

Colonial Education System and British Political Agenda in India: An Analysis

Dr. Anek Lal Barman¹, Dr. Jiban Boruah²

¹Assistant Professor in Education, Dimoria College (Autonomous), Khetri, Assam

²Associate Professor in Education, C.K.B College, Teok, Assam

¹anek1983aus@gmail.com, ²boruah.jiban@gmail.com

Introduction: Education is the most powerful instrument for the national development. Education is a transformative process that illuminates and empowers individuals, enabling them to attain a more fulfilling and enriched life. Education is a complex and dynamic process that transforms in response to societal shifts. It encompasses various interconnected elements, including the organization of educational institutions, learning objectives, academic content, teaching approaches, assessment methods, and administrative leadership. These components interact and influence one another, shaping the educational journey to equip individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge, and values to succeed in a dynamic world. India's conventional education system, rooted in pathshalas and madrasas, was augmented by the emergence of missionary schools, a novel educational institution introduced by the British. So that, they will able to produce a group of Indian who would be "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste" who would serve as negotiator between the Government and common people (Macaulay, 1835). Colonization means exploitation in socio-economic and political aspects upon the Indians by the British for their own selfish interest without considering the interest of the people of India (W. Bell, 1991). So, colonialism is nothing but the forceful domination through extension of territories and exploitation in all aspects of life upon the people of India. The colonial education system in India can be drawn back to the late 18th century, when the British East India Company established its rule, marking beginning a significant period of colonial influence that shaped the country's trajectory. However, it was during initial phase of 19th century that the British Raj began formulating systematic policies for education in India. One of the key milestones in this regard was the issuance of Wood's Despatch in 1854, which provided comprehensive the British colonial education framework. Thus, publication of Wood's Despatch in 1854 marked a significant turning point in the colonial education system in India. It laid the foundation for subsequent educational policies and shaped the trajectory of education in the country until independence in 1947.

The colonial education system in India refers to the educational policies and practices implemented by the British during their rule over the Indian subcontinent from the 18th century until India gained independence in 1947. The primary objective of the colonial education system was aimed to create a cadre of Indians who would support the British Empire's interests by filling subordinate roles, such as clerks, middlemen, and administrators, thereby perpetuating colonial rule and control.

The study is designed with the following objectives.

- 1) To examine the colonial education system in India.
- 2) To look into the British political agenda during the colonial period in India.

Methodology

The present paper is based on analysis of secondary information. In other words, the investigators used analytical research in writing this paper. The researcher has used facts already available, and analysed them to make a critical evaluation of the information. Analytical research is of different types i.e. historical, review and philosophical and the present work falls under the historical type that tries to explore the implications of such historical phenomena. This research paper is based primarily on secondary data, gathered through a comprehensive review of existing literature, including survey studies, books, academic journals, reports, and online sources.

Analysis and discussion:

The British colonization of India marked a significant turning point in Indian culture, with the colonial education system being shaped by the ideology of "Macaulayism." A primary objective of this education system was to produce a class of clerks to serve the British East India Company, leveraging India's abundant and affordable labor force. In a speech during the early 19th century, Macaulay insisted that no reader of literature "could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia". He further denigrated Sanskrit texts, stating that their historical information was inferior to what could be found in English preparatory school summaries. Macaulay's vision was to create Indians who were "Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, opinions, morals, and intellect." To achieve this, the British introduced English as the primary medium of instruction in schools and colleges, thereby imposing Western values and culture on Indian society. The purpose was to produce a class of Indians who would be proficient in English and could assist the British in their administrative and commercial activities. Here are some key aspects of colonial education.

1. **Elitist and limited access:** The colonial education system primarily catered to the elite sections of Indian society. It aimed to educate a selected few who could serve the British Empire. The British colonial authorities founded prestigious educational institutions, which were exclusive to a small section of Indian society. These institutions imparted Western education, aiming to produce a class of anglicized Indians who could serve as a bridge between the British administration and the local population, thereby perpetuating colonial control.
2. **Focus on western education:** The colonial education focused on teaching subjects like English language and literature, mathematics, science, and history from a Western perspective. The curriculum largely ignored traditional Indian knowledge systems, languages, and cultural studies.
3. **Marginalization of vernacular education:** The British colonial education system disproportionately favored English education, relegating education in Indian languages to a secondary status. This led to a linguistic and socio-economic divide, where the English-educated elite held power and influence,

while the majority, educated in Indian languages, faced significant barriers to social mobility and economic advancement.

4. **Role of missionary and private institutions:** Influence of missionary and private institutions: Missionary schools, established by Christian missionaries, played a substantial role in the colonial education system, providing educational opportunities to marginalized communities across India. Alongside private schools, these institutions facilitated the dissemination of Western education, but also inadvertently promoted Western cultural values and religious conversion, thereby exerting a profound impact on Indian society and culture.
5. **Abandonment of native education system:** The colonial era saw the systematic neglect and marginalization of India's indigenous education systems, including revered institutions like Gurukuls and Madrasas. This deliberate disregard for traditional learning methods and cultural practices led to the erosion of India's unique educational identity and the loss of valuable knowledge, causing long-lasting cultural and intellectual consequences."
6. **Education-induced social stratification:** The colonial education system created a rigid social hierarchy, where the English-educated elite occupied a superior position, while those with traditional or vernacular education were relegated to inferior status. This led to a deepening social divide, perpetuating inequality and limiting social mobility for marginalized communities."
7. **Importance on Rote Learning:** The colonial education system emphasized rote learning, where students memorized information without critical thinking or analysis. The focus was on producing clerks and administrators who could efficiently perform bureaucratic tasks.
8. **Limited focus on Technical Education:** The colonial education system did not prioritize technical or vocational education. The British administration focused more on producing a class of Indian elites who could assist them in governance and administration. This limited the development skills and hindered the growth of industries and economic self-reliance.
9. **Role in Social Reform Movements:** Despite its limitations, the colonial education system also played a role in stimulating social reform movements in India. It provided Indians with exposure to Western ideas, which influenced the thinking of some educated individuals and helped fuel movements for social, political, and cultural change.
10. **Consolidation of British Rule:** The British used education as a tool for consolidating their political control over India. By introducing English education, they sought to establish a cultural and intellectual dominance, reinforcing the idea of British superiority and the civilizing mission. The education system aimed to instill loyalty and create a sense of dependency on the British rulers.
11. **Bureaucratic Support:** The colonial education system focused on creating a class of Indians who could work as clerks, administrators, and bureaucrats in the British administration. By providing education in subjects such as law, history, and administration, the British aimed to train a cadre of Indians who would effectively assist them in governance and help maintain their control.
12. **Cultural Assimilation:** The British administration used education as a means to promote Western values, customs, and norms among the Indian population. The imposition of English education and the neglect of traditional Indian knowledge systems aimed to erode Indian cultural identities and create a generation of Indians with a Western outlook.

13. **Divide and Rule:** The British pursued a policy of divide and rule, and the education system played a role in perpetuating divisions among different communities in India. By promoting English education primarily among the elite and neglecting the educational needs of the masses, the British accentuated social and economic disparities, reinforcing divisions and preventing a united Indian nationalist movement.
14. **Control over Intellectual Discourse:** The British sought to control the intellectual discourse in India through the education system. They controlled the curriculum, textbooks, and institutions, ensuring that the content of education aligned with their political interests and did not promote ideas of nationalism or independence.

It is significant to point out that while the colonial education system had its shortcomings and was designed to serve British interests, it also had some unintended consequences, such as the emergence of a modern educated elite that eventually played a vital role in India's struggle for independence and in shaping the post-independence education system. The colonial education system served the British political agenda, it also unintentionally contributed to the growth of modern education, the emergence of an educated Indian middle class, and the eventual development of nationalist movements that led to India's independence. The seeds of resistance and intellectual awakening were sown within the very system that the British had established.

The political agenda is the set of issues that are the subject of decision making and debate within a given political system at any one time. The concept of conflict expansion is key to the idea of agendas. Issues are typically handled in a routine manner within specialized policy subsystem until they emerge on the agenda. The colonial education system in India was closely intertwined with the British political agenda during their rule. Education played a crucial role in serving the interests of the British Empire and maintaining their control over India. During the colonial period in India, the British had several political agendas that influenced their governance and policies. These agendas were shaped by their economic interests, geopolitical strategy, and the desire to maintain control over India. Here are some key aspects of the British political agenda during the colonial period.

- a. **Economic Exploitation:** One of the primary motives behind British colonization of India was economic exploitation. The British aimed to extract resources from India and establish a favorable trade balance. They implemented policies that facilitated the export of raw materials from India while importing British manufactured goods. This agenda served to enrich the British Empire and support its industrial development.
- b. **Political Control and Imperial Dominance:** The British sought to establish and maintain political control over India to further their imperial ambitions. They aimed to consolidate their rule, expand their territorial control, and assert their dominance over the Indian princely states. The British used a combination of military force, alliances, and diplomatic maneuvers to achieve this objective.
- c. **Divide and Rule:** The policy of "divide and rule" was a deliberate strategy employed by the British to weaken potential resistance and maintain control over India. They exploited existing religious, cultural, and regional divisions within Indian society, pitting different groups against each other. By fanning

tensions and playing communities against one another, the British sought to prevent a unified Indian resistance movement.

- d. **Cultural Assimilation and Westernization:** The British viewed Indian culture and traditions as inferior to their own, and they sought to impose Western values, customs, and norms on the Indian population. This cultural assimilation agenda aimed to create a group of Indians who would adopt English language, education, and lifestyle, further solidifying British dominance and reinforcing the notion of British superiority.
- e. **Expansion of Colonial Infrastructure:** The British implemented policies and invested in infrastructure development primarily to serve their own interests. They built railways, ports, canals, and other infrastructure projects to facilitate the efficient extraction and transportation of resources from India to British markets. These projects were designed to benefit the British Empire rather than prioritize the needs of the Indian population.
- f. **Suppression of Nationalist Movements:** As Indian nationalism and resistance movements emerged, the British sought to suppress and undermine these movements to maintain their control. They implemented repressive measures, such as censorship, restrictions on public gatherings, and the imprisonment of nationalist leaders. The political agenda of the British administration aimed to quell dissent and prevent the rise of a unified Indian nationalist movement.

The British political agenda was not monolithic, and various individuals and factions within the British administration had differing views and approaches. However, the overarching objectives of economic exploitation, political control, and cultural dominance were central to British colonial rule in India. The colonial period had significant negative impacts on India, it also inadvertently contributed to the growth of modern ideas, a united Indian identity, and the eventual struggle for independence. The colonial experience shaped India's historical trajectory and laid the groundwork for the challenges and opportunities faced by the country in the post-colonial era (Raj, 1987).

Conclusion

It is observed from the study that the colonial education was not in favour of Indian people. They educated the Indian people in such a way that would be fitted for clerks and other low administrative in the British administration only. Such education replaced the Education of the past delivered through semiformal structure such as Gurukul, Tol, Path Sala with institutional education through schools, colleges and universities. While the British patronized education, in one hand, opened the opportunities for oppressed and exploited class based on caste, religion and region, it led to break the value system traditionally transmitted through traditional education. Such Education could fulfill the dream of Macaulay known as the pioneer of western based education in India to create a class of people who are Indian in blood and color but English in Taste. It led to accelerate trend of Westernization among Indian people. The British sought to establish and maintain political control over India to further their imperial ambitions. They aimed to consolidate their rule, expand their territorial control, and assert their dominance over the Indian princely states and they considered education as a potent instrument to materialize this agenda. The colonial education system served the British political agenda, it also unintentionally contributed to the growth of modern education, the emergence of an educated Indian middle class, and the eventual development of nationalist movements that led to India's independence.



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