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2 **PROGRESSION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION OF PUNJAB DURING**

3 **BRITISH PERIOD**

4

5 **ABSTRACT:** This study is aimed to study evolvement of primary education of Punjab throughout British
6 period that ranged from 1846 to independence of India (1947). This study is historical in nature so data
7 collection sources are both primary and secondary that includes reports, official documents and books
8 written in the investigated period. Study period has been divided into four parts on the basis of major
9 developments for exploring the progress and features of primary education in the state during British
10 period. It is concluded that primary education that was informal, community and religion based more
11 particularly indigenous at the time of annexation of British Government transformed to formal education
12 and more systematic at the time of independence. Although at the early years of British rule, primary
13 purpose of the colonial government to foster formal education system based on western models, many
14 worth mentioning changes such as establishing educational institutions through missionaries, introducing
15 western principles alongside indigenous educational practices realistically converted the education system
16 of Punjab. The most influential and significant is the period from Wood's Despatch (1854) to Indian
17 Education Commission (1884) which is rightly considered as a period of great movement and fruitfulness
18 in primary education of Punjab. Change in administrative machinery, adoption of the vernacular
19 languages in primary schooling, classification of schools according to level and introduction of private
20 managements through system of grants-in-aid are the major characteristics of this momentous period.
21 Finally, primary education in Punjab continued to flourish after the Indian Education Commission
22 because Gurmukhi Branch Schools were established to promote education in Punjabi and the 1917 Bill
23 for Compulsory Education marked a significant step toward universal primary education, emphasizing the
24 establishment of new schools to fulfill the requirements of the act rather than enforcing compulsion. This
25 bill also served as a model for subsequent educational policies in post-independence India

26 **INTRODUCTION**

27 The state of Punjab which is situated in the northwestern region of India, has a rich history that precede
28 colonial rule. Before the arrival of the British in India, Punjab was known for its high-spirited culture,
29 agricultural prosperity, and a tradition of oral education passed down through generations. However, with
30 the advent of British colonialism in the 19th century, significant changes swept through Punjab, including
31 its educational landscape. The evolution of primary education in Punjab reflects a dynamic interplay of
32 colonial policies and indigenous initiatives spanning from the annexation by the British government to
33 India's independence. To get detailed picture of primary education before independence, its certain

34 prominent features have been divided into four sections. The first section namely *primary education at*
35 *the time of annexation of British Government (1846-54)* deals with the educational status of the primary
36 education when British Government took control of the state and highlights that in this duration,
37 education of Punjab was indigenous which was serving each community according to their interests; the
38 second section portrays *primary education in the early years of British rule* in which British Government
39 focused on establishing formal education by following Western model mainly to serve the purposes of
40 colonial governance; next section which is named as *primary education from Wood's Despatch (1854) to*
41 *1854 to Indian Education Commission (1882)* known as the period of great movement and prosperity
42 because in this period some significant administrative changes were made according to recommendations
43 of Indian Education Commission; and the last period that is named as *development of education after the*
44 *Indian Education Commission to independence* emphasized on establishment of Gurumukhi Schools to
45 serve Sikh Community and taking historical step in form of Bill for Compulsory Education 1917.

46 **1. PRIMARY EDUCATION AT THE TIME OF ANNEXATION OF BRITISH** 47 **GOVERNMENT (1846-54)**

48 Education in Punjab was primarily informal and traditional, revolving around community-based
49 learning systems in the preliminary days of this period. In the days of Sikh supremacy in the Punjab,
50 education as a state function received negligible attention; even in the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh it
51 remained stagnant because most of his time was spent in controlling disturbances, consolidating and
52 extending his powers. More importantly, various education systems were in place in the province before
53 the arrival of the British, and these continued to exist even after British annexation. Three main
54 communities, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs, inhabited the Province and each one had its own
55 system of education to follow on the basis of their respective religions. Schools were often small,
56 localized institutions where children used to learn basic literacy, numeracy, religious scriptures, and
57 vocational skills under the guidance of local teachers or religious leaders. Education was deeply
58 intertwined with cultural and religious practices, with a focus on transmitting moral values and societal
59 norms alongside academic knowledge. Leitner (1971) in his book "History of Indigenous Education in the
60 Panjab" mentioned different features of each community that, the distinctive principle of Hindu social
61 life- the institution of caste- had stamped its impress on all the Hindu educational institutions which were
62 of four kinds: *Chatsalas* including Mahajani and Lande schools for trading community, *Pathshalas* for
63 religious purposes and semi-religious purposes and *secular schools*. The permanent settlement of
64 Muslims in the province led to the establishment of mosques, which served as centers for both religious
65 worship and instruction. The Muslim Primary Schools were generally called *Maktas, Madrasas* (religious
66 and secular) and *Koran schools* whereas *Sikh indigenous education* was comprised of the *Gurumukhi*

