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**Colonial Policies and Centres of Indigenous Learning
in Early Modern India**

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Colonial Policies and Centres of Indigenous Learning

in Early Modern India¹

Amit K. Suman

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the different dimensions of the widening gaps between the theories and practices of the colonial government on issues relating to education. While analysing the educational incursions made by the colonial government in Bengal Presidency during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the paper will look into the question of whether colonial Bengal and North-Western provinces were preferred over other areas in social and educational reforms. If so, what were the reasons for it and the consequences thereof? It would explore the significance of those areas for the colonial government and whether that could be linked possibly to the neglect of the area, if at all.

An in-depth analysis of a historical process requires awareness of the various prisms through which attempts are made to understand our historical past through the use of various sources. This is important. Because of the socio-political nature of the impact made by colonial government in the educational spheres and various experimentations with the prevalent structure or individual aspects, it has occupied the minds of historians since the time of the colonial period itself. It then becomes pertinent to examine the existing historiographical literature and various archives on this significant aspect of colonial rule in India.

Introduction

Education, or acquisition of worthwhile knowledge, is one of the most precious and contested terrains of social life. It lies at the heart of the cultural, material, and social reproductive processes of a society. To educate children in the recognized values and knowledge of a society thus becomes a vital and central concern all around. For the colonial government, education was used to construct a society most beneficial for the workings of the empire in the garb of bringing about 'modernity' to a 'barbarian civilization'. This was the civilizational agenda of the colonial empire or what is popularly called the 'white man's burden'. The significance of education systems, for the colonial government, was not necessarily immediate mass contact; instead, it was its usage as entry points into collective consciousness that mattered for making inroads into power.

¹ Lecture delivered at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 17 February 2017.

The story of modern education is indeed the story of domination and resistance with the new vision of social reproduction seeking to replace established ones. According to Nita Kumar, the history of education of modern India can be read either as a declaration or as practice, which means the experience of education. In both cases, the emergent narratives are dissimilar. The first narrative is based on the focus made by most educators and ideologues in modern India having carried out their educational ventures on the premise that children are either passive receipts of certain knowledge or an unknown and insignificant quantity. For Kumar, scholars, by concentrating on the intentions and declarations of educationists seem to err by assuming the same. On the other hand, the body of work focussing on only the experience of the students of a particular institution placing greater emphasis on their agency may run the risk of being too abstract. Both narratives when brought into the public discourse individually are incomplete and do not fulfil the purpose of a complete study of indigenous education in early modern India.²

The focus of this paper is on the educational history of Bengal Presidency and the North-Western Provinces, specifically of the occupational groups of *pundits*, *maulvis*, and associated leaders of the indigenous society, the challenges to their educational systems, and their responses to such challenges and threats, all interwoven in the period of late 18th and 19th centuries. Before delving into that, however, it is important to delineate and understand the kinds of educational institutions which existed in the immediate pre-British period. Until the 19th century, questions regarding what constituted knowledge, what were the best techniques of its transmission, and what was essential for a society to do with its children were not regarded as the monopoly of any one agency. In most of Europe, it was the state that took over the role of a monopolistic agency that controlled the definition and dissemination of knowledge, rendering local truths and ways of life progressively marginal. The colonial state in India did the same as the new modern state, wherein, from being an agency of the home, the indigenous institutions/educators under colonialism became an agency of the state. According to Christopher Bayly, when the British arrived in India, education was best described as a plurality, but one of the outcomes of the conflict with an alien ideology and religion was a loosening of traditional controls, which itself led to a plurality of heterodoxies.³

According to William Adam, the British administrator responsible for bringing out three reports based on a survey of indigenous educational institutions in Bengal Presidency (1835, 1836, and 1838), by the time the British arrived, schools represented a plurality with each separate institutions organizing its own 'separate classes of institutions without any link or relation of any kind between them, each catering to a distinct class or community'.⁴ We read with pleasure the instances William Adam cites in which gratuitous instruction in the vernacular languages was afforded by resident natives from motives of benevolence or piety, and shall agree with in

² Nita Kumar, *Lessons from School: The History of Education in Banaras*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2000, p. 22.

