



# Institutionalisation Of Education In Darjeeling Hills: A Historical Study

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**Abstract:** The Grant of Darjeeling became a major juncture in the history of Darjeeling. The arrival of missionaries and the development of Darjeeling as an important centre for education in the Eastern Himalayas is a stimulating topic to read. Darjeeling stood as a gateway to Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim, and it is the closest hill station to the capital, Calcutta. Consequently, it got early exposure to Education. The Charter Act of 1813 and Wood's Despatch of 1854 played an important role in introducing Western education in the hills. In the light of Western education, schools such as Loreto Convent, St. Paul's School, the Scottish Universities Mission Institution, and many other premium institutions in Darjeeling were established. The paper elucidates the evolution and contributions of various missionary and philanthropic groups that devoted their energies and wealth to building Darjeeling as an educational hub. It also delved into the post independence progression and the reaction of the hills and Terai people of the Darjeeling district. In short, the study focuses on the formalization of Education during and after the colonial period in Darjeeling Himalaya.

**Index Terms** - □ Darjeeling Himalaya, Missionary Education, Western Education in Colonial India, Charter Act of 1813, Wood's Despatch of 1854, Educational Institutions in Darjeeling, Colonial and Post-colonial Education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Darjeeling is a colonial construct hill station, primarily preferred by the English for sanatoriums and later used for their various innovations, such as tea plantations, Timber Plantations, Hydro-Power Projects, Roadways, and Education. Within a few decades after the Grant of Deeds (1835), Darjeeling progressed in every aspect, especially in education. Neighbouring countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, and Sikkim (which was merged with India in 1975) preferred Darjeeling for educational purposes. The reason behind its popularity was that Calcutta, a colonial capital, was nearer to the hill station, and Darjeeling stands as a gateway to Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, and Sikkim. The Scandinavian Alliance Mission appeared in the hills as Darjeeling stood as a gateway to Tibet. All the factors led the hills to nurture with the light of education. Nonetheless, the obverse side of the coin was not as shiny as the reverse. The debate between Anglicists and Orientalists was prevalent in India during this period. The propagation of Western Education by missionaries further made the Anglicists' view more dominant. The English followed the British model in education. The impartation of education through missionaries was also practiced in England. The Charter of 1813 gave responsibility to missionaries to introduce Western education in India.[1]

The Negative theory of Education of Bertrand Russell, expressed about the purpose of Education, is to give culture and develop its capacity to the utmost.[2] The missionaries followed the principle of the negative theory of Education while imparting Western education in the hills. Russel further explains his theory that the negative view dominated the most progressive view of the individual, and that the theory of arrested growth during the colonial period shared common ideas.[3] Nevertheless, Russell's view is undoubtedly European. He believed that the education in India and Africa is a blessing of the light lit in Britain.[4] His other theory on Aristocrats, Democrats, and Bureaucrats, to balance the psychological

trivial, is that the individual tends to impart Western education to the dark places.[5] Delving deep into the theory of Russel, the praise-loving Europeans imparted Western Education to satisfy their psychological need for superiority. They believed, before their interference, the hill people were a wretched, unmanageable race living the life of the wild animals, and often described the people of the hills as savage.[6] The binary notion of English is not academically acceptable. The people used to have their form of Government, rules, regulations, indigenous culture, and shamanic culture, which were followed even in America, Korea, China, and other parts of the world. They were experts in herbal medicine and possessed immense knowledge of the local flora and fauna.[7]

There is no doubt that Western Education benefited the hills. The education was for the European population residing after 1835. For this purpose, Loreto Convent was opened under Carew, the Vicar Apostolic of Bengal, in 1846. The native population remained subalternised under colonial rule in Darjeeling. Years after the establishment of educational institutions, the marginalised class gained access to education. Institutionalization of education was prevalent even before the arrival of English; the monks were taught Buddhist Education in Tibetan.[8] The planned ceremony, such as Prabajja (initiation of education), the reading of Pathimokha (guidelines followed by the monasteries), and the structural system, were practiced in Buddhism. Here, it would be completely unjustified to credit the English with establishing the first institution in the Darjeeling Hills.

