Post-Graduate Diploma in the Teaching of English

INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

Course I

BLOCK I

INTRODUCTION

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INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

BLOCK I

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BLOCK

In this block, we are going to read two units. The first unit discusses the significance of Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education of 1835. You would read how the various indigenous modes of learning were replaced by the dominant western method of education. The beginning of Indian Writing in English is closely related to this historical moment and you should read this unit very carefully along with the Appendix in which you have the Minute of Macaulay. The second unit concerns the domain of English in India and its relation to IWE. Together, these two units work as an introduction to the course on Indian Writing in English of the PGDTE.

Unit 1

English in India

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Unit 1
ENGLISH IN INDIA

1.0 Introduction

In this unit, we would like to acquaint you with the historical circumstances that surrounded the introduction of "English" in India. The reason why we need to do this is because as you all know, our expertise in English is a result of the colonization of this country by the British for approximately two hundred years. It is a historical fact that the British won the battle of supremacy against the other European powers in India; if the French had won the tussle, we would all be speaking in French now. We would like to recall the circumstances under which the English language was introduced in this country as the medium of instruction in schools. This would make you understand the specific position that English occupies in India now.

In order to do this, we will read the very famous Minute of Thomas Babington Macaulay written in 1835. This is a document that formed the foundation of the shift from indigenous education systems to the modern European one. We will examine the Minute in some detail to see the arguments Macualay offered for introducing the study of English in India.

1.1 The context

The PGCTE course on Interpretation of Literature exposed you to the changing profile of the study of English literature in the world; you learnt about the "contingency" of all values, about the transitory and shifting notions of "literature" in culture. You know that your personal ideas are the product of a history that surrounds you in society; you were not born with them, you learnt them through your upbringing in a specific social context. In other words, our "subjectivity" is constructed by the time and space that we live in and all our ideas are shaped by this.

Activity A

Try to recount very clearly the reasons for your studying English literature in college. *Is it because you "loved" literature? If that is the case, why didn't you study your mother-tongue literature? Is there any other reason for your choice? What exactly are you teaching your students – the language or the literature?*

Discussion

I can only give you my response to these questions. I did pretty well in my school leaving examination and I could have studied any of the six subjects that I had in my kitty. But I decided to do a BA Honours in English literature because I knew that with a Master's degree in English my future prospects would be good; it would be easier for me to find a job and my economic prospects would be stable. Needless to say, this was what my parents also thought and made me believe.

The point to note is that in India there was no separate course for learning the English language as such. Remember that when you enroll for a course in French or German or any other "foreign" language, the method of instruction is very different. You do not start reading prose and poetry right at the beginning to learn the language. In the case of English, however, we start with literature and we continue with that till the end. Therefore, our degrees in English literature make us capable of teaching the language in a certain way. Of course there will be 1% of people who actually would like to do literature; but 99% are actually confused about their vocation.

It would be worthwhile to think about your own work to see how the epistemological frameworks of the English literary values dominate our worlds.

1.2 The East India Company and Education

The East India Company was established on December 31, 1600 by Queen Elizabeth and merchants circled the tip of Africa to reach the subcontinent of India. Historians say that the economic condition of India at that time was exemplary. J. Pirenne writes in his 1950 book: "In the middle of the seventeenth century, Asia had a far more important place in the world than Europe. The riches of Asia were incomparably greater than those of the European states. Her industrial techniques showed a subtlety and a tradition that the European handicrafts did not possess. And there was nothing in the more modern methods used by the traders of the Western countries that Asian trade had to envy. In matters of credit, transfer of funds, insurance, and cartels, neither India, Persia, nor China had anything to learn from Europe." (http:/members.tripod.com)

It is clear that the Englishmen came to India to transact business and in no way could they dictate terms to their counterparts in

India in the middle of the seventeenth century. The Company used local people to help them and the foreigners realized very soon that political control would enhance their trade prospects. Bernard S. Cohn very skillfully summarizes the process through which the British came to conquer the "knowledge" of India. He describes the process in which the merchants from England stealthily invaded the "epistemological space" of the cultures of India and "converted" these "into instruments of colonial rule."

