

Education of Jalpaiguri District: Development and Centres during 1869 to 1947

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Abstract: Education is an important hammer for societal development. Society cannot develop without education. The education system changes from decade to decade, especially during the colonial period. After the British entered the country, they were interested in education to expand the British Raj. The study aims to determine the educational status of Jalpaiguri district during the colonial period. The study has collected the data from the Bengal Gazette and the Census of India from 1872 to 1951. The study found that educational centres and the level of education have increased colonial period. Educational status was lower in the 1st stage of the colonial period due to higher poverty, frequent famine, caste discrimination, and economic constraints. Later, educational status has a gradual increase due to the British Government and local people being more aware of education. As a result, people are interested in involving school education.

Keywords: Colonial Periods, Educational Status, Education Centres, , Jalpaiguri etc.

Date of Submission: 29.09.2025

Date of Acceptance: 05.10.2025

Introduction

Jalpaiguri is the northernmost district in the state of West Bengal. The Jalpaiguri district consists of the western duars since 1865 and the Jalpaiguri and Rajganj thana's of Rongpur district since 1869. The district so formed in 1869 is bounded in the north by the Darjeeling and Bhutan, in the east by Assam, in the south by Rongpur district in Bangladesh and Cooch Behar district, and in the west by Darjeeling district and part of Bangladesh. The respective areas of the two subdivisions of the district, Jalpaiguri Sadar and Alipurduars. With a view to consolidating the British conquest of Bengal and their

Education of Jalpaiguri District: Development and Centres during 1869 to 1947

occupation of India, they proceeded very cautiously, trying to understand the problems and issues arising in their own way. The role of education as a tool of colonial domination by the British was undeniable, while Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, and other districts of North Bengal were asleep when Calcutta and its suburbs were eager to spread the influence of Western education. Although Western education spread to other parts of Bengal, it did not have much impact on the society here. The characteristics of 19th-century Bengal are not at their best here. There was hardly any participation of the common people of the region in the job-oriented education system of the British. Education was the most important factor in the Jalpaiguri district as most of the people here were illiterate. Therefore, it can be seen that the progress of education was slow and abnormal. The district had more or less the same story as other generally backward areas of North Bengal. Also, the absence of a wealthy upper class and, underdeveloped communication system deprived the district of the possibility to improve from the patrons of education. To develop education in Jalpaiguri, it is necessary to make a brief outline of the district¹.

Primary Education

Any attempt to inquire into the growth and development of primary education should be done in the generally backward perspective discussed above. Pathshalas developed in several districts of South Bengal, but were virtually unknown in Jalpaiguri. Prior to the formation of the district in 1869, there was no such information about primary education. Wood's Despatch of 1854 spoke of education from the lowest to the highest level so primary education was introduced in the scheme of pedagogical methods that were characteristic of primary education during the British period. Primary education meant that education which could be beneficial for the lower-class agricultural day laborers and artisans. When the Pathshala scheme was introduced in 1860, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir J.P. Grant, recommended a sum of thirty thousand rupees for the year with a direction to allocate funds for the improvement of the Pathshalas in the country². W. Herschell, the commissioner of the division, remarked in 1874 that the school system was well established in Jalpaiguri. A positive sign of the overall progress and educational

Education of Jalpaiguri District: Development and Centres during 1869 to 1947

development of primary education in Jalpaiguri district can be seen from the fact that in 1869, the year in which the progress of education could be traced, there were only six schools with 282 students, and in the next two years, there were sixteen schools with 600 students³. Between 1870-1871 and 1881-1882, jute mills increased from 47 to 117, with 768 to 2671 students respectively⁴. In 1892-93, there were 372 lower primary and upper primary schools and 6187 students⁵. In 1900-01 there were 464 lower and upper primary schools and 10947 students. In 1907 - 08, the number of lower and upper primary schools was 390 and the number of students was 10,980⁶. In 1911-12 and 1920-21, the number of lower and upper primary schools increased from 559 to 930, and the number of students increased from 16955 to 23724⁷. In 1941-42, there were 855 primary schools and 3,680 students. In 1946-47, the number of primary schools was 572, and the number of students was 24,680⁸.

Middle English School

The first Middle English school in the Jalpaiguri district was Falakata Middle English School (1888). And the second one is Mainaguri Middle English School (1895). In 1901-02, there were six Middle English schools and 294 students. In 1907-08 there were 4 Middle English and the number of students was 196. In 1910-11 there were 6 Middle English schools and 551 students⁶. In 1915-16, there were 10 Middle English schools and 1056 students. In 1920-21 there were 15 Middle English School and 1011 students⁷. In 1941-42 Middle English School had 28 pupils and 3,625 pupils. In 1945-46, there were 35 Middle English Schools and 4,877 students. In 1946-47, there were 21 Middle English Schools and 3442 students⁸. The Middle English schools that existed before independence were Falakata Middle English School (1888), Maynaguri Middle English School (1895), Jorpakri Middle English School (1919), Mondalghat Sikarpur Middle English School (1919), Bakali Middle English School (1920), Dhupguri Middle English School (1921), Ananda Model Middle English School (1922), Majidkhana Middle English School (1922), Salkumar Hat Middle English School (1929), Chengmari Middle English School (1931), Mahakalguri Mission (1931), Kumargramduar Middle English School (1934), Alipurduar Girl's (1938), Kadamtala Girl's (1939), Manikganj Middle English School (1940), Gafra

Education of Jalpaiguri District: Development and Centres during 1869 to 1947

Middle English School(1940), Alipurduar Mcwillam Middle English School (1941), Bhatibari Middle English School (1942), Rajadanga P.M Middle English School (1943), Jalpes Lakshmikanta Middle English School (1944), Bonapara Joydhardanga Middle English School (1945), Chura Bhandar Bhel Bhela Middle English School (1947)⁹.

