

COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM IN INDIA

Colonial Ideology and Civilizing Mission

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COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM • STUDY NOTE

Colonial Ideology and Civilizing Mission

Core V • Unit II (a)

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How did the British justify ruling India? The most famous answer was the civilizing mission: the claim that Britain governed India not for its own gain but for the good of Indians, and that British law, education, religion and order would raise a backward society to a higher level. Colonial ideology is the wider body of ideas which gave this claim its form, and which explained why Indians needed a guardian and why the guardian had a right to rule.

This note describes the roots of that ideology, the schools of thought inside it, the measures carried out in its name, the change in its tone after 1857, the Indian replies, and the scholarly debate. It is written in a neutral academic way: the colonial claims are described in

order to be understood and analysed, and are not endorsed. The related theme of cultural and racial superiority has a note of its own. This note belongs to Unit II (a) of Core V, Colonialism and Nationalism in India.

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1. Meaning and definitions

Writer	Work	Core idea
Rudyard Kipling	The White Man's Burden (1899)	Empire as a duty of the civilised towards the backward
Charles Grant	Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain (1792)	Moral improvement through Christianity and English education
James Mill	History of British India (1817)	Societies ranked by civilisation; reform by good law
T. B. Macaulay	Minute on Indian Education (1835)	An English-educated class as interpreters of British rule
J. S. Mill	On Liberty (1859)	Liberty for the advanced; tutelage for the backward
Thomas Metcalf	Ideologies of the Raj (1994)	British ideas changing from likeness to difference
Uday Singh Mehta	Liberalism and Empire (1999)	Liberal thought and the case for empire
Gauri Viswanathan	Masks of Conquest (1989)	English literary study as an instrument of rule

Scholar-wise definitions

Civilizing mission. The belief that a more advanced society has a duty to bring its religion, law, education and customs to those it regards as less advanced. In the British case it was joined with Christianity, commerce and the idea of progress, and was often called a trust or a burden.

Colonial ideology. The set of ideas, images and arguments by which a colonial power explains and defends its rule. It includes beliefs about the colonised people, about history and progress, and about the rights and duties of the ruler.

Rudyard Kipling. In *The White Man's Burden* (1899), written on the American conquest of the Philippines, Kipling called on imperial powers to take up the work of governing peoples whom he called half devil and half child. The poem is often cited as a popular statement of the idea.

James Mill. In *The History of British India* (1817), Mill, a Utilitarian who never visited India, judged Indian society by a scale of civilisation and found it backward, and he argued that good law and government could improve it.

T. B. Macaulay. In the Minute of 2 February 1835, Macaulay proposed to form a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, opinions, morals and intellect, to act as interpreters between the rulers and the ruled.

Thomas Metcalf. In *Ideologies of the Raj* (1994), Metcalf showed that British ideas of India were not fixed: the early belief that Indians could be made like the British gave way to a stress on their lasting difference.

Uday Singh Mehta. In *Liberalism and Empire* (1999), Mehta argued that nineteenth-century liberal writers, such as J. S. Mill, placed the colonised outside the full scope of liberal principles, and so linked liberalism with the justification of empire.

Gauri Viswanathan. In *Masks of Conquest* (1989), she argued that English literature was taught in India partly as a way of moral and cultural control, at a time when open conversion was thought dangerous.

Note to the student

A civilizing mission can be sincere and also useful to the ruler. Scholars debate how far it guided policy and how far it covered other aims, such as revenue, trade and security. The definitions above are paraphrased and should not be quoted as exact wording.

What the definitions share

- Rule is presented as duty and improvement.

- The ruled are seen as needing guidance.
- Law, education, religion and order are the means.
- The claim gives moral weight to power and sets the terms of debate for nationalists.

2. Characteristics of colonial ideology and the civilizing mission

Claim of moral purpose. The first mark of the mission is that rule was presented as a trust held for the benefit of the governed, and not as a conquest made for profit. This language appeared in parliamentary debates, in despatches to the Governor-General, and in missionary writing. It was useful because it answered critics in Britain who objected to the cost and morality of empire, and it gave officers in India a sense of duty. For example, when the Company asked Parliament to renew its Charter in 1813 and 1833, the debates spoke of the moral and intellectual improvement of Indians as a reason to continue. In an examination answer, this point should be paired with the observation that the same rule also brought revenue, trade and strategic gain, so that the moral claim and the interest went together.

Stage theory of history. The mission rested on a view of history as a ladder of progress, from savage to barbarous to civilised, with commercial Europe at the top. Writers of the Scottish Enlightenment, such as Adam Smith and William Robertson, gave this scheme its classic form. It mattered because it made a difference of stage out of what might have been seen as a difference of culture, and so made improvement a duty of those who were ahead. James Mill used it in his History of British India (1817) to rank Indian civilisation as low, though he had never visited India. A student should remember that this theory made the British rule look like a temporary teacher's role, and that the time at which the lesson would end was never fixed.

Paternalism. The ruled were treated as children or wards, and the rulers as guardians who knew better. Authority was said to rest on greater knowledge and on care for the people, so that self-government could be put off to a distant future when Indians would be ready. This

explains why officials answered every demand for political rights with the argument that Indians were not yet fit. The language of the Montagu Declaration of 1917, which promised responsible government by stages, still shows the habit. In an answer, this point links the mission with the idea of trusteeship that is described later in the note.

Reform from above. The mission worked through the state, the courts, the schools and the missions, and in the main through persons outside Indian society. Reform was introduced by Regulation and Act, as in the case of sati in 1829 and widow remarriage in 1856, and not through a movement within society. This had two effects. It gave the state the role of reformer, and it later allowed nationalists to argue that social reform should be led by Indians. The debate over the Age of Consent Act of 1891 is a clear example of this tension.

Several schools, one aim. Colonial ideology was not a single doctrine. Orientalists, Evangelicals, Utilitarians and Anglicists differed on the means: some wanted to govern through Indian law and learning, others to spread Christianity, others to reform by rational law, others to teach English. Yet all four shared the belief that British rule should improve India. For an examination, it is useful to name the four schools and give one example of each, such as the Asiatic Society for the Orientalists and Macaulay's Minute for the Anglicists, and then to say that the shared aim is what makes them parts of one mission.

Selective picture of Indian society. Colonial writers described India through chosen features, such as caste, child marriage, sati, idol worship and religious division, and treated them as its essence. This gave a reason for rule and for reform, since a society defined by these features seemed to need correction from outside. Mill's History, for instance, built its account on such features. Later scholars, such as Ronald Inden and Lata Mani, point out that this picture left out the variety of Indian life, including reform within society, women's own voices and the long record of debate on custom.