³ Christopher A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.

⁴ British Library (here after BL, London), Bengal, Public, E/4/769, 23 February 1842, and William Adam, *One Teacher, One School*, edited by Joseph Dibona, Biblia Impex, New Delhi, 1983.

thinking that the indigenous institutions proved both the merit attached to the communication of knowledge, and the readiness to receive instructions on the part of many who could offer no compensation for it.⁵ According to William Adam:

There were around 100,000 indigenous schools in Bengal and Behar, and assuming the population to those two provinces to be 40,000,000 there would be a village school for every 400 person. It appears that the system of village school is extensively prevalent; that the desire to give education to their male children must be deeply seated in the minds of parents even of the humblest class; and that these are the institutions, closely interwoven as they are with the habits of the people and the customs of the country, through which primary, although not exclusively, we may hope to improve the morals and intellect of the native population.⁶

Respect for learning has always been the redeeming feature of the Indian Civilization. There was not a mosque, a temple, a *dharamshala*, a *khanqah*, and a *gurudwara* that had not a school attached to it, where children following respective religions were imparted with religious and moral education. There were few wealthy men who did not patronize a maulvi, a pandit, or a guru to teach their children along with other friends and dependents. There were also thousands of secular schools frequented by Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs in which Persian and other subjects were taught. There were hundreds of learned men who gratuitously taught their co-religionists, and sometimes everyone who joined them, for the sake of God '*Lillah*'. There was not a single villager who did not take pride in devoting a portion of their produce to a respected teacher especially in the Bengal Presidency and the North Western Provinces. The outcome of surveys on indigenous schools of these two provinces encouraged the Colonial Government to adopt a similar set of knowledge system in other parts of the country. The extracts from the original document are as follows:

We have given our cordial sanction in the Dispatch which we have addressed to you upon the subject of Education in India, 'to the extension to the whole of the North Western Provinces' of the system of encouraging indigenous schools and we have desired measures of a similar tendency to be taken in other parts of India. We have only to remark therefore, that the experiments should be made everywhere on a comparatively of limited scale in the first instance, to be gradually developed if they are bound to succeed.⁷

It is important to define here the meaning of 'indigenous'. The term is used to define all such educational institutions that catered to indigenous masses, taught the

⁵ BL, London, Bengal, Public, E/4/769, 23 February 1842.

⁶ BL, London, IOR/V/27/860/23, *Report on the State of Education in Bengal*, Bengal Military Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1835, pp. 5-7.

⁷ BL, London, Bengal, Public, IOR/E/4/827, no. 64, 20 September 1854, pp. 635-636.

indigenous (pre-British) syllabus, had mostly Indian/native teachers, and were patronized by the local elites initially; however, soon the colonial masters began to fund these and assume their patronage, subsequently changing their structures.

The indigenous system of education in India had evolved over the centuries. It was well established in Bengal prior to the introduction of the Western system of education and administration of the colonial period. P.L. Rawat claims that it was due to the challenge of Buddhist monastic education that Hindu Brahmins began to establish educational institutions, that places of worship also began to function as schools, and that Hindu kings started endowing such institutions to encourage the spread of education.⁸ Broadly, there were five types of educational institutions: Sanskrit *tols* and Arabic *madrasas* for higher education; the *pathshalas* and *maktabs* (the pathshalas being the secular institutions for vernacular education for the masses) for elementary education; and additionally, the Farsi (Persian) schools for imparting training in Farsi language and literature (Farsi was the court language during the Mughal rule in Bengal, and was mastered by both Hindu and Muslim elites). For British colonial officials, all these were sacred classes of institutions without any link or relation of any kind between them, each catering to a distinct class and community.⁹

In the *tols*, exclusive use of Sanskrit higher learning was in many ways instrumental in consolidating the hegemony of the Brahmins over Hindu society. In Bengal, *smriti* and *nyaya* were the two favourite subjects for specialization. The importance of orality in the Brahmanical system of education is significant. In fact, according to Medhatithi, the first Bengali interpreter of *Manusmriti*, the etymological meaning of the word *adhyayana* or 'study' is to utter or recite a word and hence hear it too. It is no wonder that institutions of Sanskrit learning in Bengal were called *tols* rather than *chattuspathy*, which literally mean institutions for studying the four Vedas.

