

The Rise of English in Nineteenth Century British India

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Most Pakistani historians consider the dominance of English as a medium of education, administration and the judiciary – the higher level at least – a British conspiracy. Such historians use a highly polemical style of writing and give simplistic explanations for complicated historical phenomena. Among the theories advanced are: that Persian was replaced by the vernacular languages in the courts of law with a view to reducing the importance of the classical languages of the Muslims in particular. Along with this it is asserted that Urdu, a language symbolic of Muslim culture, was also belittled by the British with the help of the Hindus.¹ It is implied that the British decision-makers were unanimous in their policy of belittling the significance of Muslim languages as behooves conspirators. Thus the early 19th Century controversy between the Anglicists (supporters of Western Education and English) and the Orientalists (supporters of traditional Indian education and languages like Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic) has been largely ignored by the conspiracy theorists. Some supporters of Urdu and nationalist aspirations in Pakistan, however, have mentioned the earlier policy of supporting Oriental learning but have either done it only in passing² or called it 'surprising'³ without explaining it in detail.

Earlier historians, generally writing in the British period, discussed the controversy on the assumption that the Orientalists were misguided and that the Anglicist policies had brought enlightenment to India.⁴ A more neutral treatment of the controversy of the medium of instruction is offered by Dakin.⁵ He is not concerned with politics but with the

development of education and is less relevant for scholars of linguistic politics than the work of Gauri Viswanathan. Viswanathan's analytical article is important since it argues that English literature was introduced in India to function 'as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state'.⁶ More significantly, Viswanathan suggest that it was not introduced from an undisputed position of strength but an embattled one in which situational imperatives often dictated policy.⁷ These are the insights I shall bring to the following article on the Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy.

This article aims to demonstrate that the major objective of the British imperialists was to consolidate and strengthen the empire. Within this parameter, however, they differed considerably from each other about linguistic policy. It will be further suggested that the Orientalists, who supported the retention of traditional learning and the classical languages, belonged to an earlier paradigm of thought.⁸ Part of this paradigm was the late medieval and Renaissance idea of the 'mysterious East' with fabulous wealth, esoteric knowledge and novel way of life.⁹ This obsolescent attitude towards India was now shared by conservatives like Edmund Burke (1729-1797) and James Cummings of the Board of Control whose major aim was to conserve British, and on the same principle, Oriental traditional ways of life.¹⁰ Some of the philosophical conservatives also objected to aspects of imperialistic expansion though Orientalist scholars like Sir William Jones and the historian William Robertson believed in the intrinsic worth of much Oriental learning without opposing British imperialism.¹¹ Jones was the founder of the Asiatic Society of the Bengal in 1784 which did much research on the East.¹² The idea of the Orientalist as a savant and an adventurer who could unravel the mystery of the East inspired scholars like Henry T. Colebrook, Sir John Shore, J. Forbes and H. H. Wilson to do much pioneering work.¹³ Some of the early Orientalists believed in the intrinsic worth of traditional learning and that, out of cultural respect or for political reasons, Western ideas and English should not be imposed upon India.¹⁴ The Anglicists shared an emerging paradigm to which the Utilitarianism of Bentham and James Mill as well as the ideas of economic and political liberalism of Adam Smith, Ricardo and Tom Paine contributed.¹⁵ To this aggressive and rising imperialism, the prejudices of the ordinary Anglo-Indian and the didactic ethnocentrism of the Evangelical 'Clapham Sect' of William Wilberforce added an inordinate contempt for Oriental civilization and learning.¹⁶ The new

view of India was that it was not mysterious but backward, weak, inefficient, superstitious and contemptible. The clash of these two paradigms on the intellectual plane led to James Mill's strictures concerning the Hindu civilization was inferior – at a lower stage of evolution in the parlance of Social Darwinism which came to be used in these contexts – to the medieval European civilization.¹⁷ Thus, by implication, the high valuation of it by the Orientalists was 'romantic'.¹⁸ Moreover he belittled the work of Orientalists by pointing out that he had written his history without any knowledge of Eastern languages.¹⁹ James Mill, according to Stokes, 'was no Anglicist'²⁰ but he did share the Anglicist disdain for Oriental learning and also influenced many of the theories of Anglicists. One corollary of the Social Darwinist assumption that the East was inferior was the view that it was the duty of the superior Europeans to help it to evolve to a higher plane of existence.²¹ This 'White Man's Burden' theory, as it is called after Kipling,²² inspired Anglicists of both the evangelical and secular kinds to impose Western institutions and the English language which they regarded as civilizing influences. The conflict over the medium of instruction (Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit or English), the subjects of study (Oriental or Western) and the language of record in courts of law (Persian, vernaculars or English) are linguistic manifestations of the transition from one paradigm to another.²³ It is this thesis which is examined in this paper.

The Orientalist Phase of Indian Education

The East India Company had no distinct policy of promoting or even supporting education in India upto 1813. In 1780, however, Warren Hastings, the Governor General from 1774 to 1785, laid the foundation of oriental education in India. According to him:

In the month of September 1780 a petition was presented to me by a considerable number of Mussulmen.... They represented this was a favourable occasion to establish a Madrussa or College, and Mudgid O'din the fittest person to form and preside in it ...²⁴