Education as an instrument. The mission placed great weight on English education, which was to form a class that would carry British ideas and serve the administration. Macaulay's Minute of 1835 spoke of a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English

in taste, opinions, morals and intellect. This is why education is treated as the main field of the mission. Its results were mixed: it gave the administration clerks and the nation a leadership which later turned British ideas against British rule, as seen in the early Congress.

Christian element. Evangelical thought linked the mission with the spread of Christianity, and held that Christian morals were the base of progress. The Charter Act of 1813 admitted missionaries, and men such as Alexander Duff opened schools which joined English teaching with Christian instruction. But the Company state was cautious about open interference with religion, and after 1857 it promised non-interference in the Queen's Proclamation of 1858. A student should note that the Christian element was strong in the first half of the century and weaker in official policy afterwards.

Use of the condition of women. The treatment of women, in sati, child marriage, seclusion and the position of widows, was used as a sign of the backwardness of Indian society. The rescue of women thus became an argument for rule. At the same time, British law often made custom more rigid, and colonial concern was selective. This point is important in answers because it connects the mission with gender history, and because Indian reformers and nationalists answered the argument in their own ways.

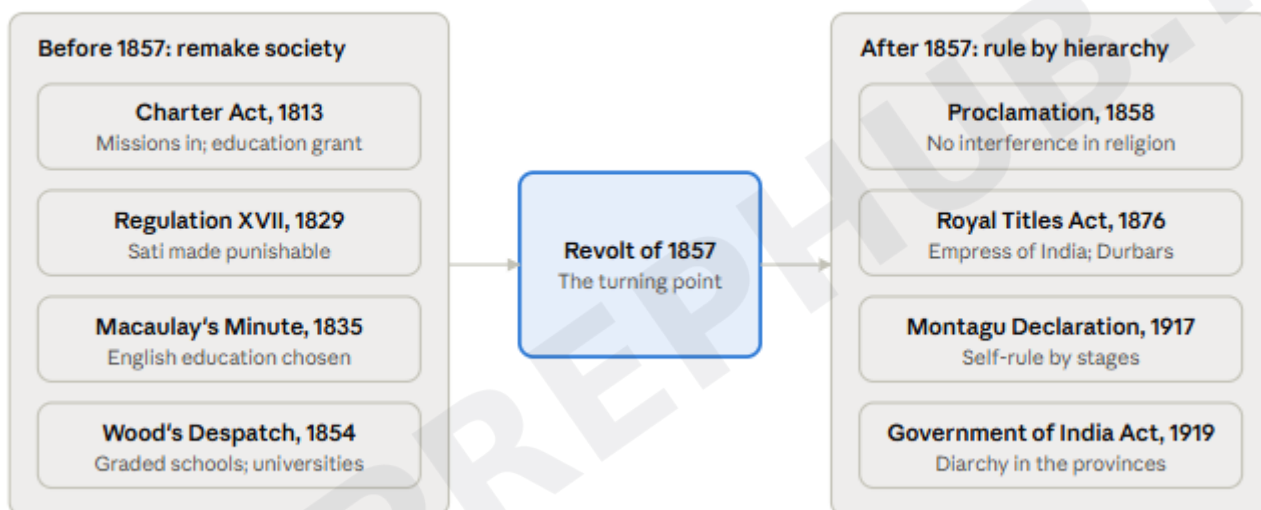
Ambivalence. The mission promised to make Indians more like the British, yet held that they could not be made equal. It encouraged English education, and then distrusted the educated Indian as unrepresentative. This inner strain explains why the same officials could praise Macaulay's plan and also support the exclusion of Indians from the higher services. In an answer on the critique of the mission, this contradiction is one of the strongest points, since it shows that the promise of equality was always limited.

Change over time. Before 1857 the emphasis was on remaking society, through law, schools and reform. After 1857 it was on ruling through existing elites, such as princes and landlords, and on the theory of trusteeship. Thomas Metcalf describes this as a move from likeness to difference. The point is useful because it shows that the mission was not constant, and an answer can use it to give a periodised account.

Match with interest. The mission suited the needs of the Company and the Crown. It gave a moral reply to critics in Britain and India, it helped to win the cooperation of an educated class, and it covered the aims of revenue, trade and security. The degree of sincerity is disputed among historians. A balanced answer says that many officials and missionaries believed in the mission, and that it also served interest, and that the two cannot be separated easily.

3. Diagram at a glance

The mission moved from remaking India to ruling through hierarchy



Read left to right: reform measures before 1857, the revolt as the turning point, then rule through hierarchy and stage-by-stage promises after it.

4. Intellectual roots

The mission drew on several streams of European thought. A student should know where each came from.

The Enlightenment and the idea of progress. Eighteenth-century writers, such as Montesquieu, Adam Smith and the Scottish historians, described history as a progress through stages, from hunting and pasture to agriculture and then to commerce, with

commercial Europe at the top. This gave a scale on which every other society could be placed and judged. It mattered for India because the scale turned difference into backwardness, and made the more advanced responsible for the less advanced. An example is the use of stage theory in the History of British India, where Indian society is ranked by its laws and arts. In an answer, state that this root gave the mission its basic logic of tutelage.

Evangelical Christianity. The Evangelical revival in Britain held that it was a duty to spread Christianity and to improve public morals. Charles Grant, a director of the Company, wrote in his Observations (written in 1792) that Indian society was sunk in moral darkness and that Christianity and English education were the remedy. William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect carried the argument into Parliament, and their pressure led to the missionary clause of the Charter Act of 1813. The Evangelical root explains why the mission had a religious colour in its early years, and why missions ran so many schools. It also explains the later fear of interference with religion.

Utilitarianism. Jeremy Bentham and James Mill held that laws should be judged by their usefulness to the greatest number, and that a good government could reform a backward society by clear and uniform law. James Mill's History of British India (1817) and the Utilitarian role in drafting codes belong to this stream. The Indian Penal Code, drafted under Macaulay's Law Commission, is often cited as its work, though Macaulay was not strictly a Utilitarian. Eric Stokes's The English Utilitarians and India (1959) is the standard study. For examinations, link this root with law and administration, in contrast to the Evangelical link with religion.