The Brahmanical system of education had its social goals apart from the spiritual upliftment of the learners. In a way, the system was instrumental in preserving the traditional social structure as it legitimized caste hierarchy in the society. The monopoly of the Brahmins in this system gave them the leverage to gain ideological control. Their monopoly over knowledge helped them become the natural leaders in rural society.¹⁰ Poromesh Acharya remarks that as custodians of dharma, the Brahmins were the interpreters of religious and social customs and law. The lower castes were not allowed to participate in the system of higher learning, as that would have posed a challenge to the Brahmins in their monopoly over knowledge. Most importantly, the system of Sanskrit higher learning received patronage from the native elites. This was

⁸ P.L. Rawat, *History of Indian Education*, Ram Prasad and Sons, Agra, 1965.

⁹ BL, London, Bengal, Public, IOR/F/4/1908/81750, January-September 1835, and Bengal, Public, IOR/E/4/769, 23 Feb 1842, pp. 539-56.

William Adam, *Third Report on the state of Education in Bengal including some accounts of the state of education in Bihar and a consideration of the means adopted to the improvement and extension of Public Instruction in both Provinces* (Calcutta, 1838), p. 59.

¹⁰ Poromesh Acharya, 'Indigenous Education and Brahminical Hegemony in Bengal', in Nigel Crook (ed.), *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia: Essays on Education, Religion, History, and Politics*, Introduction, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996, p. 105

important to keep intact the social hierarchy and expropriation of surplus by the higher class.¹¹

The pathshalas in Bengal imparted training in the basic skills ordinary people would require in their lives. Organized and managed by teachers, they were financially supported by the clientele who usually belonged to the lower orders of the prevailing hierarchical society. The Brahmin teachers and students, as a caste group, were not at all concerned with the pathshala system of education. On the other hand, non-Brahmins had a stake in the system as they did not have any other formal avenues of education. The mass base of the pathshala was strong, yet it was not beyond the pervading Brahmanical influence over the society. The pathshala system of education in a way achieved its social goals by training its learners to perform their respective caste duties according to the injunctions laid down in the smriti. As such, it did not develop any alternative ideology of education. While Sanskrit manuscripts were the mainstay in the tols, Bengali manuscripts predominated in the pathshalas. Thus, the vernacular character of the learners was invariably the medium of instruction and the only language to be taught.¹²

Thus, before the introduction of the Western pattern of education, an indigenous system of education was effectively working in Bengal and North-Western Provinces. There were different formal and informal avenues of education without any link between them. It was a decentralized system in the true sense of the term. There was neither any direct state control nor any centralized administrative structure to monitor the system. The system served the practical needs of daily life. Brahmins acquired their professional skills as teachers and religious preachers through the system of Sanskrit learning while the pathshala provided the lower castes with training in the basic skills of reading, writing, arithmetic and also professional training in different types of account keeping and in maintaining land records.

To gain power, the colonial masters sought knowledge. In 1779, as Michael Fisher notes, an East India Company official argued for ‘the utility of collecting every possible information with respect to the disposition, genius, talents, character, connections, views, interests, revenues, military strength, and even domestic history of those princes and people with whose affairs our own happen to be interwoven’.¹³ Christopher Bayly catalogues the members of the wide social stratum engaged in transmitting knowledge (as ‘intelligence’) to the British. He further argues that the process was similar to the way they used to inform the Mughal emperors. Subsequently, these informers found themselves relatively bypassed as the British began to develop their own more ‘formalized’ system using their own personnel.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 106.

