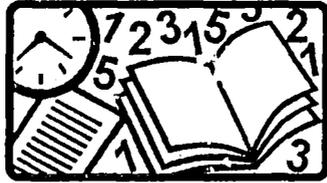


Chapter : 1



Introduction

Chapter : I Introduction

I. Statement of the Research Problem:

The proposed study "Education in colonial Bengal: A study in Selected Districts of Eastern Bengal (1854-1947)" is an attempt to investigate the history of education in colonial Bengal at local level during the above mentioned time frame. The problem that is proposed to be examined in this thesis is designed within the framework of the research paradigm namely anti-colonial discourse or post colonial discourse. Colonialism is much more than political control or colonial policies. It is best seen as a structure within which colonial interests and policies, colonial state and administrative institutes, colonial culture and society, colonial ideas and ideologies each have a fair share. When the British conquered India they were introduced to a new world, both in extent and character. Confronted with problems and unprecedented issues the British masters tried to comprehend them in their own way with the hope of strengthening control over their conquest. India, as a colony, underwent fundamental transformation: the old economy, social formation and structures were uprooted to make way for a structured colonial society. Three pieces of parliamentary legislations, the Regulating Act of 1773, Pitt's India Act of 1784 and the charter Act of 1793, limited the power of the East India Company. By 1813 when another charter Act was passed the Company had lost most of its political and economic powers, the real power being wielded by the British capitalist class as a whole.

By then it was clearly realized that the country could not be exploited in the new way within its existing economic, political, administrative and socio-cultural setting. This pattern therefore had to be shattered and transformed all along the line. Radical changes in the economic and administrative fields were introduced. Meanwhile colonial ideology underwent a major change. All talk of training the Indians for self government (generated by liberal imperial ideology among several British statesmen and administrators) was given up. The aim of British rule was declared to be a permanent "trusteeship" over India, and Indians were declared as permanently immature, a "child" people needing British control and guidance. Geography, race, climate, history, religion, culture and social organization were cited as factors which made Indians permanently unfit for self government. The British, therefore, was to exercise benevolent despotism over them for centuries to come. The corrupt Indians were to be uplifted by the upright and morally superior British. They were to be ruled to civilization and morality so that the primitive backward inferior oriental society would finally be transformed in Europe's image. Against this background I intend to make an in depth study of the impact of education on social, political, economic and religion lives of certain districts ^{namely Rajshahi, Patna and Kangpur} of Eastern Bengal between 1854 and 1947.

Colonialism being itself a cultural project of control its affirmation came through various processes, including cultural technologies of rule in which English education was to become a firm tool. Lord William Bentinck's Resolution of March &. 1835 stated that the funds appropriated to education would be best employed in English education alone. English education was thus introduced both with the administrative purpose of manning

the new vastly expanded administration and creating an overall climate of change and development and thereby generate a culture of loyalty to the rulers. This policy of cultural subversiveness was often undertaken in a very subtle manner. The nineteenth century colonial administrators used English studies for the ideological pacification and reformation of a potentially rebellious Indian population. In the scheme of education introduced by the British the students were taught not only English literature but the inherent superiority of the English race over the lesser Indian species. No opportunity was missed to affirm the superlative values of white civilization. The active domination of the Indian world by the British informed metropolitan culture in several ways, even the dynamics of everyday life. The imperial motif was woven into the structure of popular culture, fiction and the rhetoric of history, philosophy and geography. Ideas of unequal races and cultures was transmuted in classroom teaching and were part of the curriculum and pedagogy which aimed at colonial subject making.

The Indian reaction to the new structural forces released by colonial interest had several facets. The question of 'mimicry' and 'authenticity' became a dominant theme with reference to which assertive authenticity of the colonized challenged the British policy of subversion. The study proposes to explore and examine critically the role of education in the quest for Indian identity.

The years 1854 and 1947, chosen for the study, are landmarks in the history of India. The former is associated with the introduction of a properly articulated scheme of education from elementary to university level as portrayed in Wood's Despatch. Bengal moreover was placed under a lieutenant governor in this year. This was to lead to important policy

making by the Government, in the field of education. Again 1947 is the year of India's freedom from British rule, it marked the end of an era.

My aim therefore will be to examine the institutions, practices, and ideology of the western education that was introduced in Bengal. The investigation does not seek to be a comprehensive record of the history of education, nor does it even attempt to catalogue, in minute historical fashion, the various educational decisions, acts, and resolutions that led to the development of education: rather it will explore the adaptation of the content of western education to the administrative and political imperatives of British rule. It shall also examine the ways in which these imperatives in turn changed that content with a radically altered significance, enabling the humanistic ideals of enlightenment to coexist with and indeed even support education for social and political control.

II. Research Gap & Methodology

Studies about Bengal under colonial rule have come into fashion recently. Extensive studies have been made on land revenue, cultural & socio economic aspects, political movements etc. The impact of colonial education on society is still comparatively an unexplored area of research and deserves special attention. This study attempts to fill this academic gap.

Methodology

The study is a paradigmatic one where arguments will be framed on the basis of post colonial discourse in which the major research concern would be to explore (i) the colonial design of cultural subversion (ii) colonial subject making (iii) mimicry – hybridity syndrome and (iv) the quest for authenticity.

Hypothesis:

The proposed research will empirically test the truth- falsity of the colonial construct of “ subject” and the colonized’s assertion of authenticity in the geographical locate of certain districts of Eastern Bengal in the time frame already mentioned..

IV. Formulation of relevant key questions

The key questions which my research proposal wish to apply to test the hypothesis are as follows:

1. To what extent western education led to cultural subversive ness and succeeded in colonial subject making.
2. When and how, from a crisis of identity a critique of colonial discourse had emerged leading to assertive authenticity within the frame work of derivative discourse.

3. What was the nature of the authentic discourse. Did it surface in the religious revivalism, or in reaction of elitist, or in subalterns, or in all the above in the districts under study.