The seminary was Hastings' own initiative and he bore its expenses but was reimbursed by the Company later.²⁵ Seeing the successes of the Danish missionaries in Tranquebar from 1706 onwards, John Sullivan, an officer of the Madras Government, established some schools in South India for teaching Indians through the medium of English. The Directors of the Company contributed 250 pagodas to each of the schools which existed in 1787.²⁶ It would appear from this that the Directors, or at least some of them, did favour the teaching of English even before any

officially consistent educational or linguistic policy existed. However, the absence of a policy itself could have explained the generosity shown towards private initiatives for when in 1792 Wilberforce, the famous social reformer, proposed to send schoolmasters to India, one of the Directors of the Company expressed the apprehension that education could result in the loss of India just as ideas of liberty had led to the loss of America.²⁷ The argument that European education and the English language was of central significance for imperialism itself, and it was used by cautious imperialists as well as committed Orientalists, (who were also imperialists notwithstanding their love for Oriental studies), was surely the greatest obstruction in the way of the Anglicists. Some of the Anglicists were also Evangelists so that they countered this assertion by arguing that English literature, Western knowledge and Christianity would change the ideas of the Indians and they would become supporters of British imperialism. Wilberforce, and along with him Charles Grant (1746-1823), were Evangelist supporters of English and believers in what came to be known as the 'White Man's Burden' theory. Like most Anglicists Grant, who had lived in India, saw nothing intrinsically valuable about the Orient or its learning and dismissed both with even more contempt than Macaulay displayed in his Minute of 1835.²⁸ Writing in 1792 Charles Grant argued that English literature would 'silently undermine', and 'at length subvert' the Hindus' religion.²⁹ The elite which read it would support the British. He believed that the Indians would not demand independence since 'the establishment of Christianity in a country, does not necessarily bring after it a free political Constitution'. Moreover, true to the theory of racial inferiority and stereotyping which was believed in by most people at that time, Grant also thought that having a vegetable diet, the Hindus would not go in for rebellion.³⁰ These views were repeated, with different degrees of sophistication and in different idioms, by all Anglicists, C.E. Trevelyan, the brother-in-law of Macaulay and his ardent supporter, put it clearly:

There is no class of our subjects to whom we are so thoroughly necessary as those whose opinions have been cast in the English mould: they are spoiled for a purely native regime; they have everything to fear from the premature establishment of a native Government³¹

Macaulay himself expressed similar views in 1853 in a debate in the Parliament. He said:

The noble Lord is of opinion that by encouraging natives to study the arts and learning of Europe, we are preparing the way for the destruction of our power in India. I am utterly at a loss to understand how, while contemning education

when it is given to Europeans, he should regard it with dread when it is given to natives.³²

On 18 July 1853, H.H. Wilson the great Sanskrit scholar and a diehard Orientalist, testified before the House of Commons that when as a result of Macaulay's Minute the stipends of the Muslim students of the Calcutta Madrasa were stopped there was much political agitation.

They [most respectable Maulvies and native gentlemen] said that the evident object of the Government was the conversion of the Natives; that they encouraged English exclusively, and discouraged Mahomedan and Hindu studies, because they wanted the people to become Christians.³³

At that time — in 1792 when Grant wrote his *Observations* — the Company was not at all convinced of the theory that English would not create political problems. Thus the Directors chose to patronize only Oriental education when the Parliament decided in 1813 that not less than 100,000 rupees would have to be spent on education.³⁴ The Directors wrote to the Governor General in Bengal on 3 June 1814 that while spending the money on education 'due attention to the usages and habits of the natives' should be given. In the same letter they encouraged Oriental studies saying:

... due encouragement should be given to such of our servants in any of those departments as may be disposed to apply themselves to the study of the Sanskrit language.³⁵

This policy merely supported the Orientalist policy of Warren Hastings which had produced not only the Calcutta Madrasa for Muslim traditional knowledge but also the Hindoo Sanskrit College, established in 1791, at Benaras, for the promotion of Brahmanical learning.³⁶ The Hindu College of Poona, established in 1821, was also for the same purpose and both Monstuart Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, and William Chaplin, Commissioner in the Deccan, felt that its establishment was a political necessity to conciliate learned Hindus.³⁷ In fact, the conciliation of the natives was an avowed and explicit aim of the Orientalist policy of education as several letters, minutes and other sources of British administrators and the East India Company itself testify.³⁸

Indian Initiatives for Acquiring English

In 1774 the Supreme Court was established at Calcutta. This, according to Hampton, was 'the first real stimulus to the acquisition of the languages of the new rulers'.³⁹ In any case, in 1816 the 'native gentlemen of Calcutta' subscribed Rs. 113,179 to establish a Vidyalaya or Anglo-Indian College.⁴⁰ In this 'Tytler's Elements of General History, Russell's Modern Europe, with Milton and Shakespeare' were taught.⁴¹

This college had been made possible by the efforts of David Hare (1775-1852) and Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), both of whom were reformers with great interest in education, and became the test case for the success of Western learning.⁴² The greatest inducement for obtaining a Western education for the Indians appears to be employment. In 1820, for instance, the inhabitants of the town of Panswell wrote to the Governor of Bombay that they were desirous 'to learn English that we may be employed in your service and maintain ourselves'.⁴³ In a minute of 13 December 1823 Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, notes that:

A man with such knowledge of English as we require, would easily get 150 or 200 rupees as a clerk to a merchant.⁴⁴

The issue of employing more Indians was discussed and many English people testified before the Parliamentary Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company that employing Indians was politically expedient and cheaper than exporting all employees from Britain.⁴⁵ Thus, it is understandable that in 1823 Raja Ram Mohan Roy addressed a petition to the Governor General that modern rather than merely traditional subjects be taught in the Calcutta Sanskrit College. Expressing himself rather strongly at places he said:

... the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British Legislature.