¹³ Michael H. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residence and Residency System, 1764 – 1858*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991.

¹⁴ Christopher A. Bayly, ‘Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 27:1, 1993.

Eventually, the state began to centralize education for the purposes of administrative efficiency. But it was done as a gradual process depending on the ideological motivations behind public policy. An example of this is the policy regarding the pathshalas in the latter part of the 19th century. In the first half of the century, the Bengal government was concerned more with promoting higher education than elementary education and so did not get involved in the working of the pathshalas. It was with the promulgation of the Education Dispatch of 1854 that the situation changed. The Dispatch urged that increased attention be given to vernacular schools for elementary education, including the indigenous schools already existing throughout the country. Consequently, the government decided to use the pathshalas for developing a general system of education. This was done not only because these were numerous but also because they were cheap and popular. Most of the measures undertaken henceforth were focussed on providing the guru with training and directing him as to how he could run a pathshala in a more proper and efficient manner.¹⁵

The first governmental attempt aimed at establishing authority over the pathshalas was through the introduction of 'circle' schools. Started in 1855 under Henry Woodrow, Inspector of Schools for East Bengal, this system had the provision that three or four pathshalas would be selected to constitute a 'circle' where a government *pundit* would be appointed on a fixed salary of Rs 15 per month. The pundit's job, primarily, was to visit these two days a week in rotation, and induce the teachers, gurus to adopt an improved course of instruction. A monthly reward ranging from Rs 1 to 2 was also provided to the gurus in order to secure their cooperation in this scheme.¹⁶ A step further was taken when the Lieutenant-Governor J.P. Grant, proposed a new scheme of primary education on 19 October 1860, according to which the education department was required to first identify existing village pathshalas of every district from which some would be selected by the Inspector of Schools for eventual improvement. The gurus of these selected pathshalas would be induced to submit to periodic inspection as a result of the payment of rewards in cash. Grant's scheme thus aimed at improving the education in the pathshalas through improving the output of the gurus even though there was no provision for their formal training.

The present paper is premised on how historical actors, drawing from the diversity of resources available on them, strove for constructing an authoritative sight of knowledge production. In this way, groups of pundits and maulvis, for example, can be seen as engaging with the presentation of Western knowledge as a part of the process of producing specific version of 'Indian knowledge', while constantly redefining their own roles in cultural production, social interaction, education, religious practice, and governance. The institutional apparatus within which such actors were located—for instance, the Sanskrit college at Banaras and Calcutta as well as Calcutta Madrasa and Hooghly Madrasa—are presented as not only always instrumental in the processes of such self-fashioning, but also as being always remade in these interactions. Thus, groups of individuals and the institutions are not stagnant

¹⁵ Kazi Shahidullah, 'The Purpose and Impact of Government Policy on Pathshala *Gurumohashoys* in Nineteenth-century Bengal', in Nigel Crook (ed.), *Ibid.*, pp. 122-33.

¹⁶ National Archives of India (hereinafter NAI, New Delhi), Home, Education, Government of Bengal, *Report of Public Instruction in Bengal, 1863-64*, Calcutta, Appendix A, p. 113.

in historical processes but are understood as constantly playing a role in their own becoming.

The process of institutionalization of indigenous education and colonial policies regarding the same has tried to trace the state of indigenous education at the advent of the British rule and the subsequent policies. It would begin by looking at learning in the later Mughal rule by discussing the roles played by indigenous institutions such as tols, pathshalas, maktabas, and the madrasas. It would also trace the subtle links that existed in the pre-British administrative machinery and that of the early colonial period, particularly, the role played by the Hindu elites such as those belonging to caste groups as the *khatris* and the *kayasthas* whose clerical skills acquired during the later Mughal period ensured their hold over such jobs in the early colonial era as well and those of the Brahmins and traditional gurus who continued to remain the backbone of colonial educational policy at the village level.

