

6.Colonial Mindset – History

Macaulay and his 'Minute on Indian Education' – As PM Modi urges for 10-year pledge to reverse colonial legacy, here's what you must know. The Prime Minister has proposed a 10-year national pledge (2025–2035) to dismantle the colonial mindset implanted by Macaulay's 1835 reforms by reviving Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and promoting civilisational confidence. This multifaceted strategy involves replacing colonial-era laws, strengthening the "One Health" framework, and achieving economic self-reliance through initiatives like Atmanirbhar Bharat and Digital Public Infrastructure.

Dismantling the "Colonial Mindset" – A 10-Year National Pledge (2025–2035)

1. Introduction

The Prime Minister has urged a 10-year national pledge to dismantle the "colonial mindset" implanted by Macaulay's 1835 educational reforms. This mindset, reinforced over nearly two centuries through institutional, cultural, and epistemic structures, is sought to be replaced by civilizational confidence and indigenous knowledge systems.

2. The Five Pillars of the National Pledge

The roadmap for the next decade focuses on five transformative goals –

Break the Colonial Inferiority Complex – Address and eradicate deep-rooted biases that automatically treat Western models (in education, governance, and lifestyle) as superior to Indian ones.

Restore Civilisational Confidence – Promote pride in India's heritage, languages, and cultural knowledge, transforming Indian identity from a source of embarrassment to a source of strength.

Rebuild Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) – Integrate classical Indian sciences, philosophy, arts, mathematics, and medicine into mainstream education and research curricula.

Create a Self-Reliant Economic Model – Strengthen Atmanirbhar Bharat through Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), and indigenous manufacturing to reduce reliance on foreign value chains.

Reorient Governance & Politics – Shift from election-centric thinking to a duty-led approach ("Emotion Mode 24×7"), signifying constant, citizen-first public service.

3. Elements of the Colonial Mindset in India

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The text identifies several deep-seated manifestations of colonial influence across various sectors.

Language Dominance & Linguistic Hierarchy

Macaulay's Minute (1835) – Authored by Thomas Babington Macaulay, this policy replaced traditional Sanskrit-Arabic learning with English-medium education.

Aim – To create a class "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, opinions, morals, and intellect."

Impact – Diverted funds from indigenous institutions to English ones, leading to the decline of traditional knowledge ecosystems.

English-Centric Power Structure – English dominates the judiciary, elite academia, corporate leadership, and civil services.

Prestige Hierarchy – English education is linked to privilege, while vernacular education faces structural disadvantages.

Epistemic Dependence – Major research, legal provisions, and STEM content is overwhelmingly available only in English.

B. Cultural Devaluation & Civilisational Insecurity

Internalised Inferiority – The equation that "Western = Progress" and "Indian = Backwardness" persists.

Example – Use of Western suits/ties in tropical Indian climates despite unsuitability.

Heritage Neglect – Historic monuments often treated as ruins rather than assets.

Example – Neglect of stepwells (e.g., Agrasen ki Baoli) before recent refurbishment.

Tourism Disconnect – Under-utilisation of civilisational heritage compared to global peers.

India – 40 UNESCO sites but limited heritage tourism revenue due to poor infrastructure.

Japan/Italy/Thailand – Successfully monetized cultural identity (Samurai culture, Renaissance art, Buddhist temples).

C. Laws & Institutions Rooted in Colonial Structures

Legal Foundations – The IPC (1860), CrPC (1973), and Evidence Act (1872) governed India's justice system for over 150 years, rooted in colonial control.

Bureaucratic Ethos – A hierarchical, command-and-control approach persists, with low orientation towards citizen service.

Policing Culture – Focus historically remained on control, coercion, and record-keeping rather than community service.

D. Economic & Development Imagination

Western-Centric Metrics – Development viewed strictly through Western lenses of GDP and urban modernity.