67 *schools* where the Sikh children received their instruction that were attached to a *Dharmshala* and was
68 chiefly of a religious character, what was pertinent about these schools that the system of co-education
69 was existed in these schools ¹. After getting the knowledge of writing alphabets, children then learnt the
70 forms of numerals and simple enumeration and the signs for weights and measures. This was followed by
71 instruction in Japji and other books from the *Granth Sahib* containing the sacred writings of the Sikhs.
72 There was also another category which is called *mixed indigenous education* including *Persian schools*,
73 *Vernacular schools* and *Anglo-vernacular schools*. From above classification it is witnessed that
74 Pathshalas, Koran schools, and Gurmukhi schools were respectively Hindu, Muslim and Sikh institutions
75 chiefly or entirely devoted to the propagation of religious teaching. This shows that Hindu children got
76 the elementary knowledge of Shastras and learnt Mantras, Muslim children repeated and learnt Koran,
77 Gurmukhi character was taught and practice in the study of the Granth or portions thereof acquired for
78 Sikh children by Bhai.² In these schools, the Padha/Pandit (if a Hindu) or the Mian/Maulvi (if a Muslim)
79 taught his young pupils mental arithmetic, learning to count mentally and how to keep business –
80 correspondence and Behi-Khata (Punjab Records, April, 1855). The income of the teacher was derived
81 either from land, or from the contributions of his fraternity or from the endowment of the *Dharmshala* to
82 which the school was attached or similar to the Muslim teachers from the presents of his pupils.³ Overall,
83 it is noticed that the people of Punjab generally acknowledged the moral importance of education and
84 prefer to send their children to various institutions irrespective of their religious background. The Punjab
85 Administration Report (1848-50) noted that all classes, both agricultural and non-agricultural, expressed a
86 strong desire for education for their children.

87 **Female Education:** While elaborating female education within this duration, it is observed that the
88 education imparted to females was almost entirely of a religious or semi-religious character. Mehta
89 (1929) while mentioning the status of female education stated that “the Punjabis were not opposed to
90 female education but, considering the home to be the only sphere for women to get education and content
91 was predominantly to recite the Koran, read the Granth or Janam Sakhi, or study the Ramayana or
92 Bhagwad -Gita at home. Muhammadan girls generally read the Koran at the mosque; Sikh girls attended
93 Dharmshalas; while Hindu girls mostly received their education at home. The teachers were generally the
94 Mullah, the Bhai, or the family priest, though female teachers-Hindu, Muslim and Sikh – were also to be
95 found”⁴, in contrast Leitner (1971) made different classification, and concluded that female indigenous
96 education was divided into three categories such as female schools for Sikh girls, female schools for
97 Muhammadan girls and instruction at homes.⁵

98 From above observations regarding the condition of primary education in Punjab before the arrival of the
99 British it may be concluded that education was characterized by informal, community-based learning

100 systems with limited access to formal schooling. Mayhew in his book entitled *“The Education of India*
101 *(1926)”* discussed the features of the indigenous system of education as *education was required to be*
102 *morally effective that must rest on a spiritual foundations.*⁶ In this system, education and religion were
103 seen as compatible; a teacher, while fulfilling their responsibilities, was also practicing dharma and
104 fulfilling a religious duty.