Further, in 1827, native princes, chieftains and gentlemen of the Western part of India subscribed Rs.2,15,000 for 'founding one or more Professorships for teaching the languages, literature, sciences, and moral philosophy of Europe'.⁴⁷ Most of this demand for English came from the Hindus because the Muslims thought Western ideas would be inimical to their faith.⁴⁸ Even so, as early as 1814 there were some Muslim students in the school of the non-conformist missionary Robert May at Chinsura.⁴⁹ However, it is only Abdul Latif of Calcutta, the organizer of the Mohammedan Literary Society in that city, who is known for his pro-English views.⁵⁰ But even he is not as well known as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who once spoke in favour of these views in 1863 from the platform of the Literary Society, and who really broke down the Muslim resistance to English.⁵¹ Another proof that in 1835, even before Persian had lost its place as the judicial language, Persian and Arabic were not regarded as qualifications to employment is furnished by the report of the local Educational Committee of the Delhi College which taught Western subjects in Urdu and also taught the Indian classical languages.⁵² In the same year, according to Trevelyan, 31,649 school books written in English were sold whereas only 1,454 books were sold in Persian. The

number of books for Urdu (or Hindustani) was larger being 3,384 as was that of Bengali (5,754). But that of the classical religious languages was very low: 36 in Arabic and only 16 in Sanskrit.⁵³

These developments were mentioned by Englishmen who argued that Indians wanted to acquire Western knowledge and the English language. People like Francis Warden, of the Bombay Government, as well as most of the Englishmen who appeared before the Parliamentary Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company wholeheartedly supported English. They also felt that there would be no adverse political repercussions of Anglicist policies. The Directors of the Company, who appear to have favoured Orientalist policies mainly out of fear of rebellion, could now begin to think of a change in policy.⁵⁴

The Committees of Public Instruction and the Controversy

The General Committee of Public Instruction (GCPI), Calcutta, was appointed on 17 July 1823 in response to a memorandum of Holt Mackenzie. Among its members were the well known Orientalists: Henry Thomas Prinsep, Secretary to the Bengal Government, and the Sanskrit scholar Henry Wilson. The other members were Mackenzie himself and J.H. Harington, J.T. Larkins, W.B. Martin, W.B. Bayley, and H. Shakespeare.⁵⁵ The points of the view of the Anglicists and the Orientalists were articulated here so that the controversy is mainly associated with it. That is why some historians have given the dates 1833 to 1840 to the controversy in the Bengal though,⁵⁶ in fact, it was part of the transition from one paradigm to another and went on in different forms even after it was decided that Western knowledge would be promoted. However, the prominence given to the debate in the GCPI give the erroneous impression that the two points of view were equally balanced elsewhere too. In fact most Englishmen and the Directors had already views in common with the Anglicists.

The GCPI started establishing Oriental institutions and gave funds for the translation and printing of Oriental classics. The Madras CPI had H.S. Graeme, W.Oliver, John Stokes and A.D. Campbell. It too encouraged the Classical languages as the salaries of their teachers indicate. These were announced in an advertisement for teachers in 1826 as follows:

Sanskrit	Rs 70 p.m.
Arabic	Rs 70 p.m.
Persian	Rs 70 p.m.

Tamil	Rs 15 p.m.
Telugo	Rs 15 p.m.
Canarese	Rs 15 p.m. ⁵⁷

H. Harkness, the Secretary of the CPI, recommended that the Hindus will be taught Sanskrit, the Muslims Persian and Arabic among other things. However: 'both will be instructed in the English language, as well as in the elements of European literature and science.'⁵⁸ The CPI had also 'advertised for an English master'⁵⁹ and it appears that some of the Anglicist ideas had been accommodated though only marginally.

The Bombay School and School Book Society was created in 1822 to promote native education through native languages. Its name was changed in 1827 to the Bombay Native Education Society.⁶⁰ Elphinstone, though not so much an Orientalist as an enlightened imperialist,⁶¹ wanted to encourage education through native languages.⁶² But Francis Warden, one of the members of his Council, was in favour of English.⁶³ Even so books on Marathi, Gujrati and Hindustani were printed in 1824-25.⁶⁴ In 1824 too a school was opened to teach English as a classical language in Bombay.⁶⁵ While the Committees were, for the most part, still following a predominantly Orientalist policy, the efforts of Indians for acquiring English and the evidence of an increasing number of Anglicists, made the Directors of the Company express the first hint of a change in their views. In a letter of 1824 they said:

The ends proposed in the institution of the Hindoo College, and the same may be affirmed of the Mahomedan, were two; the first, to make a favourable impression, by our encouragement of their literature upon the minds of the natives; and second, to promote useful learning.⁶⁶

By 'useful learning' the Directors meant, as Hampton rightly remarks on the strength of letters and other documents, 'knowledge that would fit members of the upper classes to hold responsible posts under the government'.⁶⁷ In a minute of the same year, indeed, Thomas Munro, another enlightened imperialist and the Governor of Madras, also wrote: 'How can we expect that the Hindoos will be eager in the pursuit of science, unless they have the same inducements as in other countries?'⁶⁸ Thus, while in the minds of many people – Indians and British alike – British and employment were connected, the Committees of Public Instruction carried on with Oriental studies. This explains the Directors' animadversions on the policy of education in the same letter as follows:

In professing, on the other hand, to establish seminaries for the purpose of teaching mere Hindoo, or mere Mahomedan literature, you bound yourself to

teach a great deal of what was frivolous, not a little of which was purely mischievous, and a small remainder indeed in which utility was in any way concerned.⁶⁹

The GCPI did, however, add classes in English to most of their Oriental institutions. These classes appear to have been welcomed by those who sought employment and there does appear to have been a policy to increase the domain of the English language even in 1830, seven years before the language of the courts was changed. This is suggested by the following letter of the Directors to the Government of Bengal:

With a view to give the natives an additional motive to the acquisition of the English language, you have it in contemplation gradually to introduce English as the language of public business in all its departments; and you have determined to begin at once by adopting the practice of corresponding in English with all native princes or persons of rank who are known to understand that language, or to have persons about them who understand it.⁷⁰