It took them almost one hundred years to consolidate their position in this land and by the middle of the eighteenth century there was an important debate about the introduction of English into the Indian system of education. It is true that the Bengali people themselves wanted to learn the English language; you have the record in letters written to the British officials in the colony. But I am sure that by now you understand that there was a very valid economic reason for learning English- that was the only way to social progression. You need to feel the situation now and it will be clear why the indigenous people asked for English in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Remember that cultural activity is intimately tied to the economics of the social system and it was quite obvious that the way for social survival depended on your knowledge or ability to wield English; just as now you know that your expertise in English determines your social status and your value.

The East India Company was formed in 1600 but they did not function in the field of education till 1813 when a Charter Act renewed their existence in the subcontinent. Through this Act, the question of educational policies came up and the debate between the Orientalists and Anglicists surfaced. Orientalists were people who supported indigenous education and thought that there was a need to continue the local strategies for the education of the Indian people. Anglicists, on the other hand, advocated the introduction of English in schools in a systematic manner; it was clear that the new education system would replace or displace the traditional methods and supply a different epistemological framework for comprehending the world. "English" here did not simply mean the English language, but stood for the entire culture and lifestyle that was being imported into the country.

I am sure that you do not feel that the Indians were "uneducated" before they learnt English and western methods of scientific knowledge. There were Pathsalas, Madrassas, Maktabs, other institutions devoted to teaching in Sanskrit and the "vernacular" Indian languages. This regime of knowledge, however, was not

sufficient to cope with the changing social systems; they worked on an entirely different structure of understanding. There was a great demand among the Bengali people for learning the language of the British merchants and political administrators – the new jobs that were opening up required the knowledge of English. While Orientalists, Anglicists and the Missionaries argued with each other about the necessity of tilting the balance towards an English education system, all of them were unanimous about the superiority of the western mode of learning. Charles Grant, a missionary working in India, wrote in 1792:

> The true care of darkness is the introduction of light. The Hindus err, because they are ignorant, and their errors have never fairly been laid before them. The communion of our light and knowledge to them, would prove the best remedy for their disorders; and this remedy is proposed from a full conviction that if judiciously and patiently applied, it would have great and happy effects upon them, effects honourable and advantageous for us.

What is evident is the conviction that the indigenous systems of knowledge, religion, belief and manners were flawed, and there was a need to replace them with Christianity and Western knowledge systems. Grant, who was designated to be the Christian Director of the East India Company, was sure about his duty - evangelization was the only remedy for a people immersed in "superstition".

There was also an effort to popularize the study of Natural Sciences in the colony – you know that after the Industrial Revolution, England was at the height of its belief in the study of empirical sciences. Charles Grant was sure that the introduction of the western knowledge systems would certainly be beneficial for India:

> By planting our language, our knowledge, our opinions, and our religion, in our Asiatic territories, we shall put a great work beyond the reach of contingencies; we shall probably have wedded the inhabitants of those territories to this country.

It was becoming increasingly obvious that in spite of the earlier posture of apparent "neutrality", it was clear that there was a definite tilt towards a change in the education system of this country. As mentioned earlier, the people of the newly emerging metropolis of Kolkata had no doubts in their mind that English

would actually empower them for dealing with the future and a letter from Rammohan Roy will prove the point. Rammohan was opposing the decision to spend government money on the establishment of Sanskrit schools in Kolkata:

> The establishment of a new Sanskrit school in Calcutta evinces the laudable desire of the Government to improve the Natives of India by Education, a blessing for which they must ever be grateful; and every well-wisher of the human race must be desirous that the efforts made to promote it should be guided by the most enlightened principles, so that the stream of intelligence may flow into the most useful channels….
>
> We now find that the government are establishing. Sanskrit school under Hindu Pundits to impart such knowledge as is already current in India. This seminary (similar in character to those existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon) can only be expected to load The minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practicable use to the possessors or to society. The pupils will there acquire what was known two thousand years ago with the addition of vain and empty subtleties since produced by speculative men, such as is already commonly taught in all parts of India…. Again, no essential benefit can be derived by the student of Meemansa from knowing what is it that makes the killer of a goat sinless on pronouncing certain passages of the Vedas….

