



## Development of Western Education in Birbhum District during Colonial Period

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### Abstract

*Western education came in India with the establishment of British rule in India. It was same for Bengal and district Birbhum also. Western education started with the initiative taken by the Baptist Missionary. They were very active in the progress of western education in different parts of Bengal in general and Birbhum in particular. Specially by the Srirampur Missionary and the other Missionaries. Most important Centre of learning western education in the district was Birbhum Zila School, Bolpur High School, Rampurhat High School, Labpur High School, Krishna Chandra College etc. During the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century western education started gaining impetus in the district.*

**Keywords:** Western, Education, District, Birbhum, Missionary, School

Development of western education is said to have started with the establishment of British Rule in India. Western education in Bengal in general and Birbhum in particular started with the initiative taken by number of Missionaries, specially the Christian Missionaries.<sup>1</sup> Development of western education in Birbhum district started with the establishment of Baptist Mission in Birbhum district by Srirampur Mission. The Mission was situated in Suri.<sup>2</sup> Reverend James Williamson was entrusted with the responsibility to look after the work of the Mission. He was an assistant surgeon of Suri Jail. It is very important to note that modern and western education and the new ideas came with the establishment of the British Imperialist Authority. It is also important to note that English education spread throughout Bengal with the active effort and support of the Christian Missionaries. According to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, "The History of Indian Renaissance....began with our study of English literature and modern Philosophy and Science from books written in English language.... as early as 1789 we find an appeal published in a Calcutta paper by several Bengali gentlemen inviting some European to write a grammar of the English language for the benefit of the Bengal people....

But from 1810 onwards we find English education, at first of the School standard, spreading throughout Bengal, thanks to the efforts of the Christian Mission."<sup>3</sup>

William Carey established the first Women School in Birbhum district in 1821 along with Dacca and Chittagong. It is also reported in Adam's Report on vernacular

education in 1837 that the district had two English schools. One of the school was run by Reverend Jams Williamson was established in Suri town and other was established in Raipur. As per the recommendation of the Bengal Council of Education, Birbhum Zila School was established on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1851.<sup>4</sup>

Education made some progress in Birbhum district where the numbers of government and aided English schools rose from 2 to 21 with 694 pupils from the time period of 1856-57 to 1870-71.<sup>5</sup> During Sir George Campbell's administration of Bengal a vast expansion of primary education also took place. As per as the report of W.W. Hunter the Government Zola School of Birbhum was one of the best Government managed High English School in Bengal.<sup>6</sup> It was reported in the statistical account that on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1873 it contained 270 peoples, the daily average attendance being 195 which was a decided improvement on the previous year. Eighteen candidates presented themselves for entrance examination to the Calcutta University.<sup>7</sup> From Hetampur School, two candidates appeared in the entrance examination in the Calcutta University while Birbhum Mission School send six students.<sup>8</sup> There were two Government aided High English Schools one each at Surul and Hetampur with a total roll strength of 81 pupiles.<sup>9</sup> There were also eight aided Middle Class English Schools receiving aid from the Government and two unaided Middle English Schools in which 36 pupils were studying.<sup>10</sup> In the year 1884, a Middle Vernacular School for female was established after the name of Lieutenant Governor Rivers Thompson who was a great exponent of women edication.<sup>10</sup> Similarly one boarding school was established for the women students by the Baptist Zenana Mission.<sup>11</sup>

**The following table provides the Number of Students in rolled in Birbhum Zila School.<sup>12</sup>**

**Table -I**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Number of Students</b>
18566	135
1873	270
1912	296
1917	287
1918	260
1922	278
1929	295

The table provides information about the numerical representation of students in Birbhum Zila School. There were 135,270,296, 287, 260, 278 and 295 students in the year 1856, 1873, 1912, 1917, 1918, 1922 and 1929 respectively in Birbhum Zila School which was a government school. It was only one government school in the district as far as the Quinquennial Report on the progress of Education in the Burdwan Division for the period 1916-21 was concerned.

According to L.S.S. O' Malley there were the existence of seven High English Schools with 1610 peoples in 1909-10 which were in existence in different places of the district e.g., Bandgora, Hetampur, Labpur, Rampurhat, Larakonda and these schools were mainly privately managed schools receiving aid from Government. The school at Kirnagar was an unaided private institution.<sup>13</sup> L.S.S.O' Malley also stated that there were no less than 25 Middle English Schools (20 aided and 5 unaided) attended by 2565 boys and 15 girls.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly Narayanpur Mission Girls' School was established by a Danish Missionary Hans Peter Hansen Kamp.<sup>15</sup> He was joined by his wife Mrs. Signey Kamp. The school has great influence of the development of educational system of Birbhum district.