Liberal thought and its limits. John Stuart Mill, who worked for the East India Company, held in On Liberty (1859) that liberty was for those who were capable of being improved by free discussion, and that despotism could be legitimate in dealing with barbarians if the aim was their improvement. Uday Singh Mehta, in Liberalism and Empire (1999), argues that this shows a link between liberal ideas and the case for empire, since the colonised were placed outside the full reach of liberal principles. This point is valuable in answers for UPSC and NET, since it complicates the simple idea that liberalism and empire were opposed.

Orientalist scholarship. William Jones, who founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, and Henry Colebrooke studied Sanskrit, Persian and Indian law. They admired the classical past, though they often held that the present had declined from it. This produced a policy of governing through Indian law and learning, seen in the Calcutta Madrasa (1781) and the Benares Sanskrit College (1791). The Orientalist root shows that the mission did not always despise Indian culture, but that even admiration was joined to the claim that the British were fit to guide a declined society.

Political economy and commerce. Ideas of free trade and improvement through commerce, drawn from Adam Smith and later economists, supported the claim that British rule would bring wealth, order and markets. Railways, canals and the opening of trade were presented as proof. Critics later used the same ideas against the claim, as Naoroji argued that the drain of wealth showed the opposite. An answer can use this point to show how an idea that supported the mission was turned into a nationalist argument.

Imperial culture in Britain. The press, schools, missionary meetings and public speeches taught the British public to see empire as a duty and a mark of national greatness. Kipling's poem of 1899 is a late and popular form of a long habit of thought. This root matters because it shows that the mission had a public base at home, which gave politicians a reason to repeat the language of trust even when policy followed other aims.

Root	Main figures	Contribution
Enlightenment	Montesquieu; Adam Smith	Stages of progress; Europe at the top
Evangelicalism	Charles Grant; Wilberforce	Duty to Christianise and moralise
Utilitarianism	Bentham; James Mill	Reform by rational law
Liberal thought	J. S. Mill	Liberty for the advanced; tutelage for others
Orientalism	William Jones; Colebrooke	Study of Indian law and the classical past
Political economy	Adam Smith and followers	Improvement through commerce

5. Orientalists, Anglicists, Evangelicals and Utilitarians

British policy in the first half of the nineteenth century was shaped by competing schools. A student should be able to name them and give the main example for each.

The Orientalists. Warren Hastings (Governor-General 1773 to 1785) and scholars such as Jones and Colebrooke favoured ruling India through its own laws and learning. They believed that the British, as new rulers, would gain legitimacy by respecting the existing traditions, and that knowledge of Indian languages and law was useful for administration. The Calcutta Madrasa (1781), the Benares Sanskrit College (1791) and the Asiatic Society (1784) were set up in this spirit. Hindu and Muslim personal law was drawn from texts and applied by the courts, which later led scholars to say that custom was made more rigid. In an answer, give the Orientalists as the first school, and show that their policy was one of governing through Indian knowledge.

The Evangelicals. Grant and Wilberforce pressed for missionary work and moral reform. Their efforts led to the Charter Act of 1813, which allowed missionaries to work in Company territory and set aside one lakh rupees a year for education and the revival of learning. The Act of 1833 widened access further. Missionaries such as William Carey at Serampore and Alexander Duff in Calcutta ran schools and presses, and Duff argued for English teaching joined with Christian instruction. The Evangelicals are important because they gave the mission its moral energy, and because their influence made the Company state more cautious after 1857, when religion was seen as a danger.

The Utilitarians. James Mill's History (1817) judged Indian society severely and called for reform by clear and uniform law. Under Governor-General William Bentinck (1828 to 1835), with Utilitarian advisers, the administration moved towards legal reform, economy in government, English in higher education and an end of practices such as sati. The Utilitarians held that the cure for a backward society was good government and good law, not religion. In an examination, name Mill, Bentham and Bentinck's period, and give the example of legal codification.

The Anglicists. In the Anglicist and Orientalist controversy of the 1830s, Macaulay, as Law Member, argued in his Minute of 2 February 1835 that the funds for education should be used to teach English literature and science, since Indian learning was of little worth. Bentinck's resolution of March 1835 accepted the argument, and in 1837 English replaced Persian as the language of the courts. This was the decisive victory of the Anglicists. It is the best-known statement of the cultural side of the mission, and it should be explained with its consequence: an English-educated class that later led the national movement.

Wood's Despatch. In 1854, Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control, sent a Despatch which proposed a system running from primary schools to universities, with English for higher study and the vernacular for primary schooling, grants-in-aid to private schools, teacher training, and universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, which were founded in 1857. It is often called the Magna Carta of English education in India. For exam use, note that it settled the controversy by a compromise, and that it made education an organised state function.

Points of difference. The Orientalists and Anglicists disagreed on the means and on the value of Indian learning. Evangelicals and Utilitarians disagreed on the place of religion in reform. Yet all shared the belief that British rule should improve India. This common ground is why historians speak of one civilizing mission with several voices, and an answer should mention both the disagreement and the shared aim.

Viswanathan's argument. Gauri Viswanathan holds that English literature, with its moral lessons, was put forward partly because open conversion was thought dangerous after the Vellore mutiny of 1806, and that literature served as a way of making Indians accept British values without the open pressure of religion. Her argument in *Masks of Conquest* (1989) is useful for NET and UPSC answers, since it ties the teaching of literature to the politics of rule. It has also been questioned by those who say that the demand for English came from Indians as well.

Limits in practice. The funds spent on education were small, and the numbers reached were low. Higher education reached mainly upper castes and urban classes, and mass literacy was left behind, so that by the end of the century only a small share of the population could read. The filtration theory, which held that learning would trickle down from the educated few to the many, did not work as expected. This point is important in a critical answer, because it shows the gap between the claim of a mission and its reach.

School	Main figures	Position	Key measure
Orientalist	Hastings; Jones; Colebrooke	Rule through Indian learning and law	Calcutta Madrasa 1781; Asiatic Society 1784
Evangelical	Grant; Wilberforce; Duff	Christianise and moralise	Charter Act 1813
Utilitarian	Bentham; James Mill	Reform by rational law	Codification; Bentinck's reforms
Anglicist	Macaulay; Bentinck	English education	Minute 1835
Official synthesis	Charles Wood	A graded system of schools	Despatch 1854; universities 1857

6. The mission in practice

The ideas of improvement were carried out through laws, schools, courts and public works. A student should be able to give the main measures with dates.

English education. The Anglicist decision of 1835, the Despatch of 1854 and the universities of 1857 created a class educated in English. It filled the lower ranks of the administration, the law courts and the professions, and it later led the nationalist movement. Schools also taught English literature and British history, which carried the values of the mission and a view of India's past through British eyes. A clear example is the first generation of Congress leaders, such as W. C. Bonnerjee and Surendranath Banerjea, who were products of this education and used its ideas of rights and representation to criticise colonial rule. In an answer, show both sides: education served the mission, and it also produced its critics.

