

#HATS

Why Did Cowboys Switch to Curved Brim Hats?

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Cowboy hats are an enduring symbol of the American West, but their evolution was shaped by practical needs. While early cowboy hats had flat brims, the shift to curved brims was driven by functionality and fashion as cowboys faced the harsh conditions of the frontier.

Early Cowboy Hats

Before the cowboy hat became iconic, wide-brimmed hats were used primarily for protection against the elements. The first cowboy hats, dating back to the mid-1800s, were flat-brimmed and often made of felt or straw. These hats were practical, offering shade from the sun and protection from rain. The wide brim helped keep the sun off the face and neck, which was essential for long hours spent outdoors.

The Shift to Curved Brims

The transition from flat to curved brims didn't happen immediately, but by the late 1800s, curved brims became the dominant style. Several factors contributed to this change.

1. Wind Resistance

Flat-brimmed hats, though useful in some ways, were prone to being blown off by strong winds, something common in the open plains. Curving the brim helped reduce wind resistance, keeping the hat securely on the cowboy's head even during gusty weather. This practical adjustment made the curved-brim hat more suited to the unpredictable conditions of the American West.

2. Rain Protection

The curved brim also proved more effective at shedding rain. A flat brim could collect water, making the hat heavy and uncomfortable. With a curved brim, rainwater would slide off the sides, preventing it from dripping down the cowboy's face or soaking into the hat. This offered better protection during storms, a frequent occurrence on the plains.

3. Sun Protection

While both flat and curved brims offer shade, the curved brim provided more consistent and thorough coverage. It better protected not just the face but also the neck and ears, which are particularly vulnerable to sunburns. This

was especially important for cowboys who spent hours working outdoors under the harsh sun.

4. Fashion and Identity

As cowboy culture developed, the curved-brim hat became a symbol of the American West. Western films and literature helped cement the image of the cowboy with a curved-brim hat as a cultural icon. Actors like John Wayne popularized this style, and it became a defining feature of the rugged, independent cowboy. Over time, the curved brim was no longer just about function, it became an emblem of Western identity and pride.

5. Practicality for Riding

The curved brim also had benefits for horseback riders. When cowboys were mounted, the curved brim helped keep the hat from obstructing their vision, especially when looking down at the reins or ahead to the horizon. The angle of the brim provided a better range of sight while still offering sun and rain protection.

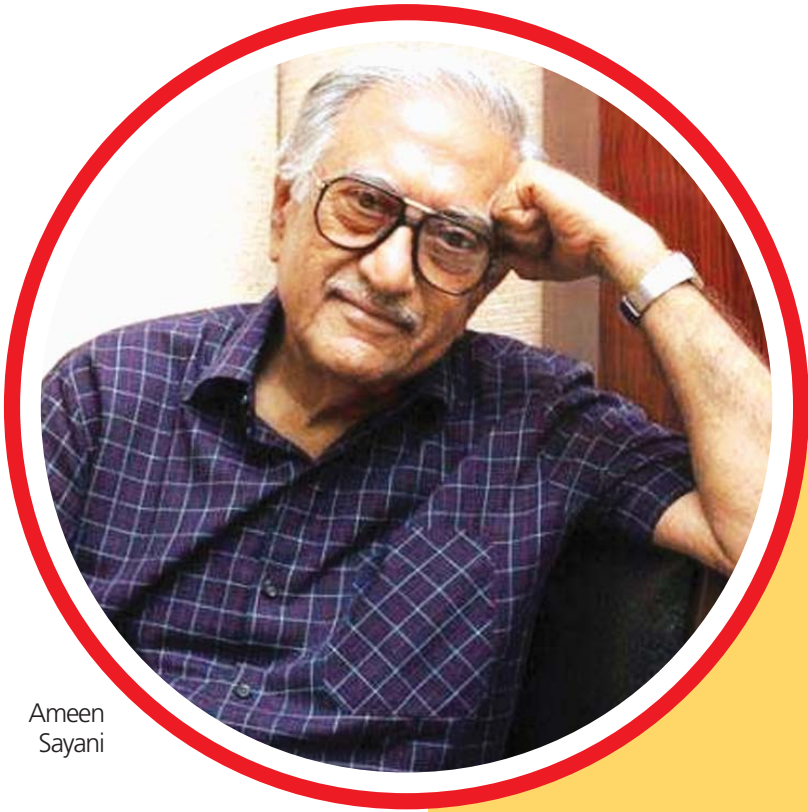
The Evolution of the Cowboy Hat

As the cowboy hat evolved, it became more specialized. Different cowboy roles, ranchers, rodeo stars, and trail bosses, each developed preferences for slightly different styles of curved brims. However, the general trend towards the curved brim remained dominant as it offered the perfect balance of protection, comfort, and style.