Such incentives for learning English appear to have created a demand for it which the Orientalists probably did not fully understand. The few steps the Committees took in support of English were fervently endorsed by the Directors. In a letter of 29 September, 1830, for instance, they wrote to Bengal as follows:

We learn with extreme pleasure the opinion of the General Committee of Public Instruction ... [that] ... the time has arrived when English tuition will be widely acceptable to the natives in the Upper Provinces.⁷¹

This letter indicates that the Directors now definitely favoured extending the domain of English. They also approved of the plan to establish 'separate colleges for the study of English'⁷² and wrote to the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay that efforts should be made to teach English more than it had been before.⁷³

The Orientalist Line of Defence

The Orientalists had been in a state of siege during the 19th century. The 'younger civil servants', according to Prinsep,⁷⁴ were vociferous supporters of Anglicist views as were some powerful civil servants like Charles Trevelyan and Francis Warden. Their views, which have been mentioned in other contexts earlier, had been accepted by administrators as well as the decision-makers. Among these views were the assumption of British superiority and the intrinsic value of European sciences and English. With this went the implied inferiority of things Oriental and hence the necessity of not wasting time on them. The other view was moral: that the British were supposed to educate Indians and help them evolve to a higher level of civilization (the White Man's Burden theory mentioned earlier). The third was pragmatic: an Indian

elite, or a middle class, which learned English would be useful for jobs. Along with this went the view that English would filter down to the masses so that it should only be taught to some privileged students (the downward filtration theory). Francis Warden, in many ways as ardent an Anglicist as Macaulay had expressed views which Macaulay wrote in 1835, as early as 1819.⁷⁵ In another minute of 1828 he said that all money he spent on 'the diffusion of the English language'.⁷⁶ He articulated the White Man's Burden theory too:

I have urged the policy of directing our chief effort to one object, to a diffusion of a knowledge of the English language, as best calculated to facilitate the intellectual and moral improvement of India.⁷⁷

But true to the downward filtration theory in which he also believed, he added that all Indians: 'a hundred million' or so, as he put it, could not be taught in this language.⁷⁸

These views were opposed by the Orientalists on the grounds that English would precipitate a rebellion against the British rule as has been mentioned in some detail earlier. Warden and others – such as Trevelyan, Macaulay and many others who have been quoted already – felt that English 'might become the most durable tie between Britain and India'.⁷⁹ In any case, the days when even an enlightened man like Elphinstone would be so cautious as to suggest that the opening of schools – in 1819 – might 'create a suspicion of some concealed design on our part'⁸⁰ were gone. Now the Indians had shown unmistakable desire for learning English and Alexander Duff's college, in spite of its Christian orientation, was flourishing (from 1930 onwards) as was the liberal and Westernized Hindu College at Calcutta.⁸¹ Now it seemed that the caution of an earlier era was unnecessary. Moreover, now that the Indians would work in subordinate jobs for the British, education was not meant primarily for conciliation. Thus no British administrator need justify the expenditure of funds on it as Elphinstone had done in 1821:

... and not one rupee has been expended for the encouragement of learning that was not already required to prevent popular discontent.⁸²

These justifications were decidedly out of fashion and the Orientalists found that they could not persuade the Directors as readily as before.

Even more unacceptable was the argument H.H. Wilson gave when he said English education would make 'a whole people dependent on a remote and unknown country for their thought and their very words'.⁸³ This argument rested, in the last analysis, on the autonomy and hence the acceptance of the worth of the Orient which was not conceded by the Anglicists. The idea that it was reprehensible to 'begin by the destruction

of its [India's] indigenous literature....⁸⁴ – the words are Elphinstone's – also rested on the assumption that Oriental knowledge had intrinsic worth which the Anglicists did not concede. For them the Orientalists, or at least those who were scholars, had such inordinate love for their subjects that all they said was a form of special pleading which was either in their own interest or only a form of romantic indulgence which had made them oblivious of the interests of both the British and the Indians.

The Advent of Macaulay

By the year 1834, when Macaulay was made the President of the GCPI, Orientalism was more strongly articulated in that body than it was supported outside it. As Prinsep said later:

There was, however, a class of Anglo-Indians, and the younger civil servants mostly joined it, who were opposed to Government's assisting to give instructions in any kind of Eastern literature or science, the whole of which they declared to be immoral, profane or non-sensical ...⁸⁵

With Macaulay's arrival, as Prinsep put it, the 'English party, as it was called, entertained high hopes that his influence and authority would turn the scale against me and my supporters...'⁸⁶ But, as has been suggested in the earlier sections of this paper, Macaulay alone could not have influenced the decision of the Governor General, Lord William Bentinck and his Council as well as the Directors, if they had not been partial to Anglicist views already.⁸⁷ Thus, when the GCPI submitted their quarrel to the Governor General-in-Council, it was not a neutral court of appeal. The language of Macaulay's Minute might reflect his personal arrogance but it could hardly have failed to appeal to the ethnocentrism of the British supporters of Anglicist views.⁸⁸ He asserted that English 'stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the West'⁸⁹ something which even Orientalists did not and dared not dispute. He then elucidated Eurocentric biases and dismissed Oriental learning with contempt. He then went on to hammer in what appeared to be the only logical step to take given his premises:

The question now before us is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach this language, we shall teach languages in which, by universal confession, there are no books on any subjects which deserve to be compared to our own; ... when we can patronise sound philosophy and true history, we shall countenance, at the public expense, medical doctrines which would disgrace an English farrier – astronomy which would move laughter in the girls at an English boarding-school history, abounding with kings thirty feet high, and reigns thirty thousand years long – and geography made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter.⁹⁰

He then went on to recommend the teaching of European sciences through English at the public expense. He believed that this would also create an Anglicized elite,⁹¹ something which he regarded as good for the Indians too since he could not think of a higher model of human civilization than the British one, which would strengthen the empire. Conspiracy theorists who seize upon this part of the Minute fail to point out that, for Macaulay, imperialism was not only benevolent but the means for making India progress.⁹² The debate whether he was right goes on to this day.

