

Colonial Pedagogy and Regional Modernity: Ravenshaw College and the Institutionalization of English Studies in Odisha (1868–1950)

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Abstract

This article examines the institutionalization of English studies in Odisha through the historical development of Ravenshaw College between 1868 and 1950. While colonial education in India has been extensively studied through metropolitan centres such as Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, the role of regional institutions in shaping localized intellectual cultures remains comparatively underexplored. Drawing upon colonial educational policy, institutional archives, student periodicals, and postcolonial theoretical frameworks, this study argues that Ravenshaw College functioned not merely as an instrument of imperial pedagogy but as a critical site for the emergence of provincial modernity in Odisha.

Established within the broader framework of British educational reforms such as Macaulay's Minute (1835) and Wood's Despatch (1854), Ravenshaw College introduced structured English literary education to a linguistically and economically marginalized region. Through its curriculum, faculty, student writing, and publications such as *The Ravenshavian*, the institution fostered an English-educated Odia middle class that played a pivotal role in linguistic nationalism, literary modernity, and anti-colonial political consciousness. The article further demonstrates how English literary education, initially designed as a tool of colonial governance, was appropriated and reworked by Odia intellectuals into a medium of critique, creativity, and resistance.

By situating Ravenshaw College within broader debates on colonial knowledge production, nationalism, and regional intellectual history, this paper contributes to the historiography of

English studies in India and foregrounds the importance of provincial institutions in shaping modern Indian intellectual life.

Keywords: Ravenshaw College, *The Ravenshavian*, English Studies, Colonial Education, Odisha, Provincial Modernity, Public Sphere, Nationalism, Odia Intelligentsia

Introduction: From Colonial Pedagogy to Provincial Modernity

The introduction of English education in colonial India has often been understood as a deliberate instrument of imperial governance, most explicitly articulated in Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education" (1835) and Charles Wood's Despatch (1854). These policy documents not only established English as the medium of higher education but also envisioned the creation of an intermediary class that would mediate between colonial rulers and the wider population.¹ In this framework, English literary education was not merely pedagogical; it was ideological, designed to inculcate European values, rationality, and moral discipline among colonial subjects.

The ideological dimensions of English education have been most influentially theorized by Gauri Viswanathan in *Masks of Conquest*, where she argues that English literature functioned as a key apparatus of colonial control. Literature, in her formulation, masked the coercive realities of empire under the guise of moral and aesthetic instruction. However, while Viswanathan's intervention fundamentally reshaped our understanding of colonial education, her analysis remains largely focused on policy and metropolitan-colonial relations, leaving open the question of how English education was received, negotiated, and transformed in specific regional contexts.

This gap becomes particularly evident in the case of Odisha, a region that has remained largely marginal within the historiography of colonial education. Most existing scholarship has concentrated on metropolitan centres such as Calcutta or Bombay, where English education was first institutionalised and where the colonial state's educational policies were most visible. By contrast, Odisha—administratively subordinate within the Bengal Presidency and linguistically marginalised—offers a distinct and understudied site for examining the local dynamics of English education.

¹ Macaulay's Minute (1835) and Wood's Despatch (1854) laid the foundation for English-medium education in colonial India and emphasised the creation of an intermediary class of English-educated Indians.

It is here that Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* provides a crucial conceptual framework. Chakrabarty argues that modernity, as theorised through European history, cannot be understood as a universal model but must be re-examined through the experiences of non-European societies. In this sense, Odisha represents what may be termed a "provincial modernity," where global intellectual formations such as English studies were not simply replicated but reconstituted through local histories, linguistic practices, and institutional conditions.

Ravenshaw College, established in 1868 as Cuttack Zilla School and upgraded to a college in 1876, emerges as a central institution in this process. As one of the earliest centres of higher education in eastern India, it played a pivotal role in introducing structured English education to the Odia-speaking population. Yet, its significance lies not merely in its institutional status but in its function as a site of cultural negotiation, where colonial pedagogy intersected with regional aspirations.

This article argues that Ravenshaw College functioned as a critical site where English literary education, initially introduced as an instrument of colonial governance, was transformed into a medium of regional intellectual formation and nationalist discourse. Through its curriculum, faculty, student writings, and publications such as *The Ravenshavian*, the college facilitated the emergence of an Odia public sphere in which English became both a language of power and a tool of critique.