The curved-brim hat became synonymous with the Western lifestyle, and it is still the go-to choice for many cowboys today. Although some flat-brimmed styles persist, particularly in fashion circles, the curved brim has become the quintessential cowboy hat shape.

Conclusion

The shift to curved brims in cowboy hats was a practical response to the challenges of the American West. The curved brim provided better wind resistance, improved rain and sun protection, and offered comfort for horseback riding. Over time, it became more than just a functional item, it became a symbol of cowboy culture, an iconic piece of Western identity. Today, the curved-brim cowboy hat remains a testament to the resilience and adaptability of those who wore it.



Ameen Sayani



Anjali Sharma  
Senior Journalist & Wildlife Enthusiast

Sri Lanka is celebrating the Centenary year of its radio service this year. It was indeed a momentous event when the Sri Lankan radio service, Radio Ceylon, was launched on December 16, 1925, making it the second-oldest radio station in the world. But that is not its only claim to fame.

Radio Ceylon became a game changer in the sphere of mass communication in Asia, which makes this historical event equally important for India as well as the rest of the world.

For the world, because of the significant role it played during World War II in communicating war news to listeners in South Asia. During the war, the Allied Forces took control of the station, establishing Radio South East Asia Command, which controlled the Allied operations in Asia during the war.

British announcers David Jacobs and Desmond Carrington, who were based in Colombo, presented news and other programmes for the Allied forces stationed in Southeast Asia.

For India, because of the great service it provided to the Indian film industry as well as film music lovers in India at a time when the All India Radio had banned film music from its airwaves altogether. In 1952, following a directive from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, under BV Keskar, the All India Radio imposed a ban on film music.

Keskar believed that classical Indian music was losing ground to westernised film music and youngsters were getting influenced by



Lata Mangeskar and Ameen Sayani.

'Behnon Aur Bhaiyon...! Radio Ceylon Turns 100

AIR's loss became Radio Ceylon's gain, and the station started its Hindi music station with Binaca Geetmala, making its presenter, Ameen Sayani, a household name in India. It is thanks to this one programme that the magical journey of the Hindi film industry and its music through the 50s, till the launch of Vivid Bharati in 1957, including songs as well as interviews of yesteryear stars, lyricists, and music composers, could be chronicled.



#LOOKING BACK



Ameen Sayani, music director late Ravi, Rajil and Dinky.



Subhashini De Silva, a librarian at SLBC for 18 years, explains about the gramophone records stored at the radio studio's disc and tape library.



SLBC chairman Hudson Samarasinghe recalls the days when mailbags filled with song requests would arrive at the studio's doors.

It turned the tide almost overnight for Indian popular music. The film industry turned its affiliation to Radio Ceylon, which took on the opportunity and also started a Hindi service to play Bollywood songs, programmes like Binaca Geetmala, a countdown show of songs by iconic presenter Ameen Sayani.

non-Indian elements. "We must make (ourselves) familiar with our traditional music," he observed. Even if a song was aired on AIR, after intense scrutiny, the name of the movie was not mentioned because the station would not advertise the movie.

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Equipment on show includes transmitters, transistors, old microphones and more.



Vintage equipment on display at the former Radio Ceylon studio in Colombo.

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"Thanks to strategies like this, Radio Ceylon became a cultural bridge between India, Pakistan and Burma. The popularity of this programme attracted Indian busi-



A broadcaster at SLBC.

ness houses to advertise in Radio Ceylon," says T Jaisakthivel,

Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Communication, University of Madras, who is writing a book on Radio Ceylon, Asia's first and world's second oldest radio station.