Law and the courts. The Cornwallis Code of 1793, the work of the Law Commission under Macaulay, the Indian Penal Code (drafted 1837, enacted 1860), the codes of procedure and the High Courts Act of 1861 brought in a uniform system based on British principles. The rule of law was a main part of the claim to a civilising role, since it promised equal treatment before a known law. In practice it was applied unequally, as the Ilbert Bill controversy of 1883 showed, when Europeans claimed the right to be tried only by European judges. For exams, link this point to the idea that the colonial state used law both to improve and to control.

Personal law. In family and inheritance matters, courts applied texts as interpreted by pandits and maulvis, and so set custom in written form. Judges looked for fixed rules in the Dharmashastras and the Quran where practice had been varied and local. Scholars hold that this made flexible practice more rigid, and strengthened the position of those who controlled the texts. A student should link this to the later debates on personal laws, since the colonial settlement still shapes them.

Suppression of thuggee. A campaign led by William Sleeman in the 1830s, and the Thuggee and Dacoity Suppression Act of 1836, were presented as the rescue of the country from bands of ritual murderers. It gave the state a heroic role as protector of society. Scholars such as Radhika Singha and Parama Roy point out that the colonial portrayal exaggerated the threat and made it a feature of Indian society, and that the campaign gave a ground for extended policing. In an answer, use it as an example of how the mission justified new powers.

Public works and communications. Railways (from 1853), the telegraph, canals and the post were presented as proof of the benefits of British rule. They did link markets and move troops, and they brought some relief in famine. Nationalists such as Naoroji and R. C. Dutt replied that they served British trade and military needs, that they were built by guaranteed profits to British investors, and that they were paid for by Indian revenues. This is a standard example of how the same fact was read in opposite ways.

Missionary activity. Missions ran schools, hospitals and orphanages, and worked with outcastes and tribal groups, such as in the hills of the North-East and in Chotanagpur. Some lower-caste groups gained education and a new standing through missions. At the same time, the fear of interference in religion was one cause of distrust, and appeared in the causes of the revolt of 1857. This point shows that the mission had social effects beyond its aims, and that these were not all in the control of the rulers.

Famine and the limits of the claim. In the great famines of the later nineteenth century, such as those of 1876 to 1878 and 1896 to 1897, relief policy was shaped by ideas of economy, non-interference with the market and self-help. The Famine Commissions, from 1880, set out codes, but relief was often kept low. Critics, such as Mike Davis in *Late Victorian Holocausts* (2001), argue that these events exposed the gap between the claim of trust and the practice. In a critical answer, this is a strong example of the limits of the mission.

Uneven benefits. The measures reached some groups more than others. Urban, upper-caste and male Indians gained most from schools and law, while rural, poor and lower-caste Indians, and most women, gained little. Regions also differed, as the presidency towns advanced faster than the interior. This unevenness is one of the grounds of the later critique, and a student should use it to show that the benefits of the mission cannot be assumed to have reached all.

Measure	Date	Purpose	Note
Cornwallis Code	1793	Courts and revenue under law	Separation of revenue and justice
Charter Act	1813	Missions allowed; education grant	Evangelical pressure
Macaulay's Minute	1835	English education	Anglicist victory
Thuggee and Dacoity Act	1836	Suppress thuggee	Sleeman's campaign

Wood's Despatch	1854	Graded system of education	Universities 1857
Indian Penal Code	1860	Uniform criminal law	Drafted 1837 under Macaulay
High Courts Act	1861	Courts at the presidencies	Uniform system
Railways	From 1853	Communications and trade	Paid from Indian revenues

7. Gender and the mission

The position of women was one of the main grounds on which the civilizing mission was argued, and a main ground on which Indians replied. A student should know the measures and the debates.

Women as the test of civilisation. British writers, such as James Mill, judged a society by the position of its women, and found Indian society low on this scale. The argument let the rulers claim that they came as protectors of women against their own society. It shifted attention from the faults of colonial rule to the faults of Indian custom. For examinations, state the argument and then add that the same writers did little to improve the education of women in the same period.

Sati and the law of 1829. Regulation XVII of 1829, passed under Bentinck, declared sati illegal in Bengal, and later it was extended to other presidencies. It is presented as the clearest case of the mission in action. Reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy had worked for the ban and gave it Indian support. Lata Mani, in *Contentious Traditions* (1998), shows that the debate used the texts and the widow herself as a ground for argument, and that the woman's own voice was largely absent. In an answer, give the law with its date, and add Mani's point.

Widow remarriage and child marriage. The Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act of 1856 followed the campaign of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. The Age of Consent Act of 1891 raised the age of consent for girls to twelve, after the Phulmoni case, and met strong opposition from many nationalist leaders, such as Tilak. The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 came later. These laws show that colonial reform often followed Indian reformers and was cautious

in applying force. For exams, use them to show that the state was slow to act where it feared public anger.

Education of women. Missions and reformers opened girls' schools, such as Bethune's school in Calcutta (1849). Numbers remained small for a long time, and the schools mostly served upper-caste and urban families. Education was often defended as a way to make better wives and mothers, rather than as a right in itself. This point is useful for showing the limits of the claim of liberation.

The colonised woman in rule and in image. Writers and officials often showed the Indian woman as a victim awaiting rescue. This image served the rulers and also narrowed the way women were seen. Gayatri Spivak's phrase, that white men were saving brown women from brown men, sums up the critique. A good answer can use the phrase, with credit, to show how gender was used as a justification.

The nationalist reply. Nationalists answered that the reform of women's status should be done by Indians themselves. Some defended custom as a mark of national identity, while others pressed for reform on their own terms. Partha Chatterjee's account of the division between the outer material domain and the inner spiritual domain, in *The Nation and Its Fragments* (1993), explains why the home was treated as a space to be kept free from colonial interference. Link this to the study of nationalism and its approaches.

Women's own voices. Women such as Pandita Ramabai, Tarabai Shinde and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain spoke and wrote against both Indian custom and colonial claims. Tarabai Shinde's *Stri Purush Tulana* (1882) criticised the double standards of men. These voices complicate the picture of passive victims, and they should be named in a good answer.

Reform without women's choice. In most of these debates, the main speakers were men, British and Indian. The effect was that laws often reflected the aims of the speakers more than the needs of the women concerned. This is a central point of the feminist critique, and it ties the section to the larger argument about who speaks for whom.