The indigenous system of elementary schools was crucial to the social economy at the village level because of their adaptability to local environment and the vitality and popularity they earned by centuries of existence. However, in the beginning of the 19th century, this system was fast declining because of its neglect by the colonial government. Yet, there were certain ideologues, particularly those belonging to the Clapham sect¹⁷, who argued in favour of governmental intervention in education. Even though this was done in a strong evangelical zeal, the idea was to bring the 'Bible to the people', that is, to teach the Bible in the language of the natives. Their efforts ultimately led to the founding of a few British-sponsored Persian and Sanskrit colleges that would be suitable for British administrative purposes. The system of indigenous education still remained neglected by the colonial government.

This paper focuses on how the indigenous schools gained the attention of the colonial government gradually. Up till 1813, the East India Company followed a policy of religious neutrality and an emphasis on oriental learning as stated earlier. This was the year when the Charter Act (1813) announced the release of large amounts of money annually for educational activities. This was also the year when, the Christian Missionaries were allowed to propagate their religious activities, based on the assumption that the Indians were primarily an ignorant lot needing introduction to a proper religion. The period between 1813 and 1833 raged with controversies between the 'Anglicans' and the 'Orientalist' groups, each vying to have the government spend public money on English education or oriental learning, respectively.

The first serious step taken towards improvement of education in the presidency of Bengal was the conduct of surveys and subsequent reports prepared by William Adam, as mentioned above. The colonial government defined traditional institutions of

¹⁷ The Clapham Sect belonged to the Group of Evangelical/Anglicans Missionaries of late 18 and early 19 centuries based in Clapham, London, who had dominant presence not only in England but also in India. This sect campaigned for abolition of slavery at home and promotion of Missionary activities and thrust for English language and literature base education in India. The prominent members of this group were William Wilberforce and Thomas B. Macaulay and Henry Thornton.

learning, such as *tols* and *maktabs*, as not being very sound because of their inefficiency in the English medium. A teacher in a traditional educational institution would not have any prospect of teaching in a university because of his inability to converse in English, leading to an isolation of such institutions.

The paper outlines how it was not until 1835 that the colonial government began to make some interventions in vernacular/indigenous education. T.B. Macaulay, in his famous minute in the same year, had asserted that the aim of the government as far as educational policy was concerned was to create a class of people who would act as interpreters between them and the people they governed. Thus, education for the masses still remained a far-fetched idea. For now, the 'educated' Indians would in turn 'educate' the masses in application of the 'Downward Filtration Policy'. It was also aimed at raising the 'moral character' of the Indians to suit the colonial administrative machinery, that is, to bring about greater efficiency in all branches of administration, by enabling the government to obtain the services of intelligent and trustworthy persons in every department of a Government.

It was in 1854 that the colonial government's role in framing an educational policy for India was asserted through Wood's Dispatch.¹⁸ The Dispatch suggested the creation of an education department, the establishment of universities, and the creation of a network of graded schools all over India, the introduction of grants-in-aid, arrangements for teachers training, the maintenance of proper relationship between education and employment, and the expansion of female education. This Dispatch promised a lot on paper but it will be seen subsequently whether policies framed under it were implemented properly. The main burden of vernacular education in Bengal thus fell on the proprietors of land rather than on the imperial revenues, thus making the entire objective of the responsibility of the colonial government towards their subjects redundant.¹⁹

Yet, this policy of keeping intact indigenous knowledge could not be continued for a long time. Soon, many colonial administrators began to challenge such a view and argued instead for an Anglicist knowledge formation. The indigenous institutions were medieval, they argued, and that they were redundant in playing a valuable role in educating the society in modern times. Instead, the knowledge of English and Western Sciences was seen as the most important aspect of acquiring Western knowledge. English had become the language of administration in the 1830s and therefore it had become important to teach that language to the natives in order to create a pool of cheap labour in the lower clerical order. This was done in the garb of improving the moral grounds of the natives.