Macaulay was opposed by Prinsep who had shown his commitment to the Orientalist policy in all the previous debates. Earlier when it was proposed that English be made compulsory for giving scholarships in Arabic seminaries, he said:

The next step will be to transfer the Professors' allowances to teachers of English and then will follow in due course the voting of Arabic and Persian to be dead and damned. I protest against this course of proceeding at the first step and feel so strongly on the subject that unless this resolution be rescinded I cannot retain my seat in this Sub-Committee.⁹³

Others, like J.C.C. Sutherland, felt that they had been funded to 'extend the cultivation of the literature of the country'.⁹⁴ But now the case was in Lord William Bentinck's court and he did not even allow Prinsep's long dissenting minute to be placed on record.⁹⁵ As a reaction to the new policy those most affected, such as the students and teachers of the seminaries, did protest. According to Prinsep:

In three days a petition was got up signed by no less than 30,000 people in behalf of the Madrassa and another by the Hindus for the Sanskrit College. T.B. Macaulay took it into his head that this agitation was excited and even got up by me.⁹⁶

The *Hafiz* (head of the Madrassa) was questioned by Macaulay through John Colvin, a junior civil servant in the Council of Education, and 'there was a very hot argument between' Prinsep and Macaulay.⁹⁷ The Governor General, however, came emphatically on the Anglicist side. His order stated categorically:

... the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science amongst the natives of India, and that all funds appropriated for the purposes of education would be best employed on English education alone.⁹⁸

The Anglicists were supported by such eminent educationists as Alexander Duff. Duff's 'indirect influence', according to C.E. Trevelyan, 'was at least equally important' in bringing about the change.⁹⁹ But Duff even advocated the imposition of Christianity in his

pamphlet entitled *New Era of the English Language and English Literature in India* which was not done.¹⁰⁰ Schools and colleges to teach English and Western learning were, however, established. The Orientalists did protest¹⁰¹ – some even resigned from the GCPI and the Asiatic Society called the changes ‘destructive, unjust, unpopular and impolitic’¹⁰² – but to no avail.

Macaulay even disputed such activities of the Orientalists as the printing of the classics of Arabic, Sanskrit and Persian. In reply to Mr. Sutherland’s minute, he said:

I should be sorry to say anything disrespectful of that liberal and generous enthusiasm for Oriental literature which appears in Mr. Sutherland’s minute: but I own that I cannot think that we ought to be guided in the distribution of the small sum, which the Government has allotted for the purpose of education, by considerations which seem a little romantic. That the saracens a thousand years ago cultivated mathematical science is hardly, I think, a reason for our spending any money in translating English treatises on mathematics into Arabic.¹⁰³

The Orientalists now pleaded for nothing more than the printing of some books and, of course, the maintenance of the established seminaries of Oriental learning. Even this was grudged to them till Lord Auckland, the new Governor General (1836-1842), declared in a minute of 24 November, 1839 that these concessions would be given. He did, however, point out that out of the revenue of £13 million in the Bengal, only £24,000 would be spent on education. Out of this meagre sum only a little could be spared for Oriental learning. He hoped that, at an extra cost of Rs. 31,000 per year the Directors would ‘approve of our having closed these controversies’.¹⁰⁴

The Court Language Controversy

Though this article has been concerned mostly with education, it would be useful to touch upon the controversy about the court language in passing as this too is a part of the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy. The controversy was about the language to be used for record in the lower courts of law. Under the Muslims this language had been Persian but now the British administrators wondered whether a change, either with English or the vernaculars, would not be better. As usual the Company asked a number of administrators for their opinion. Among those who testified before the Parliamentary Committee on the Affairs of the Company were people who had served in India or knew about it in some detail.¹⁰⁵ Most of them were asked specifically whether Persian should be substituted by English or the vernacular of the district in which the court is situated. The second major question was whether such a

change would lead to political reaction of any kind. James Mill, when asked the first question, replied as follows:

There is no doubt that might be done [i.e. change to English], but I should consider it nearly as great an impropriety as the other. It appears to me, that not only ought the proceedings themselves to be in the language of the parties and their witnesses, but that the record ought to be in that language.¹⁰⁶

Holt Mackenzie said that Persian is understood by 'most men, whether Mussulmen or Hindoos, of any pretence to education' and that, if English was to be used in the courts, it should be introduced gradually 'in any one district at a given period'.¹⁰⁷ Charles Lushington disagreeing with Mackenzie thought Persian as much of a foreign language 'to a Hindoo as English is'.¹⁰⁸ Most of these respondents did not think the change would lead to political antagonism though Mackenzie did point out that if many people were deprived of their livelihood as a consequence there could be discontent.¹⁰⁹ When the question was discussed later in the Punjab, the Commissioner of Multan reported his preference for Persian as follows:

... the substitution of Oordoo for Persian in the courts of the Southern Derajat would rather be useful than otherwise. Persian is seldom spoken there, even by the educated classes, but almost all the latter speak Oordoo as local Bilooch dialect is the language of the common people.¹¹⁰

Such arguments of practical utility and the assurance that there would not be political discontent, made the Directors decide on this linguistic change.¹¹¹ Since Persian was to be replaced by the vernacular languages which meant Urdu in the Punjab, the present North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan, the part of India which now goes by the name of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (though it was replaced by Hindi in some parts later),¹¹² the change did not actually deprive Muslims of chances for employment in courts. In spite of the claims of many Pakistani historians, it does appear that the replacement of Persian by the vernaculars was thought to be in public interest. In this context a letter of the Court of Directors to the Bengal Government, dated 29 September, 1930, is relevant:

It is highly important that justice should be administered in a language familiar to the judge, but it is of no less importance that it should be administered in a language familiar to the litigant parties, to their vakeels, and to the people at large;¹¹³

But, of course, Persian was symbolic of Muslim rule and was the language of polite (which meant Muslim elitist) culture. As such the Muslims did regret its demise and it is this which explains the conspiracy theorists' insistence that this was not only an administrative measure but

a deliberate attempt to belittle the importance of Muslims in India. That the Orientalists too regretted this change, mainly because it was yet another concession to the Anglicist lobby, is illustrated by the following extract from Prinsep's diary. After the order of 1837 replacing Persian with the vernaculars he wrote:

It had been yielded to this party [the Anglicist or English lobby] during Lord Bentinck's administration to require the law courts proceedings to be recorded in the vernacular language of the several districts instead of uniformly in Persian in all districts.¹¹⁴

But here too the Orientalists were defeated though some British administrators kept taking interest in Oriental learning and studied the languages of the Hindus and the Muslims, most considered them outlandish curiosities at best. It was rare, and only academic, to express the view that 'the views of Warren Hastings and Sir William Jones were nearer the truth than those of Lord Macaulay' as Sir John Strachy did in his lectures on India at Cambridge.¹¹⁵

After this the classical languages of India and traditional knowledge were never revived nor was the Anglicist policy ever seriously questioned. The Orientalists now generally conceded that Western and not Oriental learning should be the first priority of the Government. They did, however, argue that this knowledge could be more effectively disseminated through the vernacular languages of the country. This English-Vernacular Controversy, however, deserves separate treatment.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy can be seen as the linguistic expression of a change in the way Englishmen apprehended India in the early part of the 19th Century. The Orientalist phase – in which traditional Indian learning and classical languages were patronized – lasted roughly from 1780 to the late 1820s. It was a part of the imperialist policy of consolidating British rule in India by avoiding political antagonism. The pragmatists felt patronization of Indian learning would help to conciliate the natives. Some of the committed Orientalists, however, also valued Orientalist learning for its intrinsic worth. They belonged to an earlier way of thought which assumed the mysteriousness of the Orient and gave the privileged role of the expert and the interpreter of this mystery to the Orientalist himself. The new Anglicist way of thought, or paradigm as I have called it, assumed the backwardness of the Orient and the lack of intrinsic worth in its intellectual and cultural artifacts. Thus the Anglicists dismissed Oriental knowledge with

contempt. They also felt that imperialism would be consolidated, not threatened, by the creation of a class of Anglicized Indians educated in Western subjects through English. They also assumed that the West could, and should, educate and civilize the East and this could only be done through their policies of Anglicization. A pragmatic consideration was that English education could create a middle level of Indian administrators which would dispense with importing all administrators from Britain and thus make administration cheaper and give the Indians a stake in the maintenance of the system.

The Anglicist views gained ground gradually till, by the late 1820s, even the Directors of the East India Company were in favour of increasing the domain of English. Thus the debates in the Committees of Public Instructions in the twenties and the early thirties of the century are evidence of the last battle, so to speak, of the besieged Orientalists. Apart from the imperialist imperative, which was overtly articulated by both the parties, there does not appear to be any covert conspiracy specially against Muslims or their languages as some Pakistani conspiracy-theorists suggest. An understanding of the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy is useful in understanding the complexity of behaviour of people in a state of transition from one way of thinking to another. It also helps us to understand the way the politics of imperialism is reflected in conflicting linguistic policies with the same overt aim of consolidating the newfound empire.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Syed Abdullah, *Pakistan Mein Urdu ka Mas'la* ['The Problem of Urdu in Pakistan'] (Lahore: Maktaba Khayban-i-Adab, 1976), p.6; Gohar Naushahi, *Qaumi Zaban ke Bare Mein Ahamm Dastavezat* ['Important Documents About the National Language'] (Islamabad: National Language Authority, 1988), pp.8-9; Syed Mustafa Ali Bareilvi, *Angrezon Ki Lisani Policy* ['The Linguistic Policy of the British'] (Karachi: Academy of Educational Research, 1970), p.83; I.H. Qureshi, 'The Causes of the War of Independence', *A History of the Freedom Movement*, Vol. 2, Part 1, ed. I.H. Qureshi (Karachi: Historical Society, 1970), pp.231-234.
2. Umme Salma Zaman, *Banners Unfurled* (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 1981), pp.114-117.
3. Abdul Haq, *Marhoom Dilli College* ['The Deceased Delhi College'] (Karachi: Anjuman-i-Taraqqi-i-Urdu, 1945. This ed., 1962), 24.