In advancing this argument, the article brings together archival materials—such as zilla school reports, curriculum records, and student magazines—with postcolonial theoretical frameworks to offer a nuanced account of English studies in Odisha. It seeks to move beyond binary understandings of colonial education as either domination or resistance, and instead to foreground the processes of negotiation, adaptation, and reappropriation that characterised the provincial experience.

This article therefore argues that English studies in Odisha cannot be understood as a simple extension of colonial pedagogy; rather, through institutions such as Ravenshaw College and print cultures such as *The Ravenshavian*, English was refunctioned into a medium of provincial modernity, enabling the emergence of an Odia public sphere and a politically conscious intelligentsia.

Colonial Education, English Studies, and the Question of Region

The study of colonial education in India has been shaped by a diverse body of scholarship that foregrounds the relationship between knowledge, power, and cultural transformation. Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest* remains foundational in this regard, demonstrating how English literary education functioned as an ideological instrument of colonial rule. By situating the origins of English studies in the colonial context rather than the British metropole, Viswanathan fundamentally reorients the historiography of the discipline.

Krishna Kumar's *Political Agenda of Education* complements this perspective by examining how educational policies were shaped by broader political objectives, particularly the need to produce a compliant administrative class. Similarly, Bernard Cohn's *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge* highlights the centrality of knowledge production in sustaining colonial power, showing how institutions such as schools and colleges functioned as sites where colonial authority was both exercised and legitimised.

Ania Loomba's *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* extends this analysis by emphasising the cultural and ideological dimensions of colonial encounters, drawing attention to the ambivalence and hybridity inherent in colonial education. Rather than viewing English education as a unidirectional imposition, Loomba underscores the ways in which colonial subjects actively engaged with and reinterpreted the knowledge systems imposed upon them.

Despite these significant contributions, the regional dimensions of English education remain underexplored. Scholarship on Odisha's educational history, including works by B.C. Ray, B.K. Sahoo², and H.K. Pattnaik³, has largely focused on administrative developments and institutional growth, often without engaging with the theoretical implications of English education. Archival materials from the Odisha State Archives provide valuable insights into the spread of schooling and curriculum formation but have yet to be fully integrated into broader postcolonial debates.

² B.K. Sahoo in "Ravenshaw College and the Rise of English Education in Odisha." talks about the institutional evolution of Ravenshaw college.

³ H.K. Pattnaik's *Education in Odisha: Colonial and Postcolonial Perspectives* provides colonial and postcolonial perspectives on education in Odisha, alongside administrative developments.

This article addresses this gap by bringing together archival evidence and theoretical analysis to examine the institutionalization of English studies in Odisha, with particular emphasis on Ravenshaw College. In doing so, it contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of colonial education in India by foregrounding the role of provincial institutions in shaping intellectual and cultural life.

Colonial Knowledge, Hybridity, and the Public Sphere

This study draws upon four interrelated theoretical frameworks to analyse the institutionalization of English studies in Odisha.

First, Gauri Viswanathan's concept of English literature as a form of colonial ideology provides a foundation for understanding the role of curriculum in shaping colonial subjectivity. By positioning literature as a "mask" for imperial authority, Viswanathan highlights the subtle ways in which cultural forms were used to legitimize colonial rule.

Second, Homi Bhabha's notions of hybridity and mimicry offer a lens through which to examine the ambivalent nature of colonial education. Bhabha argues that colonial subjects do not simply imitate the colonizer but produce hybrid identities that disrupt the authority of colonial discourse. In the context of Ravenshaw College, this framework helps to explain how English education could simultaneously reinforce and challenge colonial power.

Third, Antonio Gramsci's concept of the "organic intellectual" is particularly useful for understanding the role of figures such as Gopabandhu Das⁴ and Godabarish Mishra.⁵ As educators and public intellectuals, they mediated between colonial knowledge systems and regional aspirations, using English education as a tool for social reform and political mobilisation.

Finally, Jürgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere provides a framework for analysing the emergence of a discursive space in which ideas of identity, nationalism, and modernity could be debated. Through institutions such as Ravenshaw College and publications like *The*

⁴ Gopabandhu Das, in *Bandira Atmakatha*, shows how educators, writers, and public figures bridged the gap between colonial pedagogy and local cultural contexts.

⁵ Godabarish Mishra, in *Odia Sahityara Itihasa*, serves as one of the key medium through which Gramsci conceptualises the theory of the "organic intellectual."

Ravenshavian, English education contributed to the formation of an Odia public sphere that extended beyond the classroom into the realms of print culture and political discourse.

Together, these theoretical perspectives enable a nuanced analysis of English studies in Odisha as a site of ideological production, cultural negotiation, and intellectual transformation.

