MEG - 10
ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA
ASSIGNMENT 2026 - 2027
(Based on Blocks 1 – 8)

Max. Marks: 100

Answer all questions.

1. Examine the debates surrounding the introduction of English education in colonial India. How do these debates continue to influence English studies today? 20

2. Discuss the role of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in the beginnings of the Indian English novel and the evolution of modern Indian fiction. 20

3. Critically discuss the relationship between English, multilingualism, and national identity in contemporary India. 20

4. Evaluate the role of TELI (Technology-Enabled Learning Initiatives) in English language and literature teaching in Indian universities. 20

5. Discuss the relationship between Orientalism, nationalism, and decolonisation in shaping Indian literary criticism. 20

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Answer

The introduction of English education in colonial India was not a simple educational reform. It emerged from a long argument about the purpose of education, the place of Indian knowledge, the medium of instruction, and the political interests of the colonial state. The debate is usually described as a conflict between Orientalists and Anglicists, but this description becomes more useful when we see the different motives inside both positions. Some administrators wanted to preserve classical Indian learning, some missionaries wanted access to Indians for religious and moral instruction, Indian reformers sought useful modern knowledge, and the colonial government increasingly wanted an educated group that could assist administration. These competing aims made English education both a means of intellectual change and an instrument of power.

Orientalist and Anglicist positions

In the early phase of Company rule, Orientalist policy gave institutional support to Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit learning. Institutions such as the Calcutta Madrasa and the Sanskrit College reflected the belief that the rulers should understand and work through the established traditions of the country. Orientalist scholars also translated and classified Indian texts. Their work preserved and circulated important material, yet it often treated India as a fixed ancient civilisation whose authentic culture belonged mainly to a classical past. Thus, even a policy that appeared respectful could place living Indian societies inside categories created by colonial scholarship.

The Anglicists challenged this policy. They argued that public funds should promote European science and literature and that English should become the main route to such knowledge. Thomas Babington Macaulay's Minute of 1835 gave this view its most forceful expression. It dismissed much traditional learning as inferior to modern European knowledge and imagined English education as a way of producing an intermediary educated class. The educational claim was therefore tied to a political design: English could create clerks, translators and cultural mediators who would help the colonial administration function more efficiently.