While one can deduce many meanings from this plea against the establishment of more Sanskrit schools, what is most apparent is the realization that the new social structure and the emergent economy demanded a new system of education. Rammohan was quite categorical in saying that the earlier indigenous methods of teaching would not be able to cater to the changed social circumstances and therefore people demanded the introduction of the English education system. There is no point in sitting down to judge which was the more “liberal” and “enlightened” system; the fact is that each society caters to an education system that would suit its economic needs and the indigenous system was no longer capable of doing that in the changed economic and political scenario. Therefore, it is only natural that Rammohan Roy, a noted scholar in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, felt that we needed English and an education system that would be based on the Western model and he had no hesitancy in admitting that.

The intimate connection between “Power” and “Knowledge” was equally important at the time when questions of the relevancy of the indigenous education system to the British rule were being argued. In 1784, Warren Hastings had discussed the close connection of the two when he had to explicate this for Nathaniel Smith, chairman of the Court of Directors for the East India Company:

> Every accumulation of knowledge and especially such as is obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise dominion founded on the right of conquest, is useful to the state…. it attracts and conciliates distant affections; it lessens the weight of the chain by which the natives are held in subjection; and it imprints on the hearts of our countrymen the sense of obligation and benevolence. …Every instance, which brings their real character (i.e., that of the Indians) home to observation will impress us with a more generous sense of feeling for their natural rights, and teach us to estimate them by the measure of our own. But such instances can only be obtained in their writings; and these will survive when the British dominion in India shall have long ceased to exist, and when the sources which once yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance.

Hastings clearly felt the need to establish “social communication” with the people in order to extend the “dominion” of the British in India and his Orientalist attitude saw the need to be benevolent so that the natives would be reassured of their past and present under British control. Bernard Cohn comments on this attempt towards benevolence at this time: “The political project of enhancing the credit of the Company and the British nation as the protector and preserver of indigenous knowledge was to lead them to become keepers of a vast museum which would, in turn, lead to providing definitions of what should be preserved, as well as to developing a program for locating and classifying the specimens to be maintained.” *(Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge,* p.48). It was clear that the museum of indigenous knowledge artifacts would be created and maintained by the British power on their own terms and Indians would then learn from that museum about their own heritage. This attitude was reflected in Lord Minto’s comment on the generally decayed condition of indigenous knowledge systems:

> It is a common remark that science and literature are in a progressive state of decay among the natives of India. From every inquiry, which I have been enabled, to make on this interesting subject that remark appears to me but too well founded. The number of the learned is not only diminished but the circle of learning even among those who still devote themselves to it appears to be considerably contracted. The abstract sciences are abandoned, polite literature neglected and no branch of learning cultivated but what is connected with the peculiar religious doctrines of the people. The immediate consequence of this state of things is the disuse and even actual loss of many valuable book; and it is to be apprehended that unless Government interpose with a fostering hand the revival of letters may shortly become hopeless from a want of books or of persons capable of explaining them.
>
> (Minute by Lord Minto, 6 March 1811)

The reason to quote this is to enable you to see the very constitutive nature of what we get to know. According to Minto, the "revival" of letters in India will depend on people resurrecting books from oblivion. He did not realize the significance of the project of retrieving books through pundits who worked for the British company. The idea of the "fallen" state of Indian knowledge –both science and arts – was a product of judging from a certain point of view. Undoubtedly, it has to be admitted that nothing in the indigenous systems of knowledge was anywhere near the Western supremacy of natural science or liberal arts as we know it today.

The Charter Act of 1813, therefore, was open for debate; the British had to decide how this money was to be spent. Among the Englishmen, the most important voice was that of Thomas Babington Macaulay, and we will look into his Minute on Indian Education in some detail.

Activity B

How well do you know your mother tongue? Are you able to read, write and speak well in it? Do you notice any difference between cultural markers in your mother tongue and in English? Are you a deeply religious person? How do you combine your faith in ritualistic religion with your belief in natural science? What is science any way?