The post-independence phase of Western Education in the hills is similar to that of mainland India. The 1980s were a period of major upheaval. Starting with the Bahasa Andolan (Language Movement), Angregi Hatao (Remove English language), and the Gorkhaland agitation of 1986. The exclusion of the English language by the Left Front Government of West Bengal in the State Primary School in 1981 was a factor leading to the degradation of the quality of Education in Darjeeling.[9] Contemporary intellectuals like Dick B. Dewan were continuously criticising the Angregi Hatao campaign led by the Left Government of West Bengal. The Kothari Commission introduced the three-language formula, under which any foreign language would be an advantage for the people of the hills. The people of the hills are more fluent in both Nepali and English than in other districts of West Bengal, indicating that the Nepalese population of Darjeeling has successfully adopted the progressive aspects of colonial rule. The 1901 census report showed that 1 in 8 males and 1 in 71 females were literate, far more than in any district of West Bengal.[10]

After 1835, the DPI asked Jackson, Dr. Campbell, Captain James, and Robinson to set up an educational institution in Darjeeling.[11] They began with a Sunday school, where informal gatherings were held to listen to the missionaries' preaching, and a night school for adults was also opened during the initial phase of colonial rule in Darjeeling. The night school was run by the missionaries, especially in the Tea Garden area, for classes for those out at work during the day.[12] In 1934, the Himachal Hindi Bhawan was established in Darjeeling for both boys and girls[13]. Even the schools were named after different missions. The Scott Mission Primary School of Sonada was named after its mission, and even today, the name hasn't changed. In 1841, under Rev. William Start, the Moravian mission was sent to Darjeeling, and with the help of Gossner, Rev. Start brought twenty German missionaries.[14] They opened the first school in the Takvar village, a few miles down from Darjeeling town. The propagation of Christianity was successful because the missionaries adopted the culture of the people of Darjeeling and translated the Bible into their native language. Even today, the Nepali Bible is used by the Christian population of Darjeeling. After the retirement of Rev. William Start in 1852, C.G. Neibel assumed responsibility for sending missionaries into the hills and opened a school for the Lepchas after gathering a group of boys.[15] The establishment of St. Andrew's Church in 1843 and Eden sanatorium in the hills further intensified the position of missionaries in Darjeeling Himalaya. In 1846. In the Wood's Dispatch of 1854, the Government assumed responsibility for educating people. With W.B. Jackson's efforts, the need to open a school in the hills was recognized, and the first school opened in Darjeeling in 1856.[16] The series of Schools was established in Darjeeling hills as Loreto in 1846, St. Paul's School in 1864, St. Joseph's College in 1888, Zilla School in 1872-73, Butia Boarding School in 1871-72, Teacher's Training at Kalimpong and Santirani High School in 1898, Nepali Girls School in 1890, St. Robert's School in 1934, St. Joseph's Girls School in 1938 at Kurseong. St. George's School at Pedong, 1911; St. George's School in 1883 in Kurseong; St. Alphonsus School in 1888 and for boys in 1936; St. Teresa's Girls' School in 1923 in Darjeeling. Victoria Boys' School in 1879 and Dowhill Girls' School in 1898.[17] The Victoria School in Kurseong was established in 1879 for the children of railway employees, but later opened to other government officials, reflecting the facilities provided to employees during colonial rule. [18]The Scottish missionaries under Rev. W. Macfarlane began their missionary activities in the Eastern Himalayas in 1869. They focused on the education of the hills, with much emphasis on teachers' education in the initial phase.[19] The Scottish Universities Mission Institution at Kalimpong, popularly known as SUMI,

was established in 1886 as a Teacher Training Centre.[20] Later, it was recognised and affiliated to the Calcutta University in 1933. Darjeeling and Kalimpong became the centre point for the missionaries to spread education to other neighbouring places like Sikkim. To train young Christian girls for booth teaching, nurses were sent to SUMI Kalimpong. After finishing, they would go to a different corner of the Kingdom of Sikkim.[21] The students sent by the missionaries were provided with a stipend by the government, as they needed more native minds to propagate their activities throughout the hills, with a greater focus on the downward filtration theory.[22] The provision of scholarships during the colonial period is evident. In 1941, as a result of the primary final examination, a Grade I scholarship was 3 rupees per month for a period of two years, and a Grade II scholarship was 2 rupees per month for a period of two years, which was awarded to children reading in the Darjeeling hills.[23] It is to be noted that not all awardees were from the hills; some were Bengalis and Muslim children as well.