105 **PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE EARLY YEARS OF BRITISH**

106 The arrival of British colonial rulers in Punjab led to substantial changes in the educational landscape.
107 The British administration aimed to establish a formalized education system based on Western models,
108 primarily to serve the interests of colonial governance, produced a class of clerks, and propagated
109 Western values and knowledge. This marked a departure from the indigenous educational practices then
110 prevalent in Punjab. In the early 19th century, under the administration of William Bentinck, some efforts
111 were made to introduce rudimentary forms of education, but these were often patchy and insufficient.
112 “Lord William Bentinck famous declaration of March 1835, which promulgated that the chief aim of the
113 educational policy should be to promote knowledge of European literature and science and that all funds
114 appropriated for the purpose of education would henceforth be employed in imparting native population
115 knowledge of English literature and Science through the medium of English language.”⁷ Bentinck's
116 policies aimed at promoting western-style education, but they faced significant challenges in
117 implementation due to various socio-political factors, including resistance from traditional structures and
118 limited infrastructure. Certain prominent developments of this mentioned period are explained hereunder.

119 **Missionaries as the pioneers of Education Punjab:** The missionaries were in a true sense the founders
120 of education in the Punjab. Missionaries played a crucial role as pioneers of education in Punjab before
121 independence, establishing schools and institutions to provide education, particularly to the marginalized
122 communities. Their principal aim was unequivocally evangelical, but they imparted secular education as
123 well; and although many missionary institutions had not been established before Government schools, yet
124 the missionaries worked as a party not in direct connection with the Government but were largely
125 instrumental in popularizing the British system of education in the Punjab. Institutions like Christian
126 Mission Schools and Colleges, such as Kot Garh in the hills near Simla in 1843 by the Church Missionary
127 Society, schools at Jullundur and in Lahore 1848 by the American Mission, The American Presbyterian
128 School in Ludhiana, schools at Amritsar by American mission (1853) and Ambala Cantonment by
129 Church mission(1854),Forman Christian College in Lahore, and schools run by missionaries in various
130 parts of Punjab such as Rawalpindi,Ambala, Jandiala were instrumental in spreading education. In the
131 field of female education missionary societies were much ahead of the government, because female
132 education formed no part of the official programme. In this era, first elementary school for females was

133 set up in Ludhiana in 1836 by the American Presbyterian Mission.⁸ These institutions not only provided
134 basic education but also introduced modern curriculum and teaching methods, contributing significantly
135 to the educational system of Punjab. Their efforts helped in laying the groundwork for a more inclusive
136 and accessible education system in the region.

137 **Language Diversity in Punjab Education:** A need was felt to identify the language of the government
138 work (revenue, judicial) and as medium of instruction in schools. Thus, the aim of education as set forth
139 in 1835 and subsequently partially modified in 1840. It was decided that European knowledge and Science
140 should be taught in vernacular language. However due to the diversity of vernacular languages, it led to
141 the waste of efforts and the perpetuation of petty divisions among the people. After considering the
142 linguistic condition of the province, it was decided that Urdu was to be replaced by Persian as the court
143 language for the transaction of public business, though the change was to be brought about gradually to
144 prevent any hardship to the people. Correspondence between high officers of State was of course to be
145 carried on in English. The whole language transition from Persian to Urdu in all spheres was completed
146 throughout the province by the end of 1855.⁹ In the Punjab Administration Report (1851-52, 1852-
147 53; 184), the linguistic condition of Punjabi language was highlighted that in spite of having sacred origin,
148 and in the days of Sikh supremacy both a courtly and a priestly tongue, was now rapidly falling into
149 desuetude” and was “degenerating into a mere provincial or rude dialect”; whereas Urdu or Hindustani-
150 was becoming familiar to the upper and middle classes. Urdu was hence introduced as medium of
151 instruction and Persian and Urdu languages were to be taught in schools under the patronage of
152 government.

153 **Classification of Schools:** Coming to the educational institutions established by the government in this
154 phase, it may be pointed out that schools were not graded, like present day schools, as High Schools,
155 Middle Schools, or Primary Schools. The broad divisions were *Zillah Schools* and *Tahsil* schools in
156 which *Zillah Schools* were located at the head, quarters of the various districts, where English was a
157 subject of instruction and an education of a higher class was generally provided; and schools situated at
158 *Tahsil* towns or in the interior of districts where the education imparted was strictly of an elementary
159 character, though provision for the study of English existed in some places.

