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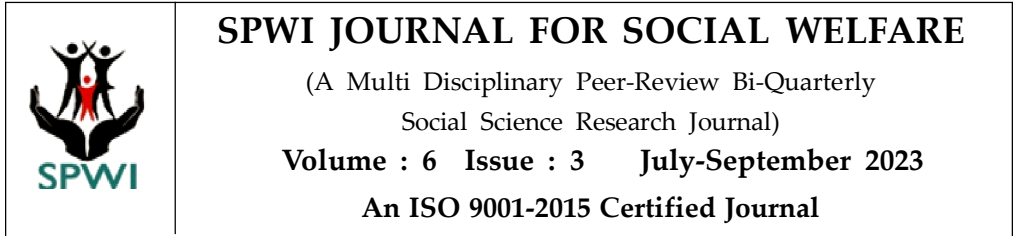
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LEGACY OF MACAULAY: UNRAVELING THE HISTORICAL IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE ON INDIA'S EDUCATION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY



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Abstract: *This study delves into the historical impact of British rule in India, particularly focusing on the East India Company and subsequent British rulers' dual objectives of exploiting India's wealth and shouldering the 'white man's burden' of civilizing the natives. The narrative explores the economic and educational ramifications of British policies, revealing a deliberate dismantling of India's indigenous education system, economic suppression of certain castes, and the imposition of English as the medium of instruction through the influence of T.B. Macaulay. Macaulay's "downward filtration method," favoring the forward castes and Brahmins, and the subsequent economic and social repercussions are scrutinized. The study underscores the persistent impact of these policies, the thwarting of British designs by certain castes, and the ongoing risks of losing cultural identity. Ultimately, it advocates for a reevaluation of the educational system to reinforce India's timeless ideals and strengthen its cultural heritage.*

Keywords: *Education system, British Rule, Destruction of Indian Education*

Introduction

During the era of the East India Company and later, under British rule, two distinct motives appear to have influenced the rulers: the exploitation of the land's wealth and the 'white man's burden' of civilizing the natives, a term used to encompass all Indians. The British adeptly pursued these objectives, leaving a lasting impact even after fifty

years of independence. The nation seems ensnared, remaining in a state of inertia, seemingly unable (and perhaps unwilling) to break free from one of the most profound hypnoses cast upon an entire people.

Many might be unaware that India was once the wealthiest land until the arrival of the British. While Britain's share in global exports was a mere 9% before, India's current share stands at 0.5%. Foreigners flocked to India enticed by its fabulous wealth. In the eighteenth century, Phillimore noted that 'the droppings of her soil fed distant regions.' However, the perception of India as impoverished only emerged in the nineteenth century, as foreign merchants sought the almost mythical riches that could be obtained there.

In India, 35% to 50% of village lands were tax-exempt, and the revenue collected was used for various public purposes, including running schools, organizing temple festivals, producing medicines, feeding pilgrims, and improving irrigation. The British, driven by greed, reduced tax-exempt lands to a mere 5%, dismantling initiatives that benefited the people. Despite conquering the nation, the rulers discovered that India remained deeply rooted in its culture. If the nation held onto its traditions with pride, the burden of the 'white man' to civilize seemed as cumbersome as ever.

Contrary to the belief that education in India was confined to the Brahmins in Sanskrit, the country had a well-spread education system that included all castes and languages. However, the British systematically dismantled this system, rendering one of the most literate nations illiterates.

In a 1931 Round-table conference, Mahatma Gandhi lamented, "The beautiful tree of education was cut down by you, British. Therefore, today India is far more illiterate than it was 100 years ago." A follower, Shri Dharampal, later researched and revealed in the book "The Beautiful Tree" how the British had destroyed the financial foundations supporting India's education system by 1820.

Despite two decades of British efforts to eradicate the Indian education system, a survey in 1822 revealed its resilience. The Bengal presidency alone had 1 lakh village schools, while Madras had a school in every village. Teachers and students from all castes were part of this system, with Brahmins constituting 7% to 48% of the teachers in any district. The students received primary education for 4 to 5 years in their mother tongue, fostering competitiveness and a deep understanding of their culture.

The British administrators, acknowledging the dedication and capability of Indian teachers, eventually adopted the Indian system for educating the masses. A Christian missionary, Mr. Bell, even took this system back to England, initiating education for the masses there. Thus, it becomes evident that it was from India that the British borrowed the system for widespread education.