During colonial period there were two types of English Schools, namely the Middle English Schools imparting education either up to Class VI or Class VIII and Higher English Schools imparting training up to Class X.<sup>16</sup>

There were large numbers of schools which were established in different places of the district which had great contribution for the promotion and development of western education. Kaijuli Higher Secondary School, Kedarpur High School of Mahammad Bazar Police Station, Sainthia High School, Ahmadpur J.D High School of Sainthia Police Station, Hetampur Raj Higher Secondary School, Dubrajpur R.B.S.D. High School of Dubrajpur Police Station, Barhara High School, Nakraconda High School of Khayrasol Police Station, Bolpur Boys High School, Bolpur Girls High School, Bahiri Brajasundari High School, Bandgora Higher Secondary School of Bolpur Police Station, Labpur High School, Kurunnagar High School, Kurumba Mukundalal High School of Labpur Police Station, Kurnagar Sibendra High School, Khujutipara High School, Daskalgram High School, Nanur Chandidas High School of Nanur Police Station, Mayureswar High School, Kundola High School, Mallarpur High School of Mallarpur Police Station, Rampurhat High School, Chandpara High School, Rampurhat Girls High School, Bishnupur High School of Rampurhat Police Station, Nalhati Higher Secondary School, Mitrabhum High School, Lohapur Higher Secondary School of Nalhati Police Station, Paikar High School, Rajgaon High School, Murarai A.K.Institution of Murarai Police Station were the pioneer institutions of the district which were largely responsible for the promotion of education, specially western education among the inhabitants of the district during the period of study.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly Krishna Chandra College of Hetampur which was founded by Maharani Padma Sundari Devi of Hetampur Rajbati was established in 1896 was largely responsible for the promotion of the Western and Higher Education.<sup>18</sup> Similarly Vidyasagar College at Suri which was established in 1942 as a branch of Vidyasagar Institute Calcutta had some great contribution for the promotion of western education in the district.<sup>19</sup> It must have contributed in the development of western education to

the larger section of the society. Visva-Bharati has grown out of the Santiniketan Asrama founded in 1863 by Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, the father of Kabiguru Rabindranath Tagore in the vicinity of the mauzas of Bolpur.<sup>20</sup> Surendranath Tagore and Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis jointly drafted the constitution of Visva-Bharati which was adopted and registered in 1922.<sup>21</sup> Large number of scholars like Sylvain Levi, G.Tucci, M.Collins, L.Bogdanow, Julius Germanus, J.B. Pratt visited Santiniketan and taught in Vidyabhabana.<sup>22</sup> The establishment of Visva-Bharati infused the ideas of west into the minds of the students to understand Education and Philosophy in much deeper perspective which have influenced the promotion of Western and Scientific Education among the people of the District.

**Table – II**

**Statement showing general statistics of attendance for the year 1916-17, 1917-18 and 1921-22 of High English Schools in the District.<sup>23</sup>**

Name of the Schools	Year	Number of pupils	Year	Number of pupils	Year	Number of pupils
<b>Government</b>						
Birbhum Zila School	1916-17	287	1917-18	260	1921-22	278
<b>Aided</b>						
Hetampur	1916-17	212	1917-18	231	1921-22	232
Nakrakonda	1916-17	235	1917-18	197	1921-22	225
Bolpur	1916-17	468	1917-18	465	1921-22	390
Labpur	1916-17	279	1917-18	345	1921-22	267
Rampurhat	1916-17	534	1917-18	437	1921-22	280
<b>Unaided</b>						
Suri Benimadhab	1916-17	108	1917-18	252	1921-22	259
Kirnahar	1916-17	286	1917-18	309	1921-22	261
Rampurhat Union	1916-17	311	1917-18	307	1921-22	338
Nalhati	1916-17	313	1917-18	365	1921-22	224
Bishnupur	1916-17	.....	1917-18	209	1921-22	266
Kundola	1916-17	.....	1917-18	53	1921-22	114