160 In summary, certain remarks are reported in the progress of primary education in the early years of
161 British rule. First of all, the colonial period witnessed significant changes with the introduction of
162 formalized education based on western models, although these reforms were often designed to fulfill
163 colonial aims and had implications for indigenous educational practices and social structures, many
164 changes in real terms shaped the education system at primary stage of the state. Moreover, it was very
165 difficult to evaluate the development of primary education as data related to the number of scholars on the

166 rolls or of daily attendance at these schools was unfortunately not available. Considering these aspects,
167 the general educational condition of the province was thus summarized in the Punjab Administration
168 Report, 1854-55, 1855-56 “It would probably be premature to direct any very strenuous efforts at present
169 upon English Education. The trails that have heretofore been made in the Punjab had not been very
170 successful. It may be better to rest a while until a class of youths shall have raised fit to receive the higher
171 European learning by means of the English language. The great and immediate object for attainment it the
172 imparting of sound elementary knowledge in the vernacular form.”

173

174 **3. PRIMARY EDUCATION FROM WOOD’S DESPATCH (1854) TO INDIAN EDUCATION**

175 **COMMISSION 1882:** The period from 1854 to 1884 in British education in Punjab was marked by
176 significant developments and productivity. Within this time, the state began to assume a controlling role,
177 leading to a unified educational system across India. Western culture and educational methods were not
178 only introduced during this era but also adapted to fit the Indian context. British government took upon
179 the responsibility of ameliorating the moral and intellectual condition of the people and it is the first
180 example in the history of the province because “education was merely a private concern in the pre-British
181 period and the state never became conscious of the uplift of its subjects.”¹¹

182 Developments in the above mentioned period are explained in the following paragraphs.

183 **Organization of the Punjab Education Department:** Various systems of primary education had been
184 tried since 1856 when Punjab Education Department was organized. The expansion of vernacular primary
185 education left two course of action open to the Punjab Education Department – one was to make use of
186 already existing indigenous schools and the other was to start its own schools. This Department played a
187 pivotal role in laying the groundwork for primary education in the province. Various communities
188 contributed to this foundational effort, which included the establishment of schools at each tahsil
189 headquarters and the enhancement of indigenous schools. A new secular curriculum was formulated, with
190 Urdu serving as the medium of instruction, ensuring broader accessibility to education. To oversee this
191 system, deputy inspectors were appointed for two or three districts, supported by sub-deputy inspectors,
192 facilitating the effective implementation of educational policies and promoting the growth of a more
193 structured educational framework in Punjab.¹²

194 **New mode of classification of Vernacular Education:** The year 1861-62 was known as a land mark in
195 the history of vernacular education in the Province so far as a new mode of classifying vernacular schools
196 in to *town and village schools* was recommended, since the term “Tahsili” did not in any way define the
197 status of the school. Disseminating of vernacular education among the different communities of the
198 Province began at the very beginning by the establishment of a school at each tehsil head quarter and the

199 improvement of indigenous schools. The sites of the schools were fixed by the Deputy or Sub-Deputy
200 Inspectors in consultation with the Deputy Commissioners concerned. The town schools were to reach a
201 certain level of efficiency instead of being identical to the old Tehsili schools which were distinguished
202 merely by being at the headquarters of Tehsils.¹³ A new curriculum of secular instruction was formulated
203 and began to be imparted through the medium of Urdu. Persian was allowed but Urdu was insisted on.
204 These tehsili schools were supported out of the general revenues. Also, efforts had already been made to
205 improve the *indigenous, Koran and Hindi schools* by the Department.

206 **Higher, Middle, and Lower Class Schools:** Another mode of classification namely higher, middle, and
207 lower class schools was adopted in 1863-64. All *Zilla* schools belonged to the higher class, all vernacular
208 town schools to the middle and all village schools to the lower class. The present day classification of
209 schools into High, Middle and Lower Class Schools was adopted in 1868-69, when the new system of
210 classification for India was introduced after independence; English schools were classed separately from
211 vernacular ones. It was in the year 1870-71 that the vernacular schools (town and village) were classified
212 as *Primary and Middle Class* Schools. The Primary School was to contain four classes and the Middle
213 School comprised of six classes. Where there was any demand for higher education the Vernacular Upper
214 Class Schools were established. A uniform system of examination was introduced.¹⁴