The Source of Deterioration : The Downward Filtration Approach

However, events in India took a significant turn. Even a meagre sum of one lakh rupees allocated for the education of Indians was met with disapproval from foreign Christian missionaries. The British responded by slashing financial resources and imposing a series of regulations, such as the requirement for a 'pucca' building. This marked the beginning of a transformative period when T.B. Macaulay was summoned to determine the allocation of funds, the language of instruction, and the method of educating Indians.

Under Macaulay's influence, English became the medium of instruction, diverting funds towards English education. In the words of G.D. Trevelyan in "Life of Lord Macaulay" (vol 1 pg164), "A new India was born in 1835." Macaulay's educational policies had a profound impact, shaking the foundations of India's ancient civilization. He not only introduced English as the medium of education but also implemented the "downward filtration method" to weaken the Indian populace and secure support for the British Raj.

The downward filtration method involved privileging the forward castes in schools, a strategy initiated after an incident in Ooty where Macaulay observed social hierarchies. Brahmins were given preference, as Macaulay aimed to create a class that was "Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals, and intellect." This preference for Brahmins persisted in government and missionary-run schools for nearly a century.

Simultaneously, other castes engaged in various trades suffered economic setbacks due to the influx of British goods and deliberate economic suppression. The British land policy further exacerbated the situation, turning farmers into landless laborers and landlords into instruments of British oppression. The systematic dismantling of the traditional Indian education system left certain castes impoverished and ignorant for over a hundred years. The Brahmins, originally tasked with leading society, underwent distortion in their perspectives due to foreign education. Even after gaining independence, the ramifications of the Macaulayan influence persisted, often overlooked, or unrecognized by many.

Thwarted Ambitions: Macaulay's Design Foiled

In a letter dated October 12, 1836, Macaulay wrote to his father, expressing the success of English schools in India and the transformative impact of English education on Hindus. He confidently predicted that within 30 years, there would be no idolaters among the respected classes, attributing this to the influence of English education.

However, over the years, missionaries realized that their efforts to convert Brahmins had not been successful. In a conference in 1882, they decided to shift their focus to other castes and tribals in educational institutions. The British policies, aimed

at dividing and creating competition among castes, resulted in the decline of educated and prosperous castes.

The Brahmins, initially seen as societal leaders, became discredited as they embraced British intellectual ideas and entered various professions. The other castes, despite being targeted, stood firm, thwarting British designs.

The impact of Macaulay's influence continues to weaken the nation. The concentration on Western models and solutions has led to a neglect of Indian thinking, problems, and solutions. The nation risks losing its identity when people forget their roots and principles.

Drawing a parallel with Greek and Roman civilizations, the study emphasizes the importance of maintaining faith in one's way of life. Greece and Rome, once great civilizations, now exist as geographical entities with a diminished connection to their cultural heritage.

This concludes by highlighting the danger of increasing ignorance about one's roots and advocating for a reevaluation of the educational system. To strengthen the nation, there is a call to revisit and reinforce the timeless ideals that have bound the Indian culture for thousands of years.

Key Findings

1. **Exploitation and 'White Man's Burden':** The British rule in India was motivated by a dual objective of exploiting the country's wealth and the perceived duty of civilizing the natives.
2. **Wealth and Taxation:** India was once among the wealthiest nations, but British policies, driven by greed, reduced tax-exempt lands and dismantled initiatives that benefited the people.
3. **Education System:** India had a well-spread education system that included all castes and languages. The British systematically dismantled this system, leading to a decline in literacy.
4. **Downward Filtration Approach:** T.B. Macaulay's influence transformed education in India, introducing English as the medium and implementing the "downward filtration method" to create a class with Indian blood but English tastes, opinions, morals, and intellect.
5. **Economic Suppression:** British policies led to economic setbacks for certain castes engaged in trades, turning farmers into landless laborers and landlords into instruments of oppression.
6. **Transformation and Resistance:** Macaulay predicted the success of English education in transforming Hindu society, but missionaries' efforts to convert Brahmins were unsuccessful. Other castes stood firm, thwarting British designs.

Conclusion

The study highlights the ongoing impact of Macaulay's influence on weakening the nation. The concentration on Western models and solutions is seen as a threat to the identity of the nation. The study advocates for a reevaluation of the educational system and a return to timeless ideals to strengthen the cultural heritage that has bound the Indian nation for centuries.

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