In his well-known statement, Charles Grant had painted a highly critical picture of the depressing state of vernacular education and public morals in Bengal, and the suggestion he had made was to introduce English education through a network of schools to transmit knowledge of western science and literature to the

¹⁸ NAI, New Delhi, Home, Public, Dispatch, No. 49, Dated the 19th July, 1854, pp. 1-16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

natives.²⁰ Grant was clearly not in favour of imparting such knowledge through the vernaculars and was strongly inclined towards imparting such knowledge by the medium of English. This strand of thought went a long way in shaping the educational policies of the British from the early decades of the nineteenth century onwards. It underlined forever the backwardness of the oriental, in this case, Indian intellectual traditions and was a move towards justification of the Empire. By juxtaposing western knowledge with modernity, it assumed the character of a superior culture. All that the western knowledge espoused including its liberal ideas were conceived as modern and consequently its implant in the native society was seen as a benevolent act by the masters. This went a long way in shaping British policies regarding education.

Immense changes were brought about in the structure of indigenous educational institutions after colonial intervention. Most importantly, it created new kinds of divisions in the educational setup. For instance, along with the already-existing madrasas and pathshalas teaching the vernaculars and hitherto untouched by the government, the latter created new institutions for vernacular education, such as the Calcutta Madrasa and the Banaras Sanskrit College. By introducing an English department in the institutions imparting indigenous education, the colonial government created frontlines within the educational system with deep political and social repercussions.

H.T. Prinsep, an English civil servant, asserted that a study of Arabic and Persian was only fit for producing qazis and maulvis. According to Prinsep, modern and scientific study was possible only through the spread of English education and modern western sciences. As a result, an English department was constituted in the Calcutta Madrasa in 1853 even though it invited lesser students than the Arabic department. The reason given to this bleak response of the number of students in the English department was that unlike the Hindu population, the local Muslim population considered a study of Arabic literature far superior than a study of English. Subsequently an Anglo-Persian department was opened at the Calcutta Madrasa. This, in some ways explains the lagging behind of the Muslim population in gaining better employment opportunities under the colonial government from nineteenth century onwards.

The Calcutta Madrasa, thus begun in 1780 by following the *Dars-i-Nizami*. A decade later, major reforms in madrasa education was considered necessary, introducing among other things, a change in the curriculum. In the 1850s, the madrasa was divided into two separate departments, the Arabic (or Senior Department) and the Anglo-Persian (or Junior Department), the latter modelled on other 'Anglo-vernacular' government schools. However, the efforts to reform the indigenous institutions were characterized with much ambiguity due to uncertainties about the utility of Oriental learning and doubts that drastic measures of reform might provoke a hostile reaction on the part of Muslims. As mentioned in chapter three, there was already resistance to radical reform from the local Muslim population.

²⁰ H.R. James, *Education and Statesmanship in India (1797-1910)*, Longman, London, 1917, p. 1.

Thus, divisions between the vernacular and Anglo-vernacular institutions were created. The institutions that were created or funded by the government introduced English as an important subject of study while the ones that were left untouched continued imparting knowledge in the vernaculars, creating a class division between the students attending them. Gradually, a sharp divide between indigenous and Western knowledge and its social consequences began to emerge in terms of employability, social status, and political influence.

The government also brought in changes in the organizational structure of the indigenous institutions that it influenced. The schools were divided into the primary, middle, and high school levels. For further studies, it introduced the system of college and universities. Within the school itself, academic levels such as first standard, second standard and so on, were created. For a population conditioned by the pathshala-tol-madrassa-maktab system, this strong hierarchical structure was entirely new and also resulted in some kind of resistance from the local population, as seen in the case of Muslims in Calcutta. The promotion to the next class reflecting the academic success or progress of the student was based on merit acquired through an examination system. The relationship between the teacher (formerly, *guru*) and the student (formerly *shishya*) was thus formalized.