Measure or event	Date	Aim	Note
Regulation XVII	1829	End of sati	Bentinck; supported by Ram Mohan Roy
Widows' Remarriage Act	1856	Legal widow remarriage	Vidyasagar
Female Infanticide Act	1870	Prevent infanticide	Directed at some communities
Age of Consent Act	1891	Age of consent raised to twelve	Tilak opposed; Malabari supported
Debate on custom	1880s to 1890s	Reform versus nationalist claim	Inner and outer domains

8. After 1857: from reform to rule

The revolt of 1857 changed the tone of colonial ideology. A student should know how the emphasis moved.

The revolt of 1857 as a turning point. The rising of 1857 showed that fast reform had caused fear, especially over religion, land and the army. British opinion hardened, and the language of trust gave way to caution. For exam answers, present 1857 as the break between a period of active reform and a period of careful rule, and note that historians debate how complete the break was.

The Proclamation of 1858. Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1 November 1858 promised that the Crown would respect the rights, customs and religion of Indians, would not interfere with faith, and would admit Indians to office without distinction of race or creed, so far as they were qualified. It was read out as a charter of rights. Nationalists later quoted it often to demand that promises be kept. It is the best example of how the language of the mission could be turned against the rulers.

Caution on social reform. After 1857, the state avoided laws that might touch religion or social custom without strong Indian support. The Age of Consent debate of 1891 and the slow progress on child marriage show this. A student should link it to the idea that reform now came from Indian groups rather than from the state.

The Crown and the language of paternalism. The Royal Titles Act of 1876 made Victoria Empress of India, and the Delhi Durbars of 1877, 1903 and 1911 displayed imperial power with ritual. Rulers were shown as a father figure to a family of subjects. Bernard Cohn, in his essay on the representation of authority, studies these ceremonies as a way to build a social order. In an answer, give the Durbar as a symbol of the new form of the mission.

Princes and landlords as allies. Rule after 1857 was built on alliance with princes and large landholders. The princely states were left in place under paramountcy, and landlords were given a role in local government. This reflected the belief that India's natural leaders were the traditional ones, not the English-educated. It also set the rulers against the educated middle class, which they described as unrepresentative.

Distrust of the educated class. Officials such as Lord Dufferin spoke of the educated Indians as a small, noisy minority. The Vernacular Press Act of 1878 and the controversy over the Ilbert Bill in 1883 showed the limits of the promise of equal treatment. The claim of the mission, that Indians would be prepared for a larger role, was denied in practice when they asked for it. This is an important point for exams, since it explains the rise of the Congress in 1885.

Progress promised, but deferred. Policy statements spoke of gradual training for self-rule, with no date. The Indian Councils Act of 1861 and 1892, and the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909, gave small steps. The Montagu Declaration of 1917 spoke of responsible government as the aim, and the Government of India Act of 1919 brought dyarchy. The pattern shows how the mission turned into a promise of future fitness. Link this to the nationalist demand for swaraj.

Racial reasoning enters the mission. After 1857, the justification for rule began to lean on the idea of fixed differences between races, and less on the idea that Indians could be raised to equality. This is the point at which the study of Colonial Ideology joins the next note on racial superiority. A good answer can end by noting the link, because it shows how the argument moved from improvement to permanent difference.

Aspect	Before 1857	After 1857
Aim	Remake Indian society on British lines	Rule through existing hierarchy
View of Indians	Capable of being improved	Different by nature and needing guardians
Allies	Reformers, Evangelicals, Utilitarians	Princes, landlords, traditional elites
Educated Indians	Hoped-for partners	Treated as unrepresentative and a problem
Self-government	A distant result of reform	Deferred by stages and trusteeship

9. Indian responses to the mission

Indians did not simply receive the mission. Reformers, nationalists and critics answered it in several ways.

Early responses of the English-educated. Ram Mohan Roy welcomed English education and modern science, as his letter to Lord Amherst in 1823 shows, and worked for the ban on sati. He also defended Indian thought against missionary attack. The early reformers show that Indians did not simply accept or reject the mission, but chose from it. In an answer, name Roy as the example of selective use.

Reform movements. The Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission and the Aligarh movement of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan all answered the charge of backwardness in different ways. Some reformed custom, some returned to a pure past, and some accepted modern learning within their faith. For exams, give two or three with their leaders, and note that the challenge of the mission shaped their form.

Cultural pride and revival. Swami Vivekananda's address at Chicago in 1893 and the writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee asserted the worth of Indian civilisation. This reply took the language of civilisation and claimed it for India. It also risked taking over the Orientalist image of a spiritual East. A student can point out this double result.

The economic critique. Dadabhai Naoroji's theory of the drain, in *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901), R. C. Dutt's *Economic History of India* (1901 and 1903) and M. G. Ranade argued that British rule impoverished India. This answered the claim of benefit with facts about revenue, trade and famine. It is the most direct reply to the mission, since it used the rulers' own test of material progress.

Constitutional demands. The early Congress asked for what the rulers had promised: fair treatment, Indian entry to the civil service, and representation. It quoted the Proclamation of 1858 and British liberal principles. W. C. Bonnerjee, Pherozeshah Mehta and Gokhale are examples. This approach turned the mission into a measure by which British rule could be judged. In an answer, call it the strategy of holding the rulers to their word.

Radical and mass responses. Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal in the Swadeshi period, and Gandhi after 1915, rejected the claim of tutelage. Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (1909) went furthest, attacking the idea of modern civilisation itself. Link this to the shift from petition to mass movement, which is a standard theme in exams.

Religious and community responses. Some groups, as in the case of lower-caste movements led by Jotirao Phule, used the language of the mission to criticise Indian hierarchy, while also criticising the rulers. Phule's *Gulamgiri* (1873) is the clearest case. This shows that responses were not uniform, and that different groups drew different lessons.

Poetry, novels and press. Writers such as Bankim, Tagore and Premchand, and newspapers such as the *Hindu* and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, spread both criticism and new ideas. They made a public sphere where the claims of the mission were argued over. A note for exams: the press was both a product of the mission and a main channel of its criticism.

Respondent	Position	Main point
Ram Mohan Roy; Vidyasagar	Reform	Accept reason; argue from Indian sources
Dayananda; Vivekananda	Revival	Answer inferiority with a spiritual past
Jotirao Phule	Social critique	Aryan theory turned against upper castes
Naoroji; R. C. Dutt	Economic critique	Drain; un-British rule
Early Congress	Constitutional	Claim British promises of equal treatment
Gandhi	Civilisational critique	Modern civilisation itself is the problem
Tagore	Universalism	Against narrow nationalism and Western arrogance

10. Scholarly interpretations and critiques

Historians and theorists have read the civilizing mission in several ways. A student should know the main positions.