215
216 **Introduction of Private Management through System of Grants-in-aid:** During this period, private
217 management in education was introduced in India through a system of grants-in-aid to cater to the
218 country's dense population. The primary conditions that schools had to meet in order to qualify for
219 government grants were few and straightforward. The schools were to be open through government
220 inspection (Punjab Records, 1859); grants were to be made only for secular education, there was to be
221 absolutely no interference with religious instruction on the part of inspecting officers who were to take no
222 notice of it; however small some fee was to be charged from pupils attending these schools but female
223 schools purely vernacular schools and normal schools were exempted from this provision. Grants were to
224 be made not for the general expenses of the school, but also for specific purpose. e.g., salaries of the staff,
225 building, or equipment, and lastly, the amount of state aid were not ordinarily to exceed one-half of the
226 entire expenditure on an institution.¹⁵

227 **Female Education:** The Educational Dispatch of 1854 entrusted the responsibility of female education to
228 the Supreme Government, and this issue was given proper attention by local governments across India.
229 The conception of the Punjabi as regards female education was however, radically different from the
230 Western ideal. It was very difficult for people to recognize female education as traditional bonds such
231 concept of early marriage in Hindu community, the *purdah* system among the Muslims, popular

232 prejudices and poor acceptance of females at workplace had created certain obstacles in progress of
233 female education. Therefore, under these circumstances no substantial progress was achieved in the
234 education of females under studied period¹⁶

235 **Recommendations of Indian Education Commission:** As the year 1882 marked the close of one era and
236 the beginning of another in the history of Education in India which were dealt with in the next section
237 under the heading “*Indian Education Commission of 1882.*” The figures, as given in the reports showed
238 that the progress of primary education in these years especially in 1883-84 had been large. The number of
239 boys was the highest ever reached previously. More specifically in this period special stress was laid on
240 the increase and improvement of the indigenous schools which were of the following kinds:-Persian
241 Schools; Persian and Koran Schools; Purely Koran Schools; Arabic Schools; Gurmukhi Schools; Hindi
242 (Nagri Schools);Sanskrit Schools; Schools for Lande Mahajani; Miscellaneous Schools.¹⁷ However,
243 Punjab Education Report (1872-73) explained the condition of indigenous schools that in spite of the best
244 efforts of the department the progress of primary education was far from satisfactory. The chief factor of
245 this failure was the neglect of indigenous schools by the Department and considered mere ‘*assemblages*
246 *of lads*’ as it was also admitted that the indigenous schools remained out of the Department, unaided,
247 uninspected and unrecognized in any way. Overall, the Punjab Government on the recommendation of the
248 Indian Education Commission had taken several measures. The most prominent were improvement of the
249 inspecting staff, appointment of a lady inspectors to visit the female schools, the revision of the grant-in-
250 aid rules, the revision of the standard of primary education with a view of simplification as recommended
251 by the Commission and arrangements for the opening of the Punjab Chiefs’ College at Lahore (Punjab
252 Administration Report 1883-84, and Punjab Education Report, 1883-84) that modified the school
253 education to some extent.

254 Therefore, the period from Wood’s Despatch, often referred to as "the Magna Carta of English
255 Education in India," to the Indian Education Commission of 1882, primary education in Punjab
256 underwent significant advancements. The Punjab Education Department was organized to oversee
257 educational initiatives. The vernacular system was classified to make education more accessible,
258 reflecting local languages. Schools were categorized into higher, middle, and lower classes, with private
259 management facilitated through grants-in-aid. Efforts to promote female education were initiated,
260 influenced by recommendations from the Indian Education Commission, which directed provision,
261 extension and improvement of primary education.