S. P. Mylvaganam was one of the first announcers in Radio Ceylon, who became popular with the Indian Tamil audience because of his perfect and clear diction of pure Tamil. Tamilians began to prefer Radio Ceylon to AIR. He was followed by many other good announcers like Rajguru Senathipati Kanakratnam, S. K. Pararajasingham, Immanuel, Visalakshi Hameed, K. S. Raja, B. H. Abdul Hameed. "We learnt to speak good Tamil by listening to them," says an old fan. The announcers enjoyed a fan following equal to film stars. So much so that Radio Ceylon was a tourist destination for Tamilians visiting

Ceylon. They would be invited to Chennai to conduct music shows. "The commercial service used shortwave transmitters which covered Asia and were heard as far as North America, we know this because a QSL card (a verification card) was sent by Radio Ceylon in 1958 to a listener in California who sent a reception report," says Jaisakthivel.

The downturn began in the 80s when ethnic conflicts began and many announcers were killed, laid off or just fled. Radio Ceylon, before the war, used to relay Tamilosai news, but during the conflict, it stopped, because the BBC reported

both sides, and Radio Ceylon reported only the government version. This gave place to the LTTE's own 'voice of tigers.'

North India was equally, if differently, impressed by the broadcasts.

For nearly four decades, every week at 8 pm sharp, millions across the Indian subcontinent tuned in to Radio Ceylon, greeted by the iconic words 'Bhaiyo aur Behno.' Through Binaca Geetmala, Ameen Sayani ji didn't just announce songs, he shaped listening habits, created shared cultural moments, and brought India together through the power of radio.

His baritone voice travelled far beyond borders, leaving an indelible mark on broadcasting history and popular culture. As his alma mater, The Scindia School has taken immense pride in celebrating an Old Boy whose legacy continues to echo through time.

Today, the library at the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) has rare recordings of songs, some of which, sadly, have been lost in India. For instance, out of a total of 170 recordings of K.L. Saigal that survive today, the SLBC has 85, comprising both film and non-film songs.

The SLBC has over 70,000 music records, considered to be the best in Asia, going back to low-fidelity 78 rpm records with metadata. For the music connoisseurs, it is literally a treasure trove.

If the Hindi service recorded the greatest moments of Hindi cinema, the All Asia English service, which was scrapped in the mid-1990s, became witness to major events of the 30s, 40s, 50s, and 60s, from the changing face of British dominion to wars, the first climb of Mt. Everest, and the moon landing.

By celebrating 100 years of SLBC, it is this shared bit of historical, social, and cultural legacy that we celebrate with this pearl of the Indian Ocean.

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com

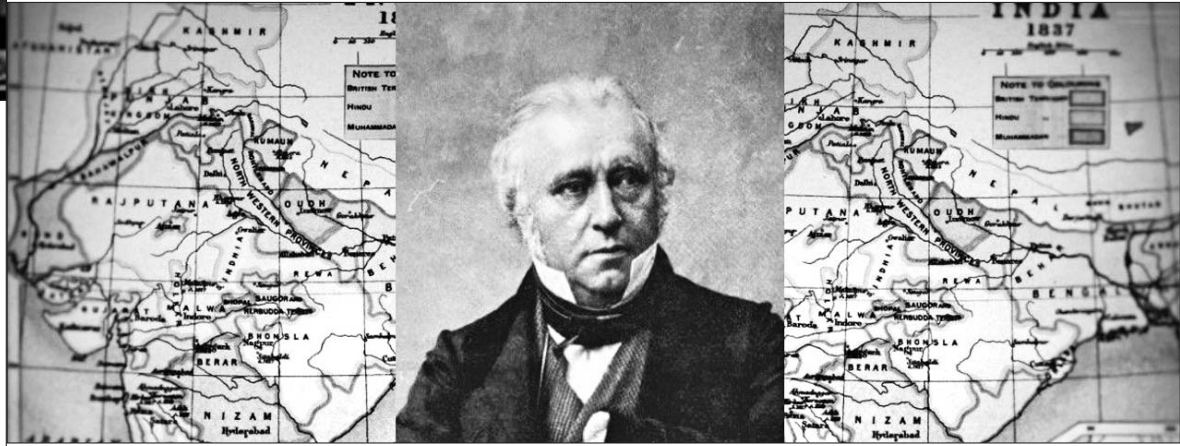


RD Burman, Asha Bhosle, Noor Jeha.

#LOOT

Looting of the Indian Mind

How the British Looted the Minds of Indians: The Intellectual Exploitation of Colonial Education



The British colonial rule in India, spanning nearly two centuries, is notorious for its economic, political, and cultural exploitation. While the extraction of wealth and resources is widely discussed, the looting of the Indian mind through colonial education is one of the most enduring legacies of British rule. This intellectual colonization not only stripped Indians of their pride in their own cultural heritage but also laid the foundation for a system of education that continues to shape India's academic landscape today.