Colonial Policy and the Uneven Terrain of Education in Odisha

The institutionalization of English studies in Odisha must be situated within the broader framework of colonial educational policy and its uneven regional implementation. While the ideological foundations of English education were articulated through Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education" (1835) and Charles Wood's Despatch (1854), their practical realization varied significantly across regions.⁶ In the case of Odisha, educational development was shaped not only by imperial priorities but also by the province's marginal position within the Bengal Presidency.

Throughout the early nineteenth century, Odisha remained educationally underdeveloped compared to metropolitan centres such as Calcutta. Administrative neglect, limited financial investment, and linguistic marginalization contributed to restricted access to formal education. The refusal to establish English schools in districts such as Balasore due to lack of funds illustrates the structural inequalities that defined colonial educational expansion (General Report 163).

At the same time, this marginality generated a distinct form of educational aspiration. The demand for English education among Odia elites, reflected in petitions for schools and scholarships, indicates that colonial pedagogy was not simply imposed from above but actively sought by sections of the local population. This demand must be understood in relation to the socio-economic transformations of the period, particularly the increasing importance of administrative employment and the emergence of an English-educated middle class (Kumar 45).

⁶ Macaulay's Minute (1835) advocated English education as a means of creating an intermediary class, while Wood's Despatch (1854) institutionalized this vision through a structured educational system across British India.

The establishment of Cuttack Zilla School in the mid-nineteenth century marked a turning point in this process. As one of the earliest institutional sites for English education in Odisha, the school functioned as a crucial intermediary between colonial policy and provincial reality.

Zilla Schools and the Institutional Foundations of English Studies

Curriculum and Knowledge Formation

The zilla school reports from the 1840s and 1850s provide a detailed account of the early structure of English education in Odisha.⁷ These reports reveal a curriculum that was both comprehensive and ideologically charged, encompassing history, geography, grammar, mathematics, and natural philosophy.

The first-class curriculum at Cuttack School included Oliver Goldsmith's *History of England*, Marshman's *Brief Survey of History*, Lennie's *Grammar*, and Bonycastle's *Arithmetic*, alongside translation and composition exercises (General Report 160).

This curricular structure reflects what Bernard Cohn identifies as the colonial state's effort to reorder knowledge systems through European epistemologies (Cohn 6). The inclusion of English history and geography served to situate colonial subjects within an imperial worldview, where Britain functioned as the centre of historical and cultural authority.

At the same time, the curriculum was mediated through vernacular translation. Students were required to translate texts "from English into the Vernacular," indicating that English education operated through a bilingual framework (General Report 160).⁸

This process exemplifies what Sanjay Seth describes as the "translation of knowledge systems," where Western epistemologies were rearticulated through local linguistic frameworks (Seth 23). Thus, English education in Odisha was not a simple imposition but a negotiated process of adaptation and reinterpretation.

Pedagogy and the Discipline of Learning

⁷ The General Reports on Public Instruction in Bengal Presidency (1844–50) provide detailed insights into curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional development in Odisha.

⁸ Translation practices in colonial schools often involved teachers compiling and dictating materials in vernacular languages due to the lack of printed textbooks in Odia.

The pedagogical practices of zilla schools reveal the disciplinary mechanisms through which English education was internalized. Emphasis on grammar, composition, memorization, and recitation created a structured learning environment that prioritized linguistic precision and intellectual discipline.

Reports from the Cuttack Normal School indicate that teachers actively translated and compiled educational materials, dictating lessons in Odia while drawing upon English and Bengali sources (Report on Public Instruction 119).

This pedagogical mediation highlights the role of teachers as cultural intermediaries, a point that aligns with Gauri Viswanathan's argument that colonial education relied on local agents to disseminate imperial knowledge (Viswanathan 85). Teachers thus functioned not merely as instructors but as translators of epistemological frameworks.

At the same time, the emphasis on memorization and repetition reflects what Michel Foucault describes as the disciplinary function of modern educational institutions, where knowledge is linked to systems of surveillance and regulation (Foucault 170). The classroom, in this sense, becomes a space where colonial authority is internalized through routine practices of learning.

Examinations and Intellectual Formation

The examination system played a central role in consolidating English education as an institutional practice. Scholarship examination papers from the mid-nineteenth century demonstrate the rigor and scope of English instruction in Odisha.

Students were tested on canonical literary texts such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Milton's poetry, Gray's elegies, and Bacon's essays, alongside history and arithmetic (General Report Appendix D).