The liberal-imperial defence. Some writers, from the nineteenth century to Niall Ferguson in *Empire* (2003), have argued that British rule brought law, trade, institutions and the English language, and that the mission had real effects. They point to the legal system, the railways, the universities and the civil service as lasting gains. Critics reply that this view is selective. It counts the gains and gives too little weight to famine, the drain of wealth and racial hierarchy, and it does not ask who paid for the gains. In an examination, state the defence fairly, name Ferguson, and then give the reply of the critics.

The nationalist critique. Naoroji, R. C. Dutt and later nationalist historians held that the mission was a cover for exploitation, and that the claim of benefit was false. They used the rulers' own test of material progress and showed, with figures on revenue, trade and famine, that India became poorer. Naoroji's *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901) is the best example. Their economic argument is the base of the later Marxist reading, so a student can present the two as one line of thought.

The Marxist reading. Marxist writers, such as R. P. Dutt and Bipan Chandra, treat the mission as an ideology which justified the economic interest of capital, and as a screen for the drain of wealth. For them, ideas follow material interests, so the moral language is a means of making rule acceptable. A weakness often noted is that this view can reduce the sincere beliefs of missionaries and reformers to simple interest. In an answer, give the strength and the weakness together.

Utilitarian and liberal studies. Eric Stokes's *The English Utilitarians and India* (1959) traced the influence of Utilitarian thought on law and administration, and Mehta's *Liberalism and Empire* (1999) argued that the idea of tutelage was built into liberal thought. Stokes studies how an idea became policy, while Mehta asks about the nature of liberalism itself. Together they show that the mission was not only a matter of religion or race. For NET, remember the two titles with their years.

Post-colonial analysis. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and later work by Inden, Cohn and Dirks treat colonial knowledge as a part of rule. Viswanathan argued the same for English literature. These writers hold that the mission cannot be separated from the ways in which India was described and known. The reading is influential, though critics say it sometimes treats colonial writers as one block, and gives Indians too little part in making colonial knowledge.

Thomas Metcalf's periodisation. Metcalf's *Ideologies of the Raj* (1994) is the main account of how the mission changed, from reform to difference, and why the ideology of the later Raj stressed hierarchy and tradition. His main gain is to show that the mission was not constant. In an exam, use his scheme to organise the answer on change after 1857, and give the dates.

Feminist readings. Lata Mani, Mrinalini Sinha and others show how the mission used the condition of women and how debates among men left women's voices out. They also show that women acted for themselves. The feminist reading adds a view that both the colonial and the nationalist accounts often missed. Link it with the section on gender when a question asks about sati or age of consent.

Cambridge and revisionist views. Some historians of the Cambridge school and others hold that colonial policy was driven more by practical needs than by ideas, and that the ideology was thinner than critics suggest. They stress local politics, revenue and the need for allies. This view is useful as a check on over-reading ideas, though it can undervalue the lasting effect of the language of the mission. A critical answer should state it as a counterweight.

Subaltern and cultural studies. Chatterjee, Chakrabarty and Nandy ask how colonial categories shaped Indian self-understanding, and how nationalism both rejected and took over the mission's terms. Chatterjee's idea of a derivative discourse is the best-known case. The approach moves attention from what the British did to how Indians thought in reply. For UGC NET, link it with the post-colonial section.

Position	Main writers	Reading of the mission
Liberal-imperial	Ferguson and earlier defenders	Real benefits of law and institutions
Nationalist	Naoroji; R. C. Dutt	Cover for exploitation
Marxist	R. P. Dutt; Bipan Chandra	Ideology of capital
Utilitarian and liberal studies	Stokes; Mehta	Tutelage built into liberal thought
Post-colonial	Said; Inden; Cohn; Viswanathan	Knowledge and power
Periodisation	Metcalf	From reform to difference
Feminist	Mani; Sinha	Women as objects of the argument
Revisionist	Cambridge school	Policy driven by needs more than ideas

11. Importance and limitations of the study of the civilizing mission

Importance

Explains how rule was justified. The study shows that colonial rule rested on ideas as well as force. A small number of British officials governed a very large population, and they needed a claim that made their rule acceptable to themselves, to voters at home and to Indian elites. The moral claim of trust gave this. For example, the Proclamation of 1858 spoke of duty and not of conquest. In exams, use this point to answer questions on the legitimacy of colonial rule.

Links ideas with policy. It connects Orientalism, Evangelicalism, Utilitarianism and Anglicism with actual measures, such as the education policy of 1835, the abolition of sati and the codification of law. This helps a student avoid listing ideas without effects. A good answer names the idea, the person and the measure together, as in Bentham's thought, Bentinck's period and the codes.

Explains the origins of English education. It shows why English was chosen, whom it served, and why it produced a class that later led the nationalist movement. The choice was made for administrative need and for cultural reasons, and it had results that the planners did not intend. This point links the topic with the rise of the Congress and is often asked in questions on the making of the middle class.

Throws light on the change after 1857. It explains why reform gave way to rule through traditional elites and to a stress on Indian difference. Without the idea of the mission, the change might appear only as a matter of security. With it, a student can see how the language of rule changed from improvement to trusteeship. Use Metcalf's scheme to support the point.

Shows the role of gender in colonial argument. The use of the condition of women as a sign of backwardness explains much of the debate on sati, widow remarriage and age of consent. It also explains why Indian reformers and conservatives treated women's questions

as questions of national honour. For examinations, it allows an answer that goes beyond politics and economics.

Supplies the nationalist case. The gap between the claim of benefit and the practice of rule gave Indian nationalists their best arguments, as in Naoroji's account of un-British rule. Nationalists asked the rulers to act on their own words. A student can show here how a justification of rule became a tool against it.

Connects liberalism and empire. It shows how liberal ideas of progress and liberty were joined with arguments for tutelage, a point that is central in the debate on liberal thought. J. S. Mill is the standard example. This point is valuable in answers on political thought, since it shows that liberal ideas were used in more than one way.

Gives concepts for post-colonial study. Civilizing mission, trusteeship, derivative discourse and colonial knowledge are tools used in many countries. A student who knows them can read the history of Africa, the Middle East and South-East Asia with the same terms. They are also the terms that NET questions most often use.