Discussion

In my case, I do see gaps between the worlds that I live in and work. On the one hand, I feel that my mother tongue literature is what I would like to read first; on the other, I am under pressure to keep up with the developments in the field of English literature. More interesting, all my standards of values are largely Western; this is because my education system taught me those values. I am largely unaware of what the indigenous knowledge systems were and I am not thinking of only one Sanskrit regime. You might know one of these, but which one would you adhere to in daily life? And, which would guide you through your life? These are questions that we really need to ask ourselves.

1.3 Reading Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education

Thomas Babington Macaulay was the eldest son of Zachary Macaulay, and he was born on 25th October 1800 at Leicestershire. As a child he was extremely intelligent and started writing poetry at the age of eight. He studied in Trinity College, Cambridge University, and was very interested in Utilitarianism. Jeremy Bentham and Joseph Priestley influenced his ideas and he was a famous student activist campaigning at the University at that time. His father had worked in Jamaica as a young man and he was acquainted with the way the slaves were treated by the government. When he returned to England, he got involved in the anti-slavery campaign and was very active in efforts to make the trade illegal. Macaulay himself became a lawyer after he left his university and was actively engaged in various social causes in England. He was a regular writer in the *Edinburgh Review*, which expressed Whig views. Lord Lansdowne was impressed by Macaulay's writing and offered him the seat of Calne, a pocket borough under his control which the latter won. Macaulay made outstanding speeches in favour of parliamentary reforms and he was appointed the commissioner of the board of control in June 1832. The Reform Act of 1832 was followed by a general election and as a Whig candidate Macaulay won the newly established seat of Leeds with a wide majority. Zachary Macaulay was involved in several bad business deals and was now deeply in debt. Macaulay accepted a lucrative post on the Supreme Council of India in order to help his father pay off his debts. During his stay in office; Macaulay received 50,000 Pounds with which he was able to pay off his father's debts. He was elected to the parliamentary seat of Edinburgh in 1839 and was the Secretary of War in the Lord Melbourne government till 1841. Lord Palmerstone titled

Macaulay "Baron Macaulay of Rothley" in 1857. Macaulay passed away on 28 December 1859.

This short biography informs you of one important fact; Macaulay was a "liberal" with utilitarianism as his predominant ideology. What does that entail? It makes us realize that it was only natural for Macaulay to advocate English education in India. There is a constant reference to "utility" in the Minute; look at the following sections and you will find the term: section 3 asks the question "what is the most useful way of employing it? (the money)"; "what language is the best worth knowing?". Section 4 mentions "the English tongue is that which would be the most useful to our native subjects" and section 6 very clearly designates the learning of English as "pleasant and profitable" and Macaulay voices the most important reason of all: "On all such subjects the state of the market is the decisive test" in the same section.

I am sure you see the ideological tint of the whole Minute if you understand that Macaulay was trying to advocate a position that would be "useful" at that particular historical juncture. He was clear about the absolute necessity of having the "English" system in India because the indigenous forms of knowledge were no longer capable of catering to the demands of the new economic order. Britain needed people who knew English and it needed people who would be ideologically conditioned to perform in the empire. Macaulay never insisted on the study of English on purely humanistic or moral reasons, he was emphatic about the fact that it was simply necessary because of the expansion and existence of the British Empire in India.

However, what is remarkable is the confidence with which Macaulay discarded the prevailing systems – Arabic, Persian or Sanskrit into disrepute. He gave examples of the futility of studying these languages or the education system that came with them because they were totally out of relevance now to the British Empire. One wonders where he got his information from and who supplied the facts to him about the value of those ancient and very sophisticated languages and the education systems that they represented.

The discussion begins with a reference to the ambiguity inherent in the Charter Act of 1813, where, he says, "a sum is set apart" "for the revival and promotion of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories." (Section 1) The debate was in the determination of

which literature should be promoted and Macaulay sought to prove that the only possible option for the British lay in teaching English and its literature as well as the "promotion" of science that was useful.