The British Strategy: Education as a Tool for Control

The British understood early on that to maintain their rule over India, they needed to control not only the land and resources but also the intellectual and cultural life of the people. The introduction of Western-style education was central to this strategy. British officials, such as Lord Macaulay, who is often associated with India's educational transformation, argued that India's indigenous systems of knowledge were inferior and should be replaced with European learning. In his Minutes on Indian Education (1835), Macaulay famously stated that 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.' This sentiment

encapsulated the British belief in the intellectual superiority of the West, and the deliberate attempt to diminish India's rich intellectual traditions.

Macaulay's Vision: Intellectual Colonialism

In 1835, Macaulay's Minutes became the blueprint for educational policy in India. His vision was to create an elite class of Indians who were well-versed in English language and British literature, and who were also disconnected from their own cultural heritage. The education system introduced during British rule was designed to produce a small group of 'English-educated' Indians who could serve as intermediaries between the colonial government and the masses, effectively making them loyal to the British Crown. The system was not intended to educate the masses but to maintain British control over the population through a cultural and intellectual hierarchy.

This shift in educational priorities led to a systemic devaluation of India's traditional knowledge systems. India had a long and storied history of scientific and philosophical thought, with advancements in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and architecture. The works of Aryabhata, Brahmagupta, Sushruta, and others were largely ignored in the colonial curriculum, while the intellectual contributions of Western thinkers like Newton,

Darwin, and Shakespeare were emphasized.

Impact on Indian Identity and Intellectual Legacy

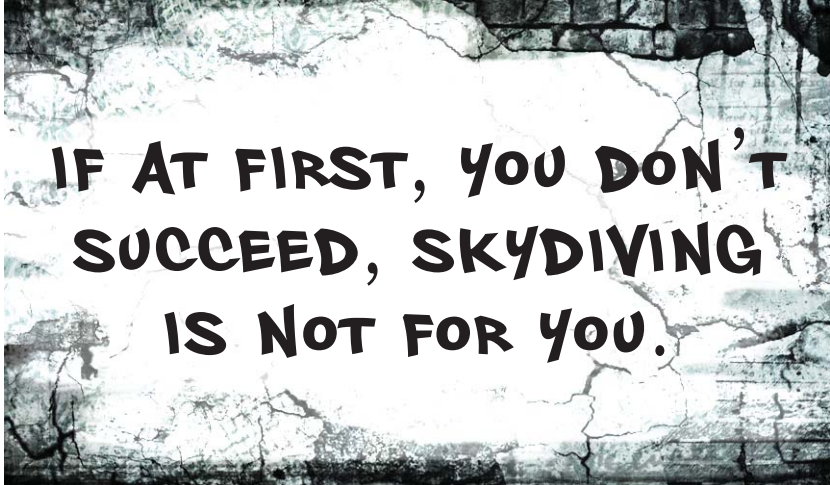
The British education system systematically taught Indians to view their own culture as backward and inferior, while Western culture was positioned as the epitome of progress and civilization. This had profound effects on Indian self-perception. The colonial curriculum glorified British history, philosophy, and literature while sidelining India's own contributions to science, art, and governance. Even languages like Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian, which had been central to Indian scholarship for centuries, were marginalized in favor of English. For the educated elite, this created a divide between their Westernized identities and the traditional values of their own communities. Many of India's intellectuals, who were trained in British schools and universities, began to internalize these colonial attitudes, leading to a generation of leaders who were more aligned with British ideas than with their own cultural roots.

The Lasting Legacy of Intellectual Colonization

Even after India gained independence in 1947, the British legacy in education remained firmly entrenched. English became the dominant language of instruction in schools and universities, and Western ideas of governance, law, and science continued to hold sway. While the Indian government made efforts to decolonize the education system, the structure and content of Indian education still reflect the patterns established during British rule. The continued emphasis on English-medium education has led to a divide in Indian society, with those who are educated in English often enjoying better economic and social opportunities, while those studying in regional languages remain at a disadvantage. Moreover, India's education system, which is still largely modeled on British colonial practices, continues to focus on rote learning, rather than nurturing critical thinking and innovation.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman