerant and ephemeral character of indigenous schools, non-cooperation of masters of the indigenous schools to submit the annual returns in time, vigilance and/or indolence of the personnels of the Education Department in collecting the data in time. It is interesting to note the references on this aspect in the contemporary records of the D.P.I.

"Figures given for missionary schools may be taken as accurate. For others, I cannot answer."<sup>32</sup> "The Satara Collector has shown 146 schools in 1874-75 of this class as shown by the Deputy Inspector but he doubts the accuracy of this nature as in 1870 there were 219 such schools."<sup>33</sup> The returns for these schools (Indigenous schools) are not entirely reliable as the schools are often ephemeral."<sup>34</sup> "Information as to these schools is not very reliable. Many of these are of an ephemeral character and accurate information is not available."<sup>35</sup> As these institutions cannot be compelled to submit the information, the statistics are for the most part based on hearsay reports and cannot be considered reliable.<sup>36</sup> "As unrecognised schools are under no obligation to submit statistics to the Department, figures which are available for such schools cannot be held relied upon."<sup>37</sup> "Figures are only approximate they are based partly on the information supplied by the schools and partly on hearsay."<sup>38</sup> "Statistics are unrealistic, private and unrecognised institutions cannot be compelled to give information."<sup>39</sup> "Although the ephemeral character of these schools and the reluctance of the managers to submit the annual returns vitiate the statistics of such schools to some extent."<sup>40</sup> "As these institutions are under no obligation to submit annual returns, the statistics collected for the purposes of this chapter, cannot be considered as exact."<sup>41</sup> The transitory nature of these institutions added to the non-dependence of

the managers, makes it difficult to collect complete or accurate particulars regarding numbers etc." "The striking increase, is due to the persistent effort made by the inspecting officers <sup>towards</sup> ~~between~~ the collection of the statistics of several schools which had not hitherto submitted returns."<sup>42</sup>

While reviewing the above contemporary opinions, a question poses into mind - are the statistical data presented by Education Department useless at all to depict the real state of education of the district of the times ? It cannot be inferred to such an extent. The objective of the whole discussion is that the generalization must have sound, accurate and up-to-date statistical data, free from errors, ambiguity and abnormality. The data must have validity so as to draw from them a meaningful conclusion.

Having discussed, at length the causes of <sup>Perpetuation</sup> ~~preparation~~ and fall of indigenous system, it is now proposed to deal with its new aspect : The place of Indigenous system in pedagogy. The critics of indigenous system have over-stressed its defects and as such they are one sided. Though this system in a certain way was handicapped, it was not altogether fruitless. Years of practice and years of patience have proved that instruction given under this system suited to the times. When life of an average man was simple and influenced by contact of nature, he hardly needed a specialised type of instruction. In the main, the function of education changes with the nature of demand of people of the time. It is only in the later 19th

century, the Industrial Revolution took place in India and gave impetus to specialised education. The growth of commerce and industry called for more trained personnels to run and administer industry and business. This new type of demand gave break-through to specialised education. This process is being continued year after year and it is still incomplete in itself in keeping with the future development in industry and commerce. Thus there is no point to compare and contrast the educational system that existed a century ago and that in existence of late days, where social and economic situation is not common.

It is universally true that no evolution in any field takes place <sup>in</sup> isolation in the sense it has root in the distant past. The present educational system is culminated into modern form by undergoing a series of changes in its original structure that existed long back. Essentially, one has to take into consideration the whole process of evolution while studying the aspects of education of the different times. This leads to one proposition that modern system of education is nothing but devetailed form of the indigenous system which is a part or one of the stages of evolution. Once this relationship is discovered, there ends the controversy over superiority. Mere criticising the indigenous system from the 20th century eyes is nothing but a falacy of observation, which is not static but dynamic one, progressing incessantly towards further modification in keeping with demand of the time.



Lastly, is it true that the indigenous system ~~has~~ completely died out before the rise of modern system of education? Should it be viewed against the above background, the answer would be negative in the sense that there may be structural or organizational change evolved from the old indigenous system to meet the demand of the present era. Even to-day, in very interior part of the district at arid places, in hilly tracks, a sole teacher is still in existence and imparting instruction in the rudiments of three R's. Just as the present huge commercial and industrial organizations have emerged from the sole trader and the sole entrepreneur so also the modern system of education is evolved from the old indigenous system of education. The old relics of these forms are still in existence and they are working in their humble way though their area of operation may be meagre. The great merit of the old indigenous system is that its gravitational pull on Indian minds is so great that even to-day amidst the cry down standard of Indigenous education of the so-called modern educational system, the general opinion of people is in favour of the old system of education. In his Educational Finance in India book, Atmaram Mishra has advocated the need of introducing the old indigenous system of education to recuperate modern education. He mentioned, "An attempt to bring the old indigenous system of education of India may prove helpful."<sup>43</sup> Implicitly, though now-a-days, the old indigenous system of education in its structural form has ceased to exist far and away, Indian mind, influenced by modern era, it seems, is still under its age-old gravitational pull.

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