Helps in reading sources. It trains a student to read official minutes, despatches and laws as texts which both reveal and conceal motive. Macaulay's Minute is a good case: it states a plan, and it also shows the writer's view of Indian learning. The skill is useful in source-based questions and in research.

Prepares for the study of reform movements. It supplies the background to Indian reform and revival, which answered the mission in several ways. The Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Aligarh movement are best understood as replies to its charges. This allows a student to connect the topic with the next units in the syllabus.

Limitations

Risk of overstating coherence. Colonial ideology was not one doctrine, and officials, missionaries and scholars often disagreed. The Anglicist and Orientalist dispute is the best proof. A student who speaks of the mission as one plan may hide these quarrels. The remedy is to name the schools and show where they differed.

Gap between idea and practice. Policy often followed cost, revenue and security more than ideas, so the ideology cannot explain every decision. The small funds spent on education show how limited the effect was. A study of ideas alone can therefore make rule look more moral than it was. A balanced answer sets ideas beside interests.

Sincerity is hard to judge. It is hard to tell how far a speaker believed in the mission and how far it was a cover for interest. The same person may have held both. Historians can read only what was written, and written statements are shaped by the audience. A student should avoid confident claims on motive.

Elite sources. Most evidence comes from officials, missionaries and the educated, and says little about how ordinary people met the mission. Peasants, artisans and tribal groups left few written records. As a result, the study often shows the rulers' view and the view of a small Indian elite. Oral history and local records can partly correct this.

Indian agency. A study of the ideology alone may leave out how Indians used, changed and resisted it. Reformers shaped the laws on sati and widow remarriage, and nationalists turned the language of trust against the rulers. If this is left out, Indians appear only as objects of the mission. A good answer keeps both sides in view.

Uneven benefits are hard to measure. Claims about gains and harms in education, law and health are disputed, and figures are incomplete. Literacy figures, for example, vary by region and period, and the effect of the railways is debated. A student should treat large claims, whether of benefit or harm, with care and ask for evidence.

Regional variety. Most studies concern Bengal and the Hindi belt, and less is known of the South, the North-East and the princely states. The mission worked differently in missionary hill areas, in Madras and in the princely states. General statements may therefore not fit all regions, and examples should be chosen with care.

Moral and political heat. The subject is debated in public, and a student has to separate evidence from present-day arguments about empire. Strong opinions can lead to selection of facts. The remedy is to state each position as its holders would, with sources, in a neutral

tone.

Overuse of theory. Applying general theories, such as Said's, without change risks treating very different writers as one. The Orientalists, for instance, were not all alike, and some admired Indian learning. A student should test a theory against the facts of the case before using it.

Changing scholarship. New work on law, education and knowledge keeps revising earlier claims. A textbook view of ten years ago may now be challenged. For this reason, a student should note the date of a book and avoid treating one author as the last word.

Illustrations

Illustration	Event or text	What it shows
Duty of the civilised	Kipling (1899)	Popular form of the mission
Moral improvement	Grant, Observations (1792)	Evangelical case for reform
English-educated class	Macaulay's Minute (1835)	Cultural policy and the mission
Reform by law	Regulation XVII (1829); Act of 1856	Moral claim in social legislation
Retreat from reform	Proclamation of 1858	Change after 1857
Trusteeship	Montagu Declaration (1917)	Self-rule by stages
Counter-argument	Naoroji, Poverty and Un-British Rule (1901)	Nationalist reply

12. Using this topic in examinations

What examiners expect

Question type	What to do	Key points to include
Define civilizing mission	Define, give a source and an example	Duty to improve; Kipling 1899; Macaulay 1835

Explain colonial ideology	Name the schools	Orientalist, Anglicist, Evangelical, Utilitarian
Discuss the mission in practice	Link idea and measure	Education, law, sati 1829, Despatch 1854
Change after 1857	Compare the two phases	Proclamation 1858; trusteeship; traditional elites
Critically examine	Give claims and critiques	Naoroji; Gandhi; Mehta; Metcalf; Ferguson
Short note	One idea with a date	Macaulay's Minute; Wood's Despatch; trusteeship

Practice questions

1. Explain the meaning of the civilizing mission and discuss its place in colonial ideology.
2. Examine the contribution of Orientalists, Anglicists, Evangelicals and Utilitarians to British policy in India.
3. Discuss the civilizing mission as seen in education and law.
4. How did the mission use the condition of women to justify rule?
5. How did colonial ideology change after 1857?
6. Examine Indian responses to the civilizing mission.
7. Write short notes on: (a) Macaulay's Minute, (b) Wood's Despatch, (c) trusteeship.

Structured outline for a long answer

Introduction. Define colonial ideology and the civilizing mission, and state that they gave a moral basis to British rule.

Body. Describe the roots, the competing schools, the measures in education, law and social reform, the change after 1857, the Indian responses and the scholarly debate.

Conclusion. State that the mission gave moral cover to rule, that it was contested and unevenly applied, and that the gap between claim and practice supplied a main nationalist argument.

Sample answer (about 200 words)

Question: Discuss the civilizing mission as an element of colonial ideology.

The civilizing mission was the claim that Britain ruled India for the good of Indians, by bringing law, education, religion and order to a society held to be backward. It drew on Enlightenment ideas of progress, Evangelical belief in the duty to Christianise, Utilitarian faith in reform by law, and Orientalist study of Indian traditions. Policy in the early nineteenth century reflected these streams: the Charter Act of 1813 admitted missionaries and made a grant for education, Bentinck's government abolished sati in 1829, and Macaulay's Minute of 1835 put English education at the centre. After the revolt of 1857, the tone changed. The Proclamation of 1858 promised non-interference in religion, and the British relied on princes and landed elites and stressed Indian difference and trusteeship. Indians answered the mission in several ways. Reformers took part of it, revivalists affirmed a spiritual past, Naoroji argued that rule was drain and un-British, and Gandhi rejected modern civilisation. Scholars such as Metcalf, Mehta and Viswanathan show that the mission was both a real belief and a form of control. It gave moral cover to power, and the gap between claim and practice fed Indian nationalism.

13. Critical analysis

Belief or cover. The central question is whether the mission was sincere belief or a cover for interest. Evidence supports both. Many officials, missionaries and reformers held the belief, as their private letters and long careers show. The mission also suited the needs of revenue, trade and security, and it was dropped when it became costly. A careful answer holds both together, and says that belief and interest were not opposites but could support each other.