The table provides information about the numerical representation of students in different categories of schools and unaided schools. There were 287, 260 and 278 students in the year 1916-17, 1917-18 and 1921-22 respectively in Birbhum Zila School which was a government school. It was only one government school in the district as far as the Quinquennial Report on the progress of Education in the Burdwan Division for the period 1916-21 was concerned. There were several aided Schools in Hetampur, in Nakrakonda, in Bolpur, in Labpur, in Rampurhat. The

numbers of students in Hetampur Raj School were 212, 231 and 232 in 1916-17, 1917-18 and 1921-22 respectively. Similarly the numbers of students in Nakrakonda School were 235, 197 and 225 in 1916-17, 1917-18 and 1921-22 respectively. The numbers of students in Bolpur School were 468, 465 and 390 in 1916-17, 1917-18 and 1921-22 respectively. In Labpur School there were 279, 345 and 267 students in 1916-17, 1917-18 and 1921-22. Similarly the numbers of students in Rampurhat School were 534, 437 and 280 in 1916-17, 1917-18 and 1921-22 respectively.

The fact also revealed out of the table is that the number of students in Nakrakonda, Bolpur, and Rampurhat Schools went down from 1916-17 to 1921-22. As far as the available statistics for the district in matters of education is concerned, there had been some slow growth in the number of schools after First World War, but there also had been decline of number of students in the district. The period also witness the decline in agriculture production because of draught and other natural calamities that occurred in between 1918-20 and also the out broke of malaria and influenza.<sup>24</sup> This resulted in high death in the district. As per as unaided schools were concerned statistics for Bishnupur and Kundola for 1916-17 was not available. But these schools went up from 1917-18 to 1921-22. The total numbers of students in Bishnupur School were 209 in 1917-18 but it rose 266 in 1921-22. Similarly the total numbers of students in Kundola School were 53 in 1917-18 which rose 114 in 1921-22. This means there were increases of the changed attitude of the masses to received western and scientific education in these schools. This may be cited as positive ship towards unaided schools instead of aided schools where the schools experienced decline in the number of students during 1921-22.

**Table - III**

**Statement showing the information of expenditure for the years 1916-17 and 1921-22.<sup>25</sup>**

<b>Name of the Schools</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>
<b>Government</b>	1916-17		1921-22	
Birbhum Zila School	Do	12,304	Do	17,527
<b>Aided</b>				
Hetampur	Do	6,189	Do	6,891
Nakrakonda	Do	5,090	Do	6,263
Bolpur	Do	8,494	Do	9,691
Labpur	Do	6,129	Do	7,893
Rampurhat	Do	12,492	Do	10,980
<b>Unaided</b>	Do		Do	
Suri Benimadhab	Do	437	Do	8,011

Kirnahar	Do	4,614	Do	4,738
Rampurhat Union	Do	5,340	Do	10,686
Nalhati	Do	2,212	Do	6,525
Bishnupur	Do	.....	Do	5,702
Kundola	Do		Do	3,950

The table mention above dose suggests the expenditure in the schools which went up for nearly all kinds of schools in the district from 1916-17 to 1921-22 except for Rampurhat which showed decline in expenditure from 1916-17 to 1921-22. This must have been done in order to provide better infrastructural facilities in the schools for the promotion of education in the district.

**Table-IV**

**The following table shows the number of Students Passed in the Matriculation Examination in the District for the year 1911-12.<sup>26</sup>**

Name of the Schools	1911-1912					
	Total Number of Students	Number of Students Sent up	Number Passed			
			1 <sup>st</sup> Division	2 <sup>nd</sup> Division	3 <sup>rd</sup> Division	Total
<b>Government</b>						
Birbhum Zila	35	26	8	9	....	17
<b>Aided</b>						
Hetampur Raj	21	20	4	5	3	12
Nakrakonda	15	12	1	5	1	7
Bolpur	24	21	10	4	....	14
Labpur	20	11	2	6	....	8
Rampurhat	41	22	7	10	....	17
<b>Unaided</b>						
Suri (new)	....	....	....	....	....	....
Kirnahar	9	7	5	1	....	6
Rampurhat Union (new)	....	....	....	....	....	....
Nalhati	....	....	....	....	....	....

The table concerned with the numerical representation of the students in different types of schools (Government, Aided and Unaided) during 1911-12 who appeared in Matriculation Examination and the number of students who passed the same examination in 1<sup>st</sup> division, 2<sup>nd</sup> division and 3<sup>rd</sup> division respectively in the district.

The striking fact revealed out of the table that there were 35 students in Government School in the district out of which 26 students were sent up for matriculation

examination. It is revealed from the same table that eight (8) students secured first division and nine (9) students secured second division in the same examination. This means that 17 students were able to pass the examination out of 26 students who were sent up for matriculation examination.

The students from the aided schools of Hetampur, Nakrakonda, Bolpur, Labpur and Rampurhat took the matriculation examination. There were 21 students in the aided school of Hetampur Raj out of which 20 students were sent up for the same examination out of which four (04) students secured first division , five (05) second and three (03) third division meaning there by 12 students who passed the matriculation examination in the year 1911-12. Similarly out of 15 students in aided school in Nakrakonda 12 were sent for matriculation examination, out of which one (01), five (05) and one (01) secured first, second and third division making it a total of seven (07) students who passed the matriculation examination. Similarly out of 24 students in aided school in Bolpur 21 were sent for matriculation examination, out of which ten (10) and four (04) secured first and second division making it a total of fourteen (14) students who passed the matriculation examination. Out of 20 students in aided school in Labpur 11 were sent for matriculation examination, out of which two (02) and six (06) secured first and second division making it a total of eight (08) students who passed the matriculation examination. Similarly out of 41 students in aided school in Rampurhat 22 were sent for matriculation examination, out of which seven (07) and ten (10) secured first and second division making it a total of seventeen (17) students who passed the matriculation examination.

As far as the unaided schools in the district for the year 1911-12 was concerned none of the students appeared in the matriculation examination from Suri, Rampurhat Union and from Nalhathi. Out of total number of nine (09) students in Kirnahar Unaided School, seven (07) were sent up for matriculation examination out of which five (05) and one (01) secured first and second division making it a total of six (06) students who took up matriculation examination.

**Table-V**

**The following table shows the number of students passed in the matriculation exam in the district for the year 1916-17.<sup>27</sup>**

Name of the Schools	1916-1917					
	Total Number of Students	Number of Students Sent up	Number Passed			
			1 <sup>st</sup> Division	2 <sup>nd</sup> Division	3 <sup>rd</sup> Division	Total
<b>Government</b>						
Birbhum Zila	35	30	21	7	1	29

<b>Aided</b>						
Hetampur Raj	28	15	10	3	1	14
Nakrakonda	19	16	4	5	....	9
Bolpur	29	23	13	5	3	21
Labpur	16	13	10	3	....	13
Rampurhat	52	34	13	10	1	24
<b>Unaided</b>						
Suri (new)	....	....	....	....	....	....
Kirnahar	6	7	6	3	3	6
Rampurhat Union (new)	....	....	....	....	....	....
Nalhati	....	....	....	....	....	....

The table concerned with the numerical representation of the students in different types of schools (Government, Aided and Unaided) during 1916-17 who appeared in Matriculation Examination and the number of students who passed the same examination in 1<sup>st</sup> division, 2<sup>nd</sup> division and 3<sup>rd</sup> division respectively in the district.

The striking fact revealed out of the table that there were 35 students in Government School in the district out of which 30 students were sent up for matriculation examination. It is revealed from the same table that twenty one (21) students secured first division, seven (07) students secured second division and one (01) secured third division in the same examination. This means that 29 students were able to pass the examination out of 30 students who were sent up for matriculation examination.

The students from the aided schools of Hetampur, Nakrakonda, Bolpur, Labpur and Rampurhat took the matriculation examination. There were 28 students in the aided school of Hetampur Raj out of which 15 students were sent up for the same examination out of which ten (10) students secured first division, three (03) second and one (01) third division meaning there by 14 students who passed the matriculation examination in the year 1916-17. Similarly out of 19 students in aided school in Nakrakonda 16 were sent for matriculation examination, out of which four (04), and five (5) secured first and second division making it a total of nine (09) students who passed the matriculation examination. Similarly out of 29 students in aided school in Bolpur 23 were sent for matriculation examination, out of which thirteen (13), five (05) and three (03) secured first, second and second division making it a total of twenty one (21) students who passed the matriculation examination. Out of 16 students in aided school in Labpur 13 were sent for matriculation examination, out of which ten (10) and three (03) secured first and second division making it a total of thirteen (13) students who passed the matriculation examination. Similarly out of 52 students in aided school in Rampurhat 34 were sent for matriculation examination, out of which thirteen (13), ten (10) and one (01) secured first, second and third division making it a total of seventeen (24) students who passed the matriculation examination.

As far as the unaided schools in the district for the year 1916-17 was concerned none of the students appeared in the matriculation examination from Suri, Rampurhat Union and from Nalhati. Out of total number of seven (07) students in Kirnahar Unaided School, six (06) were sent up for matriculation examination out of which three (03) and three (03) secured first and second division making it a total of six (06) students who took up matriculation examination.

**Table-VI**

**Percentage of boys at School to Boys of Male Population in the District from 1916-1918<sup>28</sup>**

The following table provides information about total number of boys at school for the year 1916-17 and 1917-18 against the total male population of the district.

Male Population	Number of Boys of School Going Age	Number of Boys at School		% of Boys at School to Male Population	
		1916-17	1917-18	1916-17	1917-18
463838	66778	34506	36166	7.43	7.7

It is revealed from the table that there were 463838 males in the district out of which 66778 belongs to the category of school going age. There were 34506 boys who studied at different categories of schools in 1916-17 in the district, which means there were 7.43% boys at schools to that of the total male population of the district. Similarly 36166 boy's studies at different schools in 1917-18, means there were 7.7% of boys who were at schools against the total male population of the district. The percentage represents of boys at different categories of schools were not very satisfactory but it can be considered as encouraging as far as the other district of Bengal during the period of study.

Night Schools are mainly intended to teach three R's of boys engaged in other occupations during the day and to day – labourers. Sometimes the night schools is a short of continuation of the day primary school- English being taught in the evening to those who want to learn English- the ordinary primary school curriculum being followed in the day school.

**Table-VII**

**Statistics of Night Schools in the District is given below.<sup>29</sup>**

District	Schools		Pupils		Expenditure	
	1916-17	1921-22	1916-17	1921-22	1919-17	1921-22
Birbhum	77	167	1468	3304	1523	4449

The Night Schools also played an important role in the development of education specially the western education as English were also taught in evening schools, even to those who want to learn English. The table provides information about 77 and 167 schools in 1916-17 and 1921-22 in the district. There were near about 1468 peoples who received their education at 77 schools. Similarly there were 3304 students in 167 night schools in 1921-22AD. The table provides information regarding the growth of in number of night schools from 1916-17 to 1921-22. The table also suggests that there was also substantial growth of students in night schools from 1916-17 to 1921-22. It is also important that expenditure in these night schools went up from rupees 1523 in 1916-17 to 4449 in 1921-22.

The growth in the number of night schools in the district and growth in terms of students in the night schools in the district dose suggests that people were ready to accept any form of education including western education which they could not avail because of their pre occupation in the day time. This was helpful on the promotion of literacy education and the growth of number of English literates in the district.

**Table-VIII**

**Pay and Qualification of Teachers in Primary Schools in 1921-22<sup>30</sup>**

District	Public Management		Private Management	
	Range	Average	Range	Average
Birbhum	7 to 35	17	5 to 18	8.2

It must not be imagined, however, that the teacher of a privately managed school has to depend solely upon his fee receipts. He sometimes received gifts during pujas, marriages etc. and in some rural areas he is a sort of clerk of the village. The teacher of a school under public management however has to depend solely upon his pay except in a few localities. Formerly free board and lodging were provided by the local people, this practice gradually got discontinued.

**Table -IX**

**The Following Table Provides English Literates in the District.<sup>31</sup>**

Year	Religion	Total population			Literates in English		
		Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
1921	All	847570	422986	424584	10853	10662	191
1931	All	947554	472687	474687	10526	10073	453

The census report of India provides an insight about the progress of education in Birbhum district and also the incremental growth in education. The census of India 1921, volume V, Bengal, and part II, prepared by W.H. Thompson of Indian civil service, provides an idea about the total number of inhabitants of the district who were 847570(eight lakh forty seven thousand five hundred seventy) in 1921 out of which 422986(four lakh seventy four thousand six hundred eighty seven) were male

and the total number of female were 424584(four lakh twenty four thousand five hundred eighty four). Total numbers of literates in English were 10853, meaning there by 1.28% returned as literates in English. It is revealed from the Census of 1931 for the District Birbhum that the total population of the District was 947557(nine lakh forty seven thousand five hundred fifty seven) out of which the total number of male for all communities in the district were 472687 (four lakh seventy two thousand six hundred eighty seven) and the total number of female were 474887(four lakh seventy four thousand six hundred eighty seven). The total numbers of literates in English were 10526 meaning there by 1.11% returned as the literates in English in 1931.

The inhabitants of the district showed some improvement in terms of Primary and Secondary education but it failed to motivate people to receive western education. During 1920, the students in High Schools in the district were not well represented. The reason for non-representation of the students in Middle and High Schools was because of their economic backwardness which disallowed them to take admission in these schools. The people of the district also lacked in their attitude to accept western education. As a result of the lack of financial resources, the progress of western education was very slow. During 1940s the progress was visible in Primary and Secondary education.

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