These examinations required not only memorization but also interpretation and analytical reasoning. Questions on *Hamlet* demanded close textual reading, while Bacon's essays required engagement with abstract philosophical concepts.

This reflects what Gauri Viswanathan identifies as the transformation of literature into a moral and intellectual training ground for colonial subjects (Viswanathan 44). English

literature thus became a means of cultivating interpretive skills while simultaneously reinforcing the authority of the English canon.

Moreover, the examination system functioned as a mechanism of social differentiation. Access to advanced English education was largely limited to elite groups, particularly the sons of government officials, thereby linking linguistic competence to social mobility and administrative power (Basu 112).⁹

While English education undoubtedly created new opportunities for sections of Odia society, these opportunities were distributed unevenly. Access to institutions such as Ravenshaw College remained largely confined to urban, upper-caste, and economically privileged male students throughout much of the colonial period. Women, lower-caste communities, and economically disadvantaged groups continued to face structural barriers arising from limited schooling, financial constraints, and prevailing social norms. Consequently, the institutionalization of English studies simultaneously produced new forms of intellectual mobility while reproducing existing social hierarchies. This uneven distribution of educational opportunity reflects the broader contradictions of colonial modernity, in which the promise of liberal education coexisted with persistent exclusions (Kumar; Basu).

Curriculum, Canon, and the Discipline of Colonial Knowledge

The structure and content of the English curriculum in colonial Odisha can be analysed through Louis Althusser's concept of the "Ideological State Apparatus." According to Althusser, educational institutions function to reproduce dominant ideology by shaping the beliefs and practices of individuals (Althusser 127).

In the case of zilla schools and later Ravenshaw College, the curriculum served precisely this function. The selection of canonical authors such as Shakespeare, Milton, and Bacon was not neutral but reflected the cultural priorities of the colonial state. Through these texts, students were introduced to European moral philosophy, rationalism, and civic ideals.

However, as Ania Loomba argues, colonial education was never fully successful in producing compliant subjects; instead, it generated forms of ambivalence and resistance

⁹ Scholarship examinations functioned as mechanisms for both intellectual training and social selection, privileging elite groups.

(Loomba 91). The bilingual and translational nature of education in Odisha created spaces for reinterpretation, allowing students to engage with English texts in ways that were not entirely aligned with colonial intentions.

Thus, the curriculum functioned simultaneously as an instrument of ideological control and a site of cultural negotiation. This duality lies at the heart of the institutionalization of English studies in Odisha.

From Zilla School to College: The Transition to Higher Education

The transition from zilla schools to collegiate education marked a significant stage in the development of English studies in Odisha. While zilla schools laid the structural and pedagogical foundations of English studies in Odisha, institutions such as Ravenshaw College provided the infrastructure for advanced study and scholarly engagement.

The transformation of Cuttack Zilla School into Ravenshaw College in 1876 reflects the growing demand for higher education in the region. This shift was driven both by colonial administrative needs and by local aspirations for social mobility and intellectual advancement.

Importantly, the establishment of a college within Odisha reduced the dependence on metropolitan centres such as Calcutta. As later institutional records suggest, Odia students were often reluctant to travel outside the province for higher education, making local institutions crucial for academic development (The Ravenshavian 1920).

This transition enabled the emergence of a localized intellectual culture, where English studies could be shaped in relation to regional concerns rather than metropolitan priorities alone. The institutionalization of English at Ravenshaw thus represents not merely an expansion of colonial education but the beginning of its transformation within a provincial context.

Ravenshaw College and the Institutionalization of English Studies

The transformation of English education in Odisha reaches its most significant institutional expression in the establishment and development of Ravenshaw College. Emerging from the earlier Cuttack Zilla School, the college represents not merely an expansion of colonial educational infrastructure but a crucial shift in the intellectual life of

the region. It is at Ravenshaw that English studies move from being a pedagogical instrument to becoming a disciplinary and cultural formation.

The historical evolution of Ravenshaw College reflects both colonial policy and regional aspiration. As institutional records indicate, the expansion of English education in Odisha gained momentum in the late nineteenth century, particularly after the 1857 revolt, when the colonial state intensified its investment in education as a means of governance.¹⁰ The number of students in the institution doubled within a few years, suggesting a growing acceptance of English education among the local population (“The Laying of the Foundation-Stone” 2).