262 **4. DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION AFTER THE INDIAN EDUCATION**
263 **COMMISSION TO INDEPENDENCE OF INDIA:** The Indian Education Commission recommended
264 setting a minimum expenditure on education from District and Municipal Funds, with a specific

265 proportion designated for primary education in the case of District Funds. This, along with other
266 suggestions from the commission, played a crucial role in the steady improvement of primary schools.
267 However, a major challenge was the difficulty in finding sufficiently qualified teachers.¹⁸ Efforts were
268 made to enhance the training of primary school teachers, including improving inspection provisions for
269 these institutions, with all costs to be covered by the government. In 1890, the syllabus for schools was
270 revised and simplified based on the commission's recommendations. There were minimal changes to the
271 structure of the controlling agency, while the roles of school inspectors were adjusted as suggested by the
272 education commission. It was decided that an inspector of schools should henceforth be a controlling and
273 an advising officer. It should be his chief duty to keep in touch with the wishes and requirements of the
274 people, to study the educational needs of his circle, to stimulate progress, to suggest improvements and to
275 control his subordinate staff. Rules for the inspection of schools by Tahsildars and their Naibs were issued
276 under the authority of the Financial Commissioner in December 1883. (Punjab Education Report, 1883-
277 84;65).

278 **Establishment of Gurmukhi Branch Schools:** Arrangements were made in 1890 to establish Gurmukhi
279 branch schools, where there were a considerable number of Sikh residents, and a desire for instruction in
280 Punjabi was found to exist, but scholars were taught both Punjabi and Urdu. The curriculum of these
281 schools was so arranged that boys, on the completion of the course, were able to join the upper primary
282 department of an ordinary board school. But the scheme collapsed early in 1892 as these schools did not
283 make any appreciable progress. All these primary schools formerly under the Department, with the
284 exception of the model or practicing schools attached to training institutions, were hereafter transferred to
285 the management of local bodies and rules were laid down with a view to afford every encouragement to
286 their conversion.¹⁹

287 Moving further, the period of 1900-1920 was known as period of mass education for the reason being
288 that the growth of political consciousness had changed the whole angle of vision and the outlook
289 transformed. All who were in any way interested in bettering India had realized that village education is
290 the only solution of the problem of political liberation. There was also a reduction in the number of
291 indigenous and elementary schools examined for grants due to the instability of these schools, to a
292 reduction in the rates and to adverse times. As a result, the educational conference recommended a
293 complete revision of the primary education system. In 1902, several significant departmental measures
294 were introduced, such as the inclusion of agriculture, singing, and the use of magic lanterns in schools, to
295 improve the situation. Other initiatives included the organization of an educational exhibition in Lahore in

296 1904, promoting girls' education by encouraging the wives and widows of teachers to open girls' schools,
297 the establishment of rural schools in 1908, and the introduction of schools for children from lower
298 castes—all aimed at improving primary education.²⁰

299 **Bill for Compulsory Education 1917:** The years 1917-18 are significant for two key reasons. First, in
300 1910, the government had thoroughly examined the issue of compulsory education in relation to
301 Gokhale's Bill. In 1917, a Bill for Compulsory Primary Education was introduced and published in
302 October for public opinion. Another important development of this period was the adoption of a proactive
303 policy regarding vernacular education in 1918-19. Some important alternations such as the school classes
304 numbered from I to X (This was in accordance with the recommendations of the Directors' Conference of
305 1917); Classes I to IV formed the primary department, V-VIII the middle department, and IX and X the
306 high department in the educational systems of the province. The distinction between upper and lower
307 primary schools and the term elementary school was abolished in 1919 and it was decided that now there
308 would be one standard primary school containing four classes. The new primary school provided
309 accurately the minimum education that may be prescribed under the New Compulsory Education Act.
310 The scheme for the expansion and improvement of vernacular education was further initiated in a circular
311 letter issued to Commissioners in July 1917 in which the Local Government outlined its policy as
312 follows:“Ultimately Board schools should be established at every centre where an average attendance of
313 not less than fifty children may be expected; provided that a distance of two miles by the nearest route
314 should ordinarily intervene between two Board schools” (Punjab Education Report 1917-18, p. 13).