Please notice that he is supremely arrogant in his attitude when he evaluates the indigenous systems or the languages. There are many examples, but look at this from Section 3:

> All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India, contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are, moreover, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them …
>
> What then shall that language be? One-half of the Committee maintain that it should be English. The other half strongly recommends the Arabic and Sanscrit. The whole question seems to me to be, which language is the best worth knowing? I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in the eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the western literature is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the Committee who support the oriental plan of education.

In fact, in the light of contemporary critical theories, one can very clearly see the very biased account of Macaulay's Minute; he was simply not aware of the immensely rich traditions of Arabic or Sanskrit in 1835; in fact, these two happen to be among the oldest and richest civilizational languages of the world. That all the books in these two languages would not fill up even one shelf of a library is grossly false. He makes the same kind of derogatory remark about history in Section 3:

> It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say, that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable

> than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England.

The lack of historical material in the Indian traditions of course was a matter of continuous surprise to the Englishmen because the Indian traditions had an entirely different mode of perceiving history and the passage of time; it did not agree with the linear model that the enlightenment proposed. Macaulay, however, conceives this as a serious deficiency and therefore considers the western model to be far superior. The obvious conclusion therefore, was that one has to patronize the better option - the English option for any understanding of the world. Macaulay makes it very clear that England now possesses the best available knowledges of the world, and therefore was in a position to teach others. He goes on to stake the claim of English in Section 4: We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the West. … It may safely be said, that the literature now extant in that language is of far greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together. Nor is this all. In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of Government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East. It is the language of two great European communities, which are rising, the one in the south of Africa, the other in Australasia . . . . . Whether we look at the intrinsic value of our literature, or at the particular situation of this country, we shall see the strongest reason to think that, of all foreign tongues, the English tongue is, that which would be the most useful to our native subjects.

The assumption that "English" would be the best possible solution to the problems facing India was certainly a very important characteristic of the colonial hegemonic style and Macaulay goes on to elaborate on the way in which English emerged as the best in the world. He surmises in Section 5 that:

> What the Greek and the Latin were to the contemporaries of More and Ascham, our tongue is to the people of India. The literature of England is now more valuable than that of classical antiquity. I doubt whether the Sanscrit literature will be as valuable as that of our Saxon and Norman progenitors. In some departments- in history, for example, I am certain that it is much less so.

The absolute certainty in Macaulay's attitude is really something to be noticed – he seems to have no doubts whatsoever about what he says and he is sure that the "literature of England" now was "more valuable than that of classical antiquity."

Do you notice how "literature" was coming into the scene? He was not only thinking of the English language but was also considering English literature to be the most "valuable" in the world. It is through literature that ideological instruction is most effectively communicated and literature was to be used to teach the Indians "English".

That Macaulay did not have any doubt about what the purpose of this education would be is quite apparent from his text; he did not expect to produce a class of scholarly academic human beings who would be equipped to deal with the world with their knowledge. His idea was closely linked to the axis of "power", his intention was to produce people who would serve that power with their knowledge:

> We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. (Section 9)

Here is Macaulay's "Filtration" theory that clearly saw that ideology would percolate from the English-educated class to the ones below them; these people would be "English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect."

I am sure you see the beginning of English education in this country as an effort to create a "class" of people who would be the "interpreters" of all that the British did in this land; they were actually needed for the sustenance of the Empire and the expansion of it. We have originated from this system and we still operate within it. Macaulay was confident that the British would uproot the old indigenous system; he clearly said:

> …But I would strike at the root of the bad system which has hitherto been fostered by us. I would at once stop the printing of Arabic and Sanscrit books, I would abolish the

> Madrassa and the Sanscrit College at Calcutta. … I would at least recommend that no stipends shall be given to any students who may hereafter repair thither, but the people shall be left to make their own choice between the rival systems of education without being bribed by us to learn what they have no desire to know. (Section 9)

Therefore, the introduction of the new system also meant that the old methods would be trashed, that they would have to die a natural death. People, as Macaulay says, were "free" to make their own choice, but I hope you see the very trapped nature of the freedom.