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Example – Early Five-Year Plans prioritized heavy industry (Soviet/Western model) over traditional sectors like handlooms and Ayurveda.

Consumption Imitation – Aspirational lifestyles shaped by Western consumer culture.

Example – Fast-food chains (McDonald's, KFC) becoming status symbols, replacing local nutritious food traditions.

E. Knowledge Systems & Epistemic Coloniality

Suppression of IKS – Disciplines like Ayurveda, Nyaya logic, and Arthashastra were sidelined.

Western Validation Bias – Academic quality is judged solely by publication in Western journals.

Imported Ideologies – Political discourse dominated by Western "Left vs. Right" binaries rather than indigenous concepts like *Dharma*, *Lokasangraha*, or *Sarvodaya*.

F. Technology & Cognitive Dependence

Language Asymmetry – AI models and search engines are built primarily for English.

Platform Monopolies – Dependence on foreign tech giants (e.g., Visa/Mastercard, Amazon) before the disruption by UPI and ONDC.

4. Corrective Measures Taken

Sector	Reform Initiative	Key Details
Legal Reforms	New Criminal Laws (July 2024)	BNS replaces IPC. BNSS replaces CrPC. BSA replaces Evidence Act. Focus on forensics, digital FIRs, and victim-centric processes.
Education	NEP 2020 & NCF 2023	Mother-tongue based foundational learning. CBSE Directive – Mother tongue mandated for early grades. AICTE – Translation of STEM/Technical books into Indian languages (Anuvadini AI).
Culture & Heritage	Corridor Projects	Kashi Vishwanath & Mahakal Lok – Transformed into spiritual tourism hubs. Sengol – Installed in Parliament as a symbol of democratic legacy.

Sector	Reform Initiative	Key Details
		Kartavya Path – Renaming Rajpath to emphasize duty.
Economy	PLI & Atmanirbhar Bharat	Incentives for domestic manufacturing in 14 sectors (Semiconductors, Pharma). Strengthening domestic innovation to reduce imports.
Digital Infra	India Stack	UPI, Aadhaar, DigiLocker, ONDC exported as global models. ONDC – Democratizing e-commerce for small sellers against foreign monopolies.
Knowledge	IKS & Diplomacy	Integration of IKS into curricula. Global promotion via International Day of Yoga and Ayurveda tourism.
Technology	Bhashini Mission	Creating multilingual AI datasets for Indian languages to ensure AI inclusivity.

5. Way Forward – Cognitive Decolonisation

A. Deepening Linguistic Decolonisation

Equality – Make Indian languages equal to English in courts, administration, and Parliament.

Content – Scale up high-quality STEM and medical content in regional languages.

B. Reviving Indian Knowledge Systems

Curriculum – Incorporate Indian logic, astronomy, and political thought into higher education.

Research Centres – Establish global centres for Indian epistemology and Ayurveda.

C. Transforming Legal & Administrative Culture

Service Ethos – Shift policing from a "force of control" to a "service institution."

Access – Simplify legal language and ensure proceedings are accessible in local languages.

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Bureaucracy – Move from secrecy to transparency and participatory governance.

D. Behavioural & Psychological Shift

Mindset Change – Campaign to end "Western = Superior" bias; promote balanced cosmopolitanism rooted in Indian identity.

Media Ethics – Strengthen fearless, fact-based journalism.

E. Economic & Strategic Decolonisation

Innovation – Focus on indigenous R&D in defence and deep-tech.

Value Chains – Move from assembly-based economy to design-led value creation.

Sovereign Tech – Develop indigenous chip design, cloud services, and AI platforms.

6. Conclusion

Cognitive decolonisation is not an isolationist rejection of the world. Instead, it is India's effort to engage with the global community on its own terms—backed by the strength of its languages, heritage, indigenous knowledge systems, and democratic confidence. The goal is to position India as an "Emerging Model" of democracy and multiculturalism, rather than just an "Emerging Market."

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