Reform and hierarchy. The ideas which promised improvement also held that Indians were different and in need of tutelage. This is the inner tension of the ideology, seen in Macaulay's plan and in the later distrust of the educated Indian. If Indians could be improved, they might claim equality; if they were fixed in difference, improvement was pointless. The tension explains the shift after 1857.

Ideas and interest. The ideology guided some measures, such as the education policy, while cost and politics shaped others. After 1857 the shift towards rule through elites shows how policy followed security needs. An answer can show this by comparing the Minute of 1835 with the Proclamation of 1858, and asking what changed in each.

The gap between claim and practice. The mission promised benefit, but the figures on literacy, famine and drain, and the exclusion of Indians from high office, showed limits. This gap is the strongest ground of the nationalist reply. Naoroji and Dutt used it, and the early Congress asked for the promises of 1858 to be kept. The point is central in any critical question.

Gender and rescue. The debates on sati and age of consent show how the condition of women was used to argue for or against colonial rule, and how women's own voices were often left out. The rescue story served the rulers, and the defence of custom served some nationalists. Women such as Ramabai and Tarabai Shinde spoke against both. This allows a fuller answer.

Agency of Indians. Reformers, revivalists, lower-caste thinkers and nationalists took the ideas and turned them to their own ends, and also at times took over their categories. The result was a mixed legacy, not simple acceptance or rejection. Chatterjee's idea of a derivative discourse and his later reading of the inner and outer domains help to explain this mixture.

Liberalism and empire. The link between liberal ideas and empire raises a question about how universal liberal principles were meant to be. If liberty was for those fit for it, then the colonised were placed outside it by the rulers' own judgement. This is a main reason why the mission is studied in political theory, and why Mehta's book is widely read.

Continuity into the present. The idea of a society needing improvement from outside, debates on the value of English, and the categories fixed by colonial law still shape discussion, which is why the topic matters beyond history. Personal law, the place of English and talk of development as a mission are examples. A closing line of this kind raises the quality of an answer.

Comparative frame. Other empires also used the language of civilising missions, as in the French mission civilisatrice, so the British case is one example of a wider pattern.

Comparison shows what was shared and what was special to India, such as the weight of Orientalist learning and the role of the Company. A short comparison is a good way to add depth.

Model concluding paragraph

The civilizing mission gave British rule in India a moral and intellectual basis. Drawing on Enlightenment ideas of progress, Evangelical duty, Utilitarian reform and Orientalist learning, it presented rule as a trust held for the good of Indians, and it worked through education, law and social reform. It was contested among the British and changed after 1857 from reform towards rule through traditional elites and a theory of trusteeship. Indians answered it with reform, revival, social criticism, the economic critique of drain and Gandhi's rejection of modern civilisation, and later scholars have shown how it joined belief with control. A balanced study treats it as both a real set of beliefs and a cover for interest, and sees the gap between its claim and the practice of rule as one source of Indian nationalism.

14. UGC NET: key authors and books

Author	Book	Year	Relevance
Charles Grant	Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain	1792	Evangelical case for moral reform
James Mill	The History of British India	1817	Ranking of civilisations

T. B. Macaulay	Minute on Indian Education	1835	Anglicist statement of the mission
Rudyard Kipling	The White Man's Burden	1899	Popular form of the mission
Dadabhai Naoroji	Poverty and Un-British Rule in India	1901	Nationalist reply
M. K. Gandhi	Hind Swaraj	1909	Critique of modern civilisation
Eric Stokes	The English Utilitarians and India	1959	Utilitarian influence
Edward Said	Orientalism	1978	Knowledge and power
Gauri Viswanathan	Masks of Conquest	1989	English literary study
Thomas Metcalf	Ideologies of the Raj	1994	Shifts in British ideas
Lata Mani	Contentious Traditions	1998	Sati debate
Uday Singh Mehta	Liberalism and Empire	1999	Liberal thought and empire
Partha Chatterjee	Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World	1986	Derivative discourse
Bernard Cohn	Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge	1996	Colonial knowledge

Revision tip. Make a timeline from 1784 to 1919 with the Asiatic Society, Charter Act 1813, Regulation XVII 1829, Minute 1835, Despatch 1854, revolt 1857, Proclamation 1858, Royal Titles Act 1876, Montagu Declaration 1917 and the Act of 1919, and add the dominant idea at each stage.

15. Key takeaways, sources and further reading

Key takeaways

- The civilizing mission was the claim that British rule improved India through law, education, religion and order.

- It drew on Enlightenment, Evangelical, Utilitarian, liberal and Orientalist thought.
- Orientalists, Anglicists, Evangelicals and Utilitarians differed on means but shared the aim of improvement.
- Macaulay's Minute (1835) and Wood's Despatch (1854) were main steps in education policy.
- The mission used the condition of women, as in the debates on sati, widow remarriage and age of consent.
- After 1857 policy turned from reform to rule through traditional elites and a theory of trusteeship.
- Indians answered with reform, revival, economic critique, social criticism and Gandhi's critique of modern civilisation.
- Scholars see the mission as both a real belief and a form of control.

Official sources

- [Constitution of India, Legislative Department](#)
- [National Archives of India](#)
- [Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India](#)
- [Lok Sabha, Constituent Assembly Debates](#)

Twenty books for further reading

1. Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*.
2. Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*.
3. Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*.
4. Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*.
5. Edward Said, *Orientalism*.
6. Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*.
7. Bernard Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*.

8. Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India*.
9. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*.
10. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*.
11. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*.
12. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*.
13. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885 to 1947*.
14. Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*.
15. Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*.
16. M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*.
17. Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*.
18. Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*.
19. Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar (eds.), *Women and Social Reform in Modern India*.
20. Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth-Century Bengal*.

Editorial note

These notes are prepared for study and revision. Readers should check facts, dates and quotations against the original sources before citing them. For corrections or suggestions, please use the contact page. See also the disclaimer.

Frequently asked questions

What was the civilizing mission? It was the claim that Britain ruled India to improve it through law, education, religion and order.

Who were the Anglicists? They were British officials, such as Macaulay and Bentinck, who held that public funds for education should go to English literature and science.

What did the Charter Act of 1813 do for education? It allowed missionaries to work in Company territory and set aside a yearly sum for education and the revival of learning.

How did policy change after 1857? The British moved away from drastic social reform and worked with princes and landed elites, with a stress on Indian difference and trusteeship.

How did Indians answer the mission? With reform, revival, the economic critique of drain, social criticism and Gandhi's rejection of modern civilisation.

How should a student write on this topic? With dates, names, measures, the competing schools, Indian responses and scholarly debates.

Category: Colonialism and Nationalism in India

Tag: Civilizing Mission, Colonial Ideology

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