This expansion must be read not simply as a reflection of colonial policy but as an indication of shifting social aspirations. For Odia elites, English education became a pathway to administrative employment, social mobility, and intellectual engagement. At the same time, the reluctance of students to travel to Calcutta for higher education underscores the importance of Ravenshaw as a regional centre. The establishment of college-level classes within Odisha enabled the emergence of a localized intellectual community, reducing dependence on metropolitan institutions.

The early development of Ravenshaw College thus exemplifies what Dipesh Chakrabarty describes as “provincial modernity,”¹¹ where global institutional forms are reconstituted within local contexts (Chakrabarty 16). English studies at Ravenshaw were not simply transplanted from the metropole but adapted to the cultural, linguistic, and social realities of Odisha.

Faculty, Intellectual Mediation, and the Making of an Odia Intelligentsia

The institutionalization of English studies at Ravenshaw College was not merely a function of curriculum and policy but also of intellectual leadership. Faculty members played a crucial role in mediating colonial knowledge, translating it into forms that resonated with regional aspirations.

¹⁰ The expansion of Ravenshaw College in the late nineteenth century reflects broader colonial efforts to institutionalize higher education following the 1857 revolt.

¹¹ The concept of “provincial modernity” is derived from Dipesh Chakrabarty’s critique of Eurocentric historiography.

Figures such as Gopabandhu Das and Godabarish Mishra exemplify what Antonio Gramsci terms “organic intellectuals”—individuals who emerge from within a social group and articulate its experiences and aspirations (Gramsci 5). As educators, writers, and public figures, they bridged the gap between colonial pedagogy and local cultural contexts.

Their engagement with English education was neither passive nor wholly oppositional. Instead, they appropriated the language and literary forms of English to articulate issues of social reform, cultural identity, and political consciousness. This process reflects Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity, where colonial subjects rework dominant discourses to produce new meanings (Bhabha 112).

The role of faculty at Ravenshaw thus complicates the notion of English education as a purely colonial imposition. Rather than simply transmitting imperial ideology, educators participated in its reinterpretation, transforming English into a medium of intellectual and cultural negotiation.

The Ravenshavian: Student Writing and the English Imagination

If the curriculum reveals the disciplinary logic of colonial education, student writing—particularly in *The Ravenshavian*—reveals its lived experience and imaginative transformation. Established in 1917, the magazine functioned as a crucial intellectual platform, documenting the cultural, literary, and political life of Ravenshaw College over several decades. What distinguishes *The Ravenshavian* from official educational records is its capacity to capture the lived experience of English education—its anxieties, aspirations, and creative possibilities—thereby offering an alternative archive of colonial modernity from below.

Far from being a peripheral or extracurricular activity, *The Ravenshavian* served as what may be termed a “pedagogical laboratory,” where students experimented with language, genre, and ideas. It provided a space for the articulation of a distinctly Odia English-language imagination, shaped by both colonial influences and local experiences.¹²

The content of the magazine reflects a wide range of intellectual engagements. Literary compositions, critical essays, and reviews of English texts indicate a deep engagement with

¹² The *Ravenshavian* (1917–1947) remains a key archival source for understanding student writing and institutional culture at Ravenshaw College.

the canonical tradition. At the same time, the inclusion of reports on student organizations, debates, and public events reveals the integration of English education into the broader social and cultural life of the institution.

Importantly, *The Ravenshavian* also documents the institutional growth of Ravenshaw College. Speeches, commemorative essays, and administrative reports provide valuable insights into the development of the college as a centre of higher education. For instance, references to the expansion of faculty and the introduction of new subjects highlight the increasing complexity and scope of English studies within the institution (“The Laying of the Foundation-Stone” 4–5).

From a theoretical perspective, the magazine can be understood through Jürgen Habermas’s concept of the public sphere, defined as a space of rational-critical debate where individuals engage with issues of common concern (Habermas 27). *The Ravenshavian* functioned as such a space within the institutional context of Ravenshaw College, enabling students and faculty to participate in intellectual discourse.

At the same time, the magazine exemplifies what Francesca Orsini describes as the “multilingual archive” of colonial print culture, where English coexists with vernacular languages and cultural forms (Orsini 15). The writings in *The Ravenshavian* thus reflect a hybrid intellectual environment, where English is both a medium of expression and a site of negotiation.

English Beyond the Classroom: Print Culture and the Odia Public Sphere

If Ravenshaw College functioned as the institutional nucleus of English education in Odisha, print culture extended its reach into a broader social domain, enabling the circulation of ideas beyond the classroom and the formation of a regional public sphere. This sphere was constituted through a network of periodicals, magazines, and literary associations that facilitated the circulation of ideas and the formation of public opinion.