4. H.V. Hampton, *Biographical Studies in Modern Indian Education* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1947); A.R. Wadia, *The Future of English in India* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1954), pp.7-8; Syed Nurullah and J.P. Naik, *A History of Education in India* (1943; Bombay: Macmillan, 1951), Part 1 consider this dispute unimportant and 'both the parties in the wrong', p.139. Syed Mahmud, *A History of English Education in India 1781-1893* (Aligarh: MAO College, 1895).
5. Julian Dakin, 'Language and Education in India', *The Language in Education: The Problem in Commonwealth Africa and the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent* (Language and language learning series No.20), eds., J. Dakin, B. Tiffen and H.G. Widdowson (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp.1-61.
6. Gauri Viswanathan, 'The Beginning of English Literary Study in British India', *The Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 9: Nos.1-2 (1987), pp.2-26. Quoted from p.23.
7. *Ibid.*, pp.23-24.
8. 'Paradigm' is used here in the sense of a pattern of thought or world view. It is based on the following definition of Thomas S. Kuhn: 'some accepted examples of actual scientific practice – examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together – provide models from which spring coherent traditions of scientific research' [*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd enlarged edition (1962; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), p.10]. However, contrary to the practice in the natural sciences from which Kuhn takes his examples, the social sciences neither have a high degree of consensus about assumptions nor precise definitions. Thus, the term 'paradigm', as used here, assumes the presence of disparate, even conflicting, assumptions which exist in a state of tension. The term is useful because, as in the natural sciences, it suggests that a certain pattern (matrix or world view) creates a limiting intellectual universe in which thoughts are born and in which they exist.
9. For the early image of India, see S.N. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp.4-16 and M.E. Chamberlain, *Britain and India: The Interaction of Two Peoples* (Hamden, Connecticut: Aschon Books, 1974), p.52. For Burke's views about the desirability of non-interference with India, see George D. Bearce, *British Attitudes Towards India 1784-1858* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p.17. For the romantic image of India, see Mukherjee, pp.111-112 and for its expression in literature, see Bearce, pp.102-120.
10. Bearce, pp.11-20 and 27-33.
11. *Ibid.*, pp.20-26. For the positive relationship between Orientalism and imperialism, and Warren Hasting's approval of it, see Mukherjee, pp.79-80.
12. Mukherjee, pp.73-90.
13. *Ibid.*, pp.91-121; William Robertson, *An Historical Disquisition Concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India* (London, 1991), p.268. Richard Burton (1821-1890), who came to India in 1842, combined appreciation of Muslim classics with a strong belief in the necessity of imperialism. Likewise

he had admiration as well as contempt for most Oriental cultures and was also critical of the British in India whom he considered ignorant. See Frank Mc Lynn, *Burton: Snow Upon the Desert* (London: John Murray, 1990), pp.49-50, 66 and 91-93.

14. For Jones's admiration of certain aspects of India, see Mukherjee. Also Bearce, p.96. For Warren Hastings's views see, Mockton-Jones, *Warren Hastings in Bengal 1772-1774* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1918), pp.337-338.
15. For the Utilitarians, see Eric Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), pp.47-80. Also see, Bearce, pp.65-78.
16. 'Anglo-Indian' is used in the earlier sense of English people living in India and not to denote people of mixed European and Indian parentage. For their prejudices, see Percival Spear, *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India* (1932; London & Dublin: Curzon Press Ltd, 1980), pp.126-145. For Evangelicism, see Bearce, pp.78-88. Also see, M.E. Chamberlain, p.68.
17. James Mill, *The History of British India* abridged and introduced by William Thomas (1817; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp.246-248. Chamberlain, p.68. Mukherjee, p.111.
18. J. Mill, pp.10-23.
19. Stokes, p.57.
20. Stokes, pp.302, 310; for the Liberal and reformist idea of duty, see Bearce, pp.28-101 and for Bentinck, Metcalfe and Macaulay's ideas, see pp.153-179. The term 'Social Darwinism', a later concept, is being used for convenience here.
21. This phrase from Kipling's poem is expressed in the literature of a more aggressively imperialistic era. See Allen J. Greenberger, *The British Image of India: A Study of the Literature of Imperialism 1880-1960* (London: Oxford UP, 1969), p.21.
22. The idea that some such change was taking place is in Stokes, pp.1-47; Chamberlain, p.66; Bearce, pp.20-35 and Spear, p.136.
23. Henry Sharp, ed., *Selections from Educational Records: Part I 1781-1839* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1920), pp.7-8.
24. 'Fisher's Memoir, 1826' in *Indian Education in Parliamentary Papers: Part I, 1832*, ed., A.N. Basu (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1952, pp.1-2.
25. Hampton, p.2.
26. *Second Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Indian Territories 1852-1853 in Parliamentary Papers*, p.113.
27. Charles Grant, *Observations on the State of Society Among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain Particularly With Respect to Morals; and on the Means of Improving It (1792) in Parliamentary Papers Relating to the Affairs of India: General, Appendix 1; Public (1832)*, pp.3-89.
28. Grant, *Observations* quoted from Syed Mahmud, p.3.
29. *Ibid.*, p.219.
30. Charles Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* (London: Longmans, 1838). Quoted from Syed Mahmud, p.235.

32. George Otto Trevelyan, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, Vols. 1&2 (1876; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978), p.278.
33. *Printed Parliamentary Papers (1853): Sixth Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Indian Territories*, p.12.
34. Section 43 of the Act of Parliament (1813), St 53, Geo III, Chap 155. Also see Nurullah, *et. al.*, Part I, pp. 81-82.
35. Basu, pp.149, 151.
36. Fisher in Basu, p.7.
37. William Chaplin (Commissioner in the Deccan), 'Scheme for the Establishment of the Hindoo College, Poona', in a letter to the Bombay Government, 24 Nov, 1820. Quoted from *Selections from the Government of Bombay: Education 1819-1852*. Part I, ed., R.V. Parulekar (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1953), pp.92-95.
38. Bearce, p.28. Such references are found in many documents some of which have been quoted elsewhere in this article.
39. Hampton, p.83; Chamberlain, p.66.
40. Basu, p.27.
41. *Ibid.*, p.67.
42. Hampton, p.73.
43. R.V. Parulekar, ed., *Selections from Educational Records (Bombay Part II 1815-1840)* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1955), p.233.
44. M. Elphinstone, 'Minute', 13 Dec, 1823 in Basu, p.203.
45. 'Minutes of Evidence' from 'Extracts from the Proceedings of the Parliamentary Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company' in Basu, *op. cit.* to which are all the page references given below. 'Extract No. 1'; James Mill, p.271; James Sullivan, p.272; Holt Mackenzie, p.277; Charles Lushington, p.281; N.B. Edmonstone, p.287; Capt. Henry Harkness, p.290; Hohn Sullivan, p.292 and M. Elphinstone, p.299.
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47. 'Address from the Native Princes' in Parulekar, Part II, p.107.
48. Syed Ahmad Khan, 'Translation of the Report of the Members of the Selection Committee for the Better diffusion and Advancement of learning among Muhammadans of India' (Benares, 1872) reports that most members agreed that Muslims believed that English education would create 'disbelief of religion in the minds of the pupils' ever since the beginning of British rule. See Hafeez Malik, ed., *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Educational Philosophy: A Documentary Record* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1989), p.136.
49. Hampton, p.35.
50. Abdool Latif, 'The Hooghly Mudrassah' (1861) and other writings in Enamul Haque, *Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif: His Writings and Related Documents* (Dacca: Samudra Prokashani, 1968), pp.21-25, etc.
51. Syed Ahmad Khan, 'Patriotism and the Necessity of Promoting Knowledge in India' [English translation of Persian lecture] 6 Oct, 1863, delivered in the Mahomedan Literary Society, Calcutta, reproduced in Enamul Haque, pp.43-53. For Sir Syed's contribution to English education, see Hafeez Malik, *op.*