The history of Saint Paul's School and Saint Joseph's is very interesting. Saint Paul's was first introduced in Calcutta and failed due to economic complexities. Later, during the time of Bishop Cotton, it was opened in Darjeeling. The Cambridge University Local Examination Syndicate prescribed the curriculum of Saint Joseph.[24] The syndicate recognised the Diocesan Girls' High School, which was founded in 1875. After the Queen's Proclamation of 1858, the English stopped interfering in the cultural matters of Indians. The revolt of 1857 became a setback for them. The Charter Act of 1813 sanctioned 1 lakh for education, but it was not even spent in a decade after its sanction. The Wood's Despatch of 1854 established the University of Calcutta in 1857 and 171 institutions in the Darjeeling-Terai region.[25] The role of Mrs. Graham was unforgotten in the field of women's education in Darjeeling. She founded a girls' school in Kalimpong in 1891, which became a landmark for women's educational institutes such as the Scott Mission Girls School in Kurseong.[26] The landslide of 1899 swept away the Queen's Hill School, governed by the American Methodist Mission, which later shifted to Mount Hermon in Singamari, Darjeeling.[27] The first Primary education was established in the rural area of colonial Darjeeling in 1900 by Scottish missionaries, and in 1953 it was affiliated to the Bengal Board of Education, forming Sukhia Pokhri High School.[28] By the early twentieth century, the hill peoples were aware of their rights. They submitted a memorandum to the Morley-Minto Reform of 1909 for a separate dominion for Gorkha in Darjeeling. The social organisation, like the Gurkha Dukh Nivarak Sangh, was founded in 1932, and the Ramkrishna Vedanta Ashram was founded in 1924, both further working for the upliftment of the people of the hills. Industrial institutions such as Dr. Graham's Home School around 1900 and St. Alphonsus School of Fr. Wary in Kalimpong provided vocational education in Darjeeling during the colonial period.[29] Later, the Government of West Bengal shifted it to Tung. Industrial Training Institute, Tung, is actively providing training to the young aspiring minds of Darjeeling Himalaya. The Institute for Special Children was opened by Ms. De Laplace at Kurseong in 1918, and by Mary H. Scott in 1940 for visually impaired students at Kalimpong.[30] The joint efforts by the Maharaja of Nepal, the Chogyal of Sikkim, and King Wangchuk of Bhutan, under the chairmanship of Rev. Rd. Graham, to establish a college in Kalimpong in 1927 lasted only 26 years.[31] Kalimpong College was established in 1971, affiliated with the University of North Bengal, and is still in operation. A few kilometres before reaching Sonada Railway Station from Siliguri, there is a beautiful glance of Salesian College in Gorabari, Sonada. The history of the College dates back to Shillong. It was first established in Shillong, shifted to Sonada in 1938, and opened its extension in Siliguri in 2009. Beneath the Padmaji Naidu Zoological Park, a magnificent building of Darjeeling Government College has stood still since 1948. A few steps from Darjeeling Chowrasta, Southfield College, founded in 1961, is a women's college affiliated with the University of North Bengal. Kalimpong College faced Campus issues in its initial year of operation and finally shifted to its permanent campus in 1982. The history of Kurseong College is moreover similar to that of Kalimpong College. After the college was established in 1967, it acquired its permanent campus in 1977 on the famous Downhill Road in Kurseong. In the village of Lower Rameity and Nalichour, a few kilometres from the Sonada Garage line, Sonada Degree College was established in 1985 and offers only humanities subjects. The college has common ground shared by the people of nearby villages. The best thing about the people of the hill is their love for wisdom. Despite working in the Tea Garden at minimum wage, they somehow managed to send their child to a different college in Darjeeling. To balance the distribution of colleges across different parts of Darjeeling, Bijanbari, 50km from the main town, opened a college in 1995. Bijanbari Degree College is also affiliated with the University of North Bengal. Moreover, every college, except for some teacher training and vocational institutes, is affiliated with the University of North Bengal. The best scenery of Mirik College can be seen from the Mirik Helipad. The massive building began as an idea for a community college in 1972 and took shape by 2010. In 1998, the Cluny Women's College was established in 1998 in Kalimpong. The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council also

established a college in Ghoom Jorebunglow in 2004, which lies on the Senchal Road (Tiger Hill Road). To facilitate the young aspiring minds of Darjeeling, the institute, like Shree Ramakrishna B.T. College, was established in 1957. It trains the curious mind that dreams of being a pedagogue in the future. It is one of the premium institutes in the hills and is preferred by people inside and outside the hills. A few meters above the Shree Ramakrishna B.T. College lies the Shree Ramakrishna Government Sponsored Primary Teachers Training Institute. The institute was established in 1957. Both were the result of the Ramakrishna Mission in Darjeeling.

