

# History of India: Education – from glory to slavery

- **Takshashila University (Taxila)** founded c. 700BC, is the first university in the world. It is said that over 60 subjects was taught. Range of subjects taught in the university are: (1) Science, (2) Philosophy, (3) Ayurveda, (4) Grammar of various languages, (5) Mathematics, (6) Economics, (7) Astrology, (8) Geography, (9) Astronomy, (10) Surgical science, (11) Agricultural sciences, (12) Archery and Ancient and Modern Sciences.
- Students entered Takshashila at age 16 and studied the *Vedas* and the “eighteen arts and sciences,” which included medicine, surgery, astronomy, agriculture, accounting, archery and elephant lore. One could later specialize in medicine, law or military strategy. Takshashila was destroyed by the Huns in 455 A.D.
- In ancient times many institutions of higher learning were formed of which **Taxila, Ujjain, Nalanda, Benares, Vallabhi, Ajanta, Navadvipa, Madura Sangam (Madurai), Kanchipuram and Vikramasila** were very famous. Taxila was famous for medicine and Ujjain for Astronomy.
- **Chinese pilgrim Hiuen – Tsang (630 CE)** travels to India, recording his insightful and voluminous observation for posterity. When he studied at the **Buddhist University of Nalanda**, he records that it had 3000 students, 150 teachers and thousands of manuscripts.
- The Nalanda University was the center of education for scholars from all over Asia. Many Greek, Persian and Chinese students studied here. The
- Many of the great ancient universities and its vast libraries were destroyed by Muslim plunderer such as in 1203, the University of Vikramasila and the learning center of Jagaddala was destroyed. In 11<sup>th</sup> century the Nalanda university was burnt down by pillaging by Muslim invaders who overran India.



Takshashila



Nalanda

## How badly India fared in Literacy and Education under British rule?

- Several Indians are deeply concerned about why literacy rates in India are still so low. What they don't know is what happen to education and literacy rate during over a hundred years of British rule, who not only shamelessly impoverishing an earlier prosperous nation but also degraded Indian education system to the most disgusting levels.
- **Literacy in British India in 1911 was only 6%, in 1931 it was 8%, and by 1947 it had crawled to 11%!** That fifty years of freedom had allowed the nation to quintuple it's literacy rate was something that almost seemed unfathomable to them.
- Perhaps - the British had concentrated on higher education ....? But in 1935, only 4 in 10,000 were enrolled in universities or higher educational institutes. In a nation of then over 350 million people only 16,000 books (no circulation figures) were published in that year (i.e. 1 per 20,000).
- In October 1931 **Mahatma Gandhi** made a statement at Chatham House, London, that created a furor in the English press, he said, **"Today India is more illiterate than it was fifty or a hundred years ago, and so is Burma, because the British administrators, when they came to India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out. They scratched the soil and left the root exposed and the beautiful tree perished".**
- As **Max Mueller**, the propagator of the Aryan invasion theory, wrote to his wife, **"It took only 200 years for us to Christianise the whole of Africa, but even after 400 years India eludes us, I have come to realize that it is Sanskrit which has enabled India to do so. And to break it I have decided to learn Sanskrit."**

## Ever wonder why Indian education is creating Indians who disregards and are antagonistic towards their own glorious heritage? Well, do you know who Baron Macaulay is?

This British Baron was the Member of Governor-General's Council in India during the British rule in India. He advocated the supremacy of European culture, but thought teaching it would eventually create a group of Indians who thought like Englishmen with legitimate claims to holding political offices, an idea he supports. And he saw to it that the later Indian generations are successfully cut off from their Sanskrit roots. Baron Macaulay's influence was so decisive that this **"colonized mindset"** is today known as **Macaulayism**.

His **"Minute on Indian Education,"** delivered in 1835, reads **"It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect."**

Some quotes from his other speeches elaborate on that.

- **"A single shelf of good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."**

- **"Are we to keep the people of India ignorant in order that we may keep them submissive? Or do we think that we can give them knowledge without awakening ambition? Or do we mean to awaken ambition and to provide it with no legitimate vent? Who will answer any of these questions in the affirmative? Yet one of them must be answered in the affirmative, by every person who maintains that we ought permanently to exclude the natives from high office. I have no fears. The path of duty is plain before us: and it is also the path of wisdom, of national prosperity, of national honor."**

- **"I would at once stop the printing of Arabic and Sanskrit books. I would abolish the Madrassa and the Sanskrit College at Calcutta"**

## How British ruined India in the field of knowledge?

- British did comparable damage was in the field of knowledge. British information system, books, and education system designed for **perpetuation of its rule**, magnified every flaw, real or imaginary, in the Indian system, manifold. At the same time, all the good in India was attributed to foreign invaders or influence. The effect of this British view of India has been so devastating, that the 30 million backward castes killed by starvation by the British exploitation are almost forgotten today, and the onus of wretched condition of Indian poor has been shifted to the upper castes, when in reality it lies somewhere else.. - Dr. V.V. Bedekar, V.Y.Sardesai
- British made **policies that affected Indian education, history, archaeology, law and order, social structure, and religion**. These were calculated, well-conceived, deliberate, well-planned, well-engineered policies with long term objectives. The essence of these was to paint a picture of India as a place without law and order, a barbaric people with no civilization or value system whatsoever (i.e in essence 'the White man's burden'). And the British in their divinely ordained duty had to teach their ways to civilize these barbarians. That formed the hypothetical basis for the subjugation of a subcontinent by the Royal Empire. After all civilized people do not dominate others; they only help them to become civilized. Also to perpetuate this 'process of civilization' British tried to create their 'mirror images' in the local population. Thus the British analysis magnified flaws, real or imaginary, in Indian society out of proportion. - Dr. V.V. Bedekar, V.Y.Sardesai