High School

Jalpaiguri district had only one high school from 1876 to 1906-07, the Jalpaiguri Zilla School (1876). In 1907, the Jalpaiguri district school stopped teaching at the lower primary level and continued teaching at the higher level. In 1907-08, Debiganj School was upgraded to the status of Middle English School, and in 1907-08, there were two high schools in the Jalpaiguri district and the number of students was 382⁶. In 1911-12, the district had 2 high schools and 637 students. In 1916-17, the number of high schools increased to 4 and the number of students to 996. 1920-21 Although the number of high schools did not increase, the number of students decreased somewhat. At that time, there were 980 high school students⁷. In 1941-42 there were 7 high schools and 1811 students. In 1946-47, the number of high schools was 10 and the number of students was 2988⁸. The high schools that existed before independence were Jalpaiguri Zilla school (1876), Alipur duar high English school (1919), Fanindradeva institution, Jalpaiguri (1920), Jalpaiguri sadar girls school (1927), Domohani polwhele High English school (1927), Sonaulla institution, Jalpaiguri (1929), Bhelakoba high English school (1943), Dharmapur Abdul Karim high English school (1945), Dhupguri high English school (1946), Jorpakri Abdul Gani high English school (1946), Mcwillam high English school (1947), Mandalghat high English school (1947)⁹.

Female Education

Munshi Tarukoollah Sahib of boda, who played a leading role in the promotion and initiation of women's education in Jalpaiguri district in the 19th century, is remembered for his efforts in the field of education, especially women's education. Boda Munshi

Education of Jalpaiguri District: Development and Centres during 1869 to 1947

Tarukullah Adult Girls School and another school there were built on his initiative. In 1887, when the Deputy Commissioner of Rajshahi Division remarked that nothing was possible except local efforts to advance women's education in a district where the majority of the people were working class and peasants. In the 19th century, the practice of female education in Jalpaiguri was at the very initial stage; the gurus were given an incentive allowance at the rate of four annas per head to teach girls. In 1886-87, there were only two girls' schools in the district. The spread of female education was interrupted when the monthly allowance of the gurus was withdrawn in 1889 - 90. In the Annual General Administrative Report of Rajshahi Division of 1890, statistics showed that only 182 girls were studying in the boys' school¹⁰. In 1907-1908, the number of girls' schools in Jalpaiguri district was 35 with 597 girls studying⁶. In 1910-1911, the number of girls attending school was 1.5% of the total female population. In 1915-16, the number of girls attending school was 3.2% of the total female population. In 1920-21, the number of girls attending school was 4.3% of the total female population⁷. In 1940-41, girls were only 10% of the total female population. In 1946-47, the number of girls attending school was 9% of the total female population⁸. The proportion of girls in school is very low. However, over the years, there has been a gradual interest in girls' education.

Collegiate Education

Before India's independence in 1947, Jalpaiguri district (located in the northern part of Bengal) had very limited access to higher education, especially colleges. The establishment of colleges in the district was quite delayed compared to other parts of Bengal, like Calcutta, Murshidabad or Nadia. Based on available historical records and educational surveys from the colonial period, the number of colleges in the district was very few, most likely only one by the 1940s. The students in the 40s mostly used to attend colleges at Cooch Behar, Rangpur or Rajshahi as there was no college in the district headquarters. A son of the late Anada Chandra Raut of Jalpaiguri made a gift of 4 bighas of land and Rs. 25000 in cash for a college in memory of his late father. The college named Ananda Chandra College started functioning from 1942 with a roll strength of 91,

Education of Jalpaiguri District: Development and Centres during 1869 to 1947

which figure rose to 211 in 1943, to 263 in 1944, to 310 in 1945, to 339 in 1946, to 582 in 1947⁸. It was the first and only college in the Jalpaiguri district before independence. It became the intellectual and cultural hub for North Bengal during the last phase of colonial rule.

Conclusion

Finally, the education system in Jalpaiguri district was very backward during the colonial period. The main reason for this is the lack of enthusiasm towards education, government apathy, illiterate people are largely responsible for this. Also, there was not much positive response to education from a district dominated by agriculture and labour. Parents were reluctant to send their children to school. Because they thought that if their children could read and write once, they would no longer want to plow, that was not unfounded. Education was used as a tool of Western cultural domination. While the participation and involvement of the upper strata of Indian society was envisaged, the role of the public in the planning was minimal. Government apathy towards the educational demands of the lower and backward classes is also an accepted fact. The education system was largely neglected, especially in Jalpaiguri district. During the colonial rule, the education system and the rate of education here were very low. In 1901, the literacy rate was 3.92 percent of the total population with male literacy rate of 6.98 percent and female literacy rate of 0.36 percent. In 1911, the literacy rate was 5.57 percent of the total population with male literacy rate of 9.89 percent and female literacy rate of 0.44 percent. In 1921 the literacy rate was 5.67 per cent of the total population with male literacy rate of 9.92 per cent and female literacy rate of 0.72 per cent. In 1931 the literacy rate was 4.79 per cent of the total population with male literacy rate of 7.92 per cent and female literacy rate of 1.08 per cent. In 1941, the literacy rate was 8.77 per cent of the total population, with male literacy of 14.15 per cent and female literacy of 2.41 per cent. That is, although the literacy rate in terms of the total population of the district is low, the literacy rate has increased continuously every year under the colonial rule.

Education of Jalpaiguri District: Development and Centres during 1869 to 1947

Notes and References

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