The new educational system also perpetuated other divisions within the society. Segregation in organization of schools was practiced on the basis of gender and religion. Padma Anagol through her path-breaking work on gender studies has urged the historians to focus on women's agency, on women requiring civil, political, and religious rights. This means recognizing what women were saying, writing, and doing in relation to dominant discourses in society.²¹ We do not find the same in the indigenous institutions set up by the British. The premier indigenous institutions such as the Calcutta Madrasa, Banaras Sanskrit College, Sanskrit College of Calcutta as well as Hooghly Madrasa were all for boys. This explains the colonial government's notions regarding the Indian society and their subsequent hesitation in intervening with the Indian customs and traditions. It is also demonstrative of how the colonial administrators, the 'men of enlightenment', were not entirely 'modern' despite their claims, though the colonial institutions did eventually provide agency to women in the 19th century.

Similarly, the idea of the Indian society being fragmented along religious lines was deeply entrenched in the administrative psyche of the government. In the pre-British era, both Hindus and Muslims went to study in the maktabas and madrasas. During Sikandar Lodi's reign, the Hindus for the first time applied themselves to the study of Persian. Moreover, according to Narendra Nath Law, Hindus and Muslims were studying in the same schools during the time of Akbar.²² Several works of Sanskrit were also rendered into Persian such as the Mahabharata (*Razmnama*) and

²¹ Padma Anagol, *The Emergence of Feminism in India, 1850-1920*, Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate, 2005.

²² G.M.D. Sufi, *Al-Minhaj, Being the Evolution of Curriculum in the Muslim Educational Institutions of India*, Idrah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, Delhi, 1941, p. 53.

Ramayana.²³ Thus, Hindus also studied in madrasas in order to gain better access to employment in the pre-British era (Raja Ram Mohan Roy studied at Patna madrasa to gain knowledge in Islamic studies). However, with the faulty orientalist notion of ‘one language for one community’—meaning thereby that Sanskrit was a language of the Hindus, and Arabic that of the Muslims—the colonial government opened separate institutions for each community, for instance, the Calcutta madrasa was for the Muslims and Banaras Sanskrit College for Hindus. Yet, for Hooghly College, the government of Bengal in 1872, was so keen to have Muslims in the educational staff that it ‘declared its readiness to accept a somewhat lower standard of excellence in Mahomedan masters than it has recently obtained in Hindu masters’.²⁴

These moves contributed to the polarization of the Indian society on religious lines. Categories such as ‘Hindus’ and ‘Muslims’ began to be part of a larger discourse, even as education was primarily meant for the upper strata of the population. The Banaras Sanskrit College, for instance, admitted the upper castes such as pundits and kayasthas, and European men as students, leading to a greater degree of stratification of the Indian society and a perpetuation of the privileges of the upper castes. In this context, Nigel Crook has very well postulated the idea of a ‘hidden curriculum’.²⁵ According to him, in the minds of some educators at least, the hidden curriculum was that which argued that exclusion was a form of social control, not only because access to data was thereby limited, but because a hidden curriculum of caste differentiation was reinforced.²⁶

The colonial policies regarding the institutions of indigenous learning were characterized with great ambivalence. But first, in the process of accumulating greater knowledge about the native society, the colonial government began to institutionalize such centres of knowledge. While in the pre-British period, the centres of learning were defined by their plurality and decentralized organisation, under the British, we find a process of centralization and institutionalization in the name of ‘quality education’. It was a gradual process though. In the initial period, because of the lack of knowledge about educational practices in India, the government followed the pre-existing norms in terms of management, patronage, and the syllabi of these institutions. However, we see a process of centralization beginning with the late eighteenth century, mostly under the pretext of ‘mismanagement of funds’. For instance, in the first few years of its founding, the principal of Banaras Sanskrit College, Kashinath Sharma, along with other pundits employed with the college, were dismissed for ‘corruption’ having apparently appropriated the stipends paid by the Company to attract students—into their own personal salaries.

²³ N. N. Law, *The Promotion of Learning in India during Muhammadan Rule (By Muhammadans)*, Longman, London, 1916, p. 148.

²⁴ M. Azizul Huque, *History and Problems of Moslem Education in Bengal*, Spink and Company, Thacker, Calcutta 1917, pp. 44-45.

²⁵ Nigel Crook (ed.), *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

While there was no ambiguity regarding the goal of centralizing or institutionalizing these centres of indigenous learning, the colonial policies regarding how that goal is to be attained were ambivalent for several reasons: one, the policy of the colonial government was dominated by the ideological inclinations of the administrators in charge. In chapters first and second, the well-known debates between the 'Orientalists' and the 'Anglicans' are discussed. Questions such as: which institutions, vernacular or Anglo-vernacular, should public money be spent etc. raged in the early decades of the nineteenth century. This led to the processes of neglect and adaptation of various phases of policy formation during the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. The indigenous institutions, for instance, were first neglected by the colonial government that led to a continuation of the organizational systems as established during the time of their founding. However, as the Anglicans began to criticise these institutions by pointing to their 'degradation' and 'moral disrepute', the attention of the government was drawn to these issues, subsequently leading to reforms, particularly, the introduction of English to these institutions. This led to a phase of adaptation of the ideas of the 'Anglicans' in the first half of the nineteenth century, one of the current important ideologues as far as colonial policy regarding India was concerned.

A study of institutions is informed by not only what it was but also by what it was not. One of the important critiques of colonial policy was that there was no proper training system for the teachers. There were attempts made for improving the pathshalas at the village level by Lieutenant-Governor J.P. Grant, in 1860, wherein from every district of Bengal, some pathshalas would be selected by the Inspector of Schools for eventual improvement wherein scholar's performance in an examination of pathshalas subjects would determine the cash reward for the guru.²⁷ Grant's scheme aimed at improving the education in the pathshalas through improving the gurus. But one serious flaw was that it made no provision for the education or training of the gurus. Later, Inspector Woodrow, entrusted with the task of implementing Grant's scheme brought in two new elements of teachers training in the Normal School and payment by results instead of fixed stipends, but we do not find any attempt to train teachers at a higher level. This closed the windows of opportunity for those having studied in vernacular institutions to be able to teach in an Anglo-vernacular or governmental educational organizations.

Moreover, even though the government promised 'modern' or 'scientific' knowledge, it failed to provide technological instructions. Undue preference for literary instruction was one of the defective points of the Macaulian set-up of English education in India.²⁸ The fate of indigenous scientific works, especially those originating from the medieval era and thus termed as 'obsolete' by the colonial government, was sealed with Macaulay's obsession with European literature and science. Earlier, the exchange of ideas between the Hindu and Muslim had brought to the fore many exponents of science. In the pre-British era, the Muslim rulers had successfully introduced the Islamic sciences of medicine, astronomy, geography, and

²⁷ Kazi Shahidullah, *Ibid.*, in Nigel Crook (ed.), *Ibid.*, pp. 122-33.

²⁸ Satpal Sangwan, 'Science Education in India under Colonial Constraints, 1792-1857', *Oxford Review of Education*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1990, pp. 81-95.

navigation in India and many of them did not consider Indian literature and science useless and absurd, hence, there did exist exchange of scientific ideas between them. But, the British adopted a negative approach in their educational plans towards indigenous scientific works once their rule was secure, and totally rejected oriental literature and indigenous works of science.

Conclusion

Thus, the present paper offers a preliminary analysis of how colonial authority was established over cultural spaces in India first by establishing indigenous centres of higher learning and then by centralizing them by bringing the management under colonial authority based on the ideological undercurrent of the superiority of European civilization. Hence, there were attempts to replace personalized Indian cultural authority by institutionalizing and co-opting Indian forms of authority leading to immense changes in the social matrix of the Indian society and culture.