- cit. Also see David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Lahore: Book Traders, 1991)
52. Abdul Haq, p.37.
 53. C. Trevelyan, pp.78-83.
 54. James Mill, a major exponent of Liberal and Utilitarian ideas about India, was highly influential as the examiner of correspondence in the East India Company's office from 1819 to 1836. See Bearce, pp.65-69.
 55. 'Fisher's Memoir' in Basu, p.23.
 56. Nurullah, *et. al.*, Part I, p.131.
 57. 'Fisher's Memoir' in Basu, pp.40-41.
 58. Letter from H. Harkness, 24 June, 1826 in Basu, p.112.
 59. 'Fisher's Memoir' in Basu, p.41.
 60. Parulekar, Part II, p.xvi.
 61. According to Bearce Sir Thomas Munro and Mountstuart Elphinstone represented a 'synthesis of attitudes i.e., Conservatism, romantic sentiment and Liberalism' though they were well read in Oriental subjects (Chapter V, 121-149). Also see Stokes, p.9
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 63. Francis Warden, 'Minute', 29 Dec., 1823 in Basu, pp.212-218.
 64. 'Extract for the Second Report (1824-25) of the Bombay Native School Book and School Society' and list of books in Parulekar, Part II, pp.81-83.
 65. 'Report on the Working of the Schools Established by the Society for Teaching English to the Natives as a Classical Language', in Parulekar, Part II, pp.89-98.
 66. Letter from the Court of Directors to the Governor General of Bengal, 18 Feb., 1824 in Basu, p.152. This letter was drafted by James Mill according to Bearce, p.96.
 67. Hampton, p.143.
 68. Thomas Munro, 'On the State of the Country and the Conditions of the People', Minute, 31 Dec., 1824. Quoted from Hampton, p.137.
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 70. Letter from the Court of Directors, 25 Sept., 1830 in Basu, p.170.
 71. Letter from the Court of Directors, 29 Sept., 1830 in Basu, p.164.
 72. *Ibid.*, p.165.
 73. Letters from the Court of Directors to the Madras and Bombay Governments, 29 Sep., 1830 in Basu, pp.195-196 & 253-256.
 74. 'Prinsep's Diary', in H. Sharp, Part I, p.132.
 75. C. Trevelyan; Francis Warden, Minutes dated 25 June, 1819, 29 Dec., 1823, 6 April 1825 and 24 March 1828 in Basu, pp.217 & 220-222.
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 79. *Ibid.*, p.221.
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 81. Hampton, pp.94 & 73.

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83. H.H. Wilson, Letter of 5 Dec., 1835 in *Asiatic Journal*, XLVII (Jan., 1836), pp.1-16. Quoted from Bearce, p.171.
84. Letter from M. Elphinstone to the Court of Directors, 11 Aug., 1824 in Parulekar, Part I, p.109.
85. 'Prinsep's Diary', in H. Sharp, pp.132-133.
86. *Ibid.*
87. For Bentinck's Liberal and reformist views, see Bearce, pp.154-179.
88. T.B. Macaulay, 'The Necessity of English Education', 2 Feb., 1835 in *Basic Documents in the Development of Modern India and Pakistan 1835-1947*, ed., Christine Dobbin (London: Van Reinhold Co, 1970), pp.15-18.
89. *Ibid.*, p.16.
90. *Ibid.*, p.17.
91. *Ibid.*, p.18.
92. Bearce, pp.161-163.
93. Quoted from A.R. Wadia, p.8.
94. *Ibid.*, p.105.
95. H. Prinsep in H. Sharp, pp.133-134.
96. *Ibid.*, H.H. Wilson, 'Education of the Natives of India', *Asiatic Journal* (Jan., 1836) says only 8,000 persons signed the petition.
97. H. Prinsep in H. Sharp, pp.133-134.
98. In C. Trevelyan, pp.13-15.
99. Hampton, p.98.
100. *Ibid.*
101. Wilson in H. Sharp, p.134.
102. Hampton, pp.101 & 99.
103. Quoted from G.O. Trevelyan, p.377.
104. Lord Auckland, 'Minute', 24 Nov., 1839 in H. Sharp, pp.148-149.
105. 'Extracts from the Proceedings of the Parliamentary Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company', in Basu, pp.267-306.
106. James Mill in Basu, p.272.
107. H. Mackenzie in Basu, p.278.
108. C. Lushington in Basu, p.282.
109. Mackenzie in Basu, p.280.
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112. Joytindra Das Gupta, *Language Conflict and Language Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p.84.

113. Letter from the Court of Directors to the Bengal Government, 29 Sept, 1830 in Basu, p.170.
114. Sharp, pp.132-133.
115. Syed Mahmud, p.256.