In 1924, Shri Ramakrishna Vedanta Ashram was founded, and in 1931, Sardeswari Girls' School was established. Education in Darjeeling is not solely the result of missionaries; the contributions of Bengali Bhadrals and Bhadramahilas cannot be ignored. Mentioned Hemlata Sarkar, a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, which was founded by Raja Rammohan Roy, who spread female education in Darjeeling.[32] The Maharani School is near the Darjeeling Railway Station. The school was established in 1908 for the Bengali students, but it also benefited the local folks. [33] In 1944, Pranami Vidya Mandir in Kalimpong and the Young Men's Buddhist Association established a girls' school at Ghoom.[34] A girl's Maktab was opened in 1910 in Darjeeling, showing the diversity of the people of Darjeeling and its openness to education. The data from 1916 to 1942 on primary education in Darjeeling showed a gradual rise in the number of schools, pupils, and expenditure. [35] The data indicates the favourable growth and the contribution of English in the field of Education in the hills. The relationship between Hill and Terai is inseparable. Terai had been standing beneath the Darjeeling hills unconditionally. A large portion of the Nepali population resides in the Terai, carrying the same culture as the hills. However, the education in Terai was more systematic than in the hills. It was examined by the Education Department under the Deputy Commissioner, with assistance from a Sub-Inspector of Schools.[36]

Colonial homes were opened to marginalised children to provide a conducive environment and well-being for the orphanage as well. Saint. Andrew's Colonial Homes, founded in 1900, was an example of a colonial house. Even in Sonada, there is a colonial home where the orphanage was kept and where the Christian organisation provided educational opportunities. Many of the government schools in West Bengal include Physical Education as a subject. The subject not only evaluates the cognitive domain but also the psychomotor domain of a child. The widely accepted Bloom taxonomy discusses the roles of the cognitive, affective, and psych-motor domains of Education. Particular attention was paid from 1938 to include Physical Education in the curriculum of schools of the Darjeeling hills. The West Bengal Board of Secondary Education has adopted Physical Education as a compulsory subject in the curriculum. In 1835, the population of Darjeeling was around 100, which later continued to increase due to educational and tea plantation development in the hills. The gradual growth showed a favourable environment for the development of education in Darjeeling.

Following Independence, the education system in India was reformed through various education commissions and the establishment of various educational bodies. The series of education reforms, like the Radhakrishna Commission, Mudaliar Commission, Kothari Commission, National Policy on Education in 1968, National Policy of Education 1986, National Curriculum Framework 2005, National Knowledge Commission, Right to Education 2010, and finally the New Education Policy, made education in India more accessible and of utmost importance in Darjeeling. Apart from education, the problem of identity crisis is a major problem in the hills. The Left Government in the eighties launched a campaign to remove English from school education. The fear of losing the indigenous language sometimes led the leaders of the hills to resist the imposition of other languages in the curriculum, which later became the immediate cause of the Gorkhaland agitation of 2017. Rather than relying on enforcement, people are learning English and Bengali to pursue opportunities. The people living in the plains of Darjeeling, like Siliguri and Naxalbari, are multilingual. They are well versed in Nepali, English, Hindi, and Bengali. Nevertheless, from the colonial period to the present, the need to preserve the indigenous language is of utmost significance. The outstanding example is Sikkim, where indigenous languages are being taught to students, whereas in Darjeeling, they are far more ignored.

## CONCLUSION

The education in Darjeeling is a colonial gateway, not an origin; before the advent of missionaries, Buddhist monasteries operated with a systematic curriculum. The people of Darjeeling were known for their informal education and immense knowledge of herbal medicines. They were tribal, not savage. There is no doubt that the missionaries contributed to the formalisation of education in Darjeeling. The establishment of Schools, Teachers' training institutes, and vocational institutes is still ongoing today, having been opened by various missionaries during colonial rule. The missionaries were successful in

introducing their principles by adopting the regional notion. They learned Nepali and other indigenous languages and also started a night school for students who worked as tea coolies during the day. Along with missionaries, neighbouring kingdoms were also interested in opening an educational institute in Darjeeling. All these factors led to Darjeeling becoming an educational hub. At first, the schools were open only to European people, but later they were open to all. The provision for scholarship and affiliation to Calcutta University opened a national gateway for the people of the hills. The role of Bengalis can't be ignored as well. The influence of the Bengal Renaissance and the establishment of the Maharani School in Darjeeling contributed to the field of education. Despite periodic upheavals, the people of the hills didn't lose their zeal to learn. The establishment of different private and government schools and colleges showed the evolution of educated minds in Darjeeling. In short, the history of education in Darjeeling is a patchwork of contributions from Buddhist studies, Christian missionaries, the Ramakrishna Mission, the Brahma Mission, and other philanthropic groups, with the Christian missionaries making the most contributions.

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