315 In this interval, significant emphasis was placed on the establishment of new schools rather than
316 enforcing compulsory education, as a rapid shift to compulsory education was neither anticipated nor
317 desired. While these changes improved the conditions of ordinary village schools, they also provided an
318 opportunity to elevate educational standards in rural areas through the introduction of Lower Middle
319 Schools. These schools were created by adding fifth and sixth classes to larger, well-staffed primary
320 schools. This new class was expected to be popular and had the potential to evolve into full Middle
321 Schools in the act. Another significant change was the decision to delay the teaching of English until the
322 middle department, specifically the fifth grade, in all government and board schools. This measure aimed
323 to address the challenges rural students faced in accessing secondary education. Previously, English was
324 introduced in the fourth primary class, which meant that students transitioning from vernacular schools to
325 Anglo-Vernacular schools had to spend an additional year in a 'Junior Special Class' learning English,
326 while their more privileged peers had already learned it in the fourth and fifth grades.²¹

327 Therefore, after the Indian Education Commission, primary education in Punjab continued to evolve.
328 Gurmukhi Branch Schools were established to promote education in Punjabi. The establishment of the
329 Punjab Education Department organized educational efforts, culminating in the Bill for Compulsory
330 Education in 1917, marking a significant step towards universal primary education and emphasis was
331 given to opening of new schools for the full provision of the this act. Its recommendations included
332 mandating primary education for children within a specified age range, thereby aiming to increase literacy
333 rates among the populace and ensure basic education for all children, laying foundational principles that
334 would shape educational policies leading up to independence in 1947. The impact of this bill on primary
335 education in Punjab was twofold: it formalized the importance of education as a fundamental right,
336 encouraging more children to enroll in schools. This led to a gradual increase in literacy rates and
337 educational attainment among the population, laying the groundwork for future educational reforms in the
338 region. However, it also faced challenges in implementation due to limited infrastructure and resources in
339 rural areas, which persisted until independence. Overall, the 1917 Bill for Compulsory Education marked
340 a pivotal step towards universal primary education in Punjab, setting a precedent for subsequent
341 educational policies in post-independence India.

342 **CONCLUSION**

343 From above discussion it is concluded that, the introduction of western education, the
344 establishment of government-run schools, and the implementation of standardized curricula represented
345 key aspects of British educational reforms in Punjab. While these initiatives aimed to expand access to
346 education and improve literacy rates, they also led to the marginalization and erosion of traditional
347 educational practices and languages. Over the early years of British rule in Punjab, primary education
348 underwent significant changes as schools were classified based on funding and curriculum, ranging from
349 government-run institutions to missionary and indigenous schools, each catering to different socio-
350 economic strata and educational philosophies. Missionaries played a fundamental role in establishing
351 educational institutions, focusing on spreading western education and Christian values, introducing
352 western principles alongside indigenous educational practices. Language diversity posed both challenges
353 and opportunities, with efforts to integrate vernacular languages like Punjabi and Urdu alongside English.
354 Major developments in the Primary Education Punjab can be seen in the period that ranged from Wood's
355 Despatch to the Indian Education Commission of 1882 including change in administrative machinery,
356 adoption of the vernacular languages in primary schooling, classification of schools according to level,
357 also stimulation and aiding of educational institutions through private enterprises were also harmonized.
358 Finally, the 1917 Bill for Compulsory Education in Punjab was a crucial legislative move during the
359 British colonial era, designed to broaden access to education.

360 The developments in India's primary education system prior to independence have had a
361 lasting impact on its evolution. William Bentinck's policies of 1835 played a foundational role in
362 introducing Western-style education, which was further shaped by the influence of missionaries and key
363 documents such as Wood's Despatch (1854) and the Indian Education Commission (1884). These reforms
364 championed a structured education system, advocating for the use of English as the medium of instruction
365 while emphasizing the importance of primary education. They set the stage for the creation of a network
366 of schools across the country. The Indian Education Commission (1884) built upon these earlier policies,
367 recommending improvements in teacher training and curriculum. It stressed the need for both vernacular
368 and English education, with an aim to make education more inclusive and accessible. These early
369 initiatives were instrumental in the classification of schools into High, Middle, and Lower Class
370 categories in 1868-69. Additionally, the introduction of the grants-in-aid system encouraged private
371 involvement in education. The 1917 Bill for Compulsory Education further highlighted the importance of
372 ensuring access to education for all. These frameworks laid the foundation for India's future educational
373 policies and reforms. In the 20th century and beyond, they guided the development of policies like the
374 National Policy on Education (1986), Operation Blackboard, the District Primary Education Programme,
375 and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, all aimed at expanding primary education. This legacy continues in the 21st
376 century through initiatives like the Right to Education Act (2009) and the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan,
377 which promote inclusive and equitable education for all children in India.

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