

Chapter 7 Civilising the “Native”, Educating the Nation

1. Match the following:

William Jones	Promotion of English education
Rabindranath Tagore	Respect for ancient cultures
Thomas Macaulay	Gurus
Mahatma Gandhi	Learning in a natural environment
Pathshalas	Critical of English education

Answer.

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

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 the promotion of literacy was the most important aim of education.
- (d) Rabindranath Tagore felt that children ought to be subjected to strict discipline.

Answer.

- (a) True
- (b) True
- (c) False
- (d) False

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

Answer.

William Jones shared a deep respect for ancient cultures, both 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 period. For only those texts could reveal the real 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.

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

Answer.

James Mill and Thomas Macaulay felt that knowledge of English would allow Indians to read some of the finest literature the world had produced; it would make them aware of the developments in Western science and philosophy. The teaching of English could thus be a way of civilising people, changing their tastes, values and culture. They also felt that the aim of education ought to be to teach what was useful and practical. So 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.

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

Answer.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, education should be like an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. His beliefs were that literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. He thought that literacy is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Therefore he thought that the child's education should begin by teaching him/her a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. "I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically, i.e. the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process," quotes Gandhi.

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

Answer.

Mahatma Gandhi argued that colonial education created a sense of inferiority in the minds of Indians. It made them see Western civilisation as superior and destroyed the pride they had in their own culture. Gandhi thought that there was poison in English education and it was sinful, it enslaved Indians, it cast an evil spell on them. Charmed by the West, appreciating everything that came from the West, Indians educated in these institutions began admiring British rule. Mahatma Gandhi wanted an education that could help Indians recover their sense of dignity and self-respect. During the national movement, he urged students to leave educational institutions in order to show to the British that Indians were no longer willing to be enslaved.