Periodicals such as *Arya*, *Mahodadhi*, and *Prabodh Chandrika* played a crucial role in this process. These publications not only disseminated information about scientific and

technological developments but also provided a platform for debates on education, culture, and politics.¹³

The coexistence of modern scientific discourse and traditional cultural forms within these periodicals reflects the hybrid nature of the Odia public sphere. For instance, discussions of industrial technologies such as steam engines and electricity appear alongside traditional calendars and literary texts, illustrating the simultaneous engagement with global modernity and local tradition.

This hybrid public sphere aligns with Partha Chatterjee's distinction between the "inner" and "outer" domains of colonial society, where Western institutions coexist with indigenous cultural practices (Chatterjee 6). English education operated primarily in the outer domain of administration and public discourse, but its influence extended into the inner domain of cultural identity and social life.

At the same time, the public sphere was marked by ideological contestation. Articles such as "English Education and Independence" critique the colonial education system as a tool of intellectual domination, arguing that it produces a class of intermediaries rather than genuinely educated individuals ("English Education and Independence" 66).

Such critiques resonate with postcolonial theories of education, particularly those of Frantz Fanon and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who emphasize the role of language in shaping consciousness and identity. The Odia public sphere thus becomes a site where the meanings and functions of English are actively debated and contested.

From Pedagogy to Politics: Nationalism and the Refunctioning of English

By the early twentieth century, English education in Odisha had become deeply intertwined with nationalist politics. Students and faculty at institutions such as Ravenshaw College participated in movements such as the Swadeshi Movement, the Non-Cooperation Movement, and the Civil Disobedience Movement, using English as a medium for political expression and mobilization.¹⁴

¹³ Periodicals such as *Arya* and *Mahodadhi* played a crucial role in shaping public discourse in colonial Odisha.

¹⁴ Nationalist movements such as Swadeshi and Non-Cooperation were deeply influenced by English-educated elites.

This transformation reflects a broader shift in the function of English. Initially introduced as a tool of colonial governance, English became a language of resistance, enabling Indian intellectuals to articulate critiques of imperial rule. As Partha Chatterjee argues, nationalist discourse often appropriated the language of the colonizer to challenge colonial authority (Chatterjee 38).

Student writings and periodical literature provide evidence of this shift. Satirical works, essays, and political commentaries demonstrate how English was used to critique colonial policies and to articulate visions of national identity.

At the same time, English education facilitated the formation of a politically conscious intelligentsia. By providing access to global intellectual traditions, it enabled students to engage with ideas of democracy, liberty, and self-governance. This engagement was not merely theoretical but translated into active participation in political movements.

The refunctioning of English as a language of resistance thus represents a key moment in the history of English studies in Odisha. It illustrates how colonial education, despite its ideological foundations, could be appropriated and transformed by colonial subjects. Moreover, the trajectory traced across institutions, curricula, and print culture demonstrates that English studies in Odisha cannot be understood as a static colonial imposition but as a dynamic and contested field.

Conclusion: English Studies and the Making of Provincial Modernity

The institutionalization of English studies in Odisha between 1868 and 1950 represents a complex and dynamic process shaped by the interplay of colonial policy, regional aspiration, and intellectual agency. Ravenshaw College emerges as a central site in this process, functioning not merely as an instrument of imperial pedagogy but as a space of cultural negotiation and intellectual transformation.

Through its curriculum, faculty, student writings, and publications such as *The Ravenshavian*, the college facilitated the emergence of an Odia intelligentsia capable of engaging with both colonial and indigenous knowledge systems. English education, initially introduced as a tool of governance, was reworked into a medium of critique, creativity, and resistance.

In foregrounding Odisha as a site of provincial modernity, this study not only extends existing scholarship on colonial education but also challenges its metropolitan bias. The history of English studies in India, it suggests, must be rewritten from its margins, where the discipline acquired new meanings, functions, and political possibilities.

At the same time, the institutionalization of English studies remained socially uneven, with access largely mediated by class, caste, gender, and urban location, reminding us that colonial modernity simultaneously enabled intellectual mobility and reproduced inherited inequalities.

In this sense, the case of Ravenshaw College exemplifies the broader processes of provincial modernity, where global intellectual formations are reinterpreted and transformed within local contexts. English studies in Odisha thus emerges not as a static disciplinary formation but as a dynamic and evolving field shaped by historical contingencies and cultural negotiations.

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