The 1835 decision to introduce English in India was the root of the proliferation of people who became proficient in that language and also at the same time were saturated with the ideology of the colonizer. This is not to say that there has been no "resistance" to that ideology, but by and large, we still follow or continue what the English-speaking world decides. Indian Writing in English is a very important result of this Minute.

Activity C

Please read the Minute carefully and note the points that Macaulay makes about Indian culture at that time. Do you think he is correct? What is your reading of Macaulay's Minute? Do you feel that English-education needs a change in this country or should we follow it the way we have done it in the last century?

Discussion

As you can very well understand, opinions about these matters will be very divided. Some people might think that English has done us more good than evil and we are a member of the "modern" world because we know and use that language. It is true that with the globalization of power, the net of English now extends to all corners of the world; very soon, we would find it difficult to recognize our own cultural traits.

I however feel that there is a need for a whole scale change of the education system in our country; we have not been able to create a method that is suited to this particular country. Think carefully and you would find that we hardly have our own strategies for education; it is largely derived and structured in terms of class and privileges. The need to change it is absolutely essential.

1.4 Summary

This unit sought to make you familiar with Thomas Babington Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education of 1835. The important point to note is the way in which a "demand" for English education was created and nurtured by the colonial power and the way in which this demand was catered to. Please remember that the demand for English was the result of a changed socio-economic context and it was inevitable that the British would use it for their own advantage.

1.5 Recommended reading

Allen, Richard and Harish Trivedi. *Literature and Nation: Britain and India 1800-1990.* London: Routledge, in association with the Open University, 2000.

Cohn, Bernard S. *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*. Delhi: OUP, 1997.

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983.

------. *The Function of Criticism*. London: Verso, 1984.

1.6 Appendix

Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education

1. As it seems to be the opinion of some at the gentlemen who compose the Committee of Public Instruction, that the course which they have hitherto pursued was strictly prescribed by the British Parliament in 1813, and as, if that opinion be correct, a legislative act will be necessary to warrant a change, I have thought it right to refrain from taking any part in the preparation of the adverse statements which are now before us, and to reserve what I had to say on the subject till it should come before me as a member of the Council of India.

   It does not appear to me that the Act of Parliament can by any art of construction, be made to bear the meaning which has been assigned to it. It contains nothing about the particular languages of sciences which are to be studied. A sum is set apart "for the revival and promotion of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British

territories. "It is argued, or rather taken for granted, that by literature, the Parliament can have meant only Arabic and Sanskrit literature, that they never would have given the honourable appellation of 'a learned native' to a native who was familiar with the poetry of Milton, the Metaphysics of Locke, and the Physics of Newton; but that meant to designate by that name only such persons as might have studied in the sacred books of the Hindoos all the uses of cusa-grass, and all the mysteries of absorption into the Deity. This does not appear to be a very satisfactory interpretation. To take a parallel case; suppose that the Pacha of Egypt, a country once superior in knowledge to the nations of Europe, but now sunk far below them, were to appropriate a sum for the purpose of 'reviving and promoting literature, and encouraging learned natives of Egypt, would anybody infer that he meant the youth of his pachalie to give years to the study of hieroglyphics, to search into all the doctrines disguised under the fable of Osiris, and to ascertain with all possible accuracy the ritual with which eats and onions were anciently adored? Would he be justly charged with inconsistency, if, instead of employing his young subjects in deciphering obelisks, he were to order them to be instructed in the English and French languages, and in all the sciences to which those languages are the chief keys.

The words on which the supporters of the old system rely do not bear them out, and other words follow which seem to be quite decisive on the other side. This Lac of rupees is set apart, not only for 'reviving literature in India,' the phrase on which their whole interpretation is founded, but also for 'the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories,' – words which are alone sufficient to authorize all the changes for which I contend.

If the Council agree in my construction, no Legislative Act will be necessary. If they differ from me, I will prepare a short Act rescinding that clause of the Charter of 1813, from which the difficulty arises.

2. The argument which I have been considering, affects only the form of proceeding. But the admirers of the oriental system of education have used another argument, which, if we admit it to be valid, is decisive against all change. They conceive that the public faith is pledged to the present system and that to alter the appropriation of any of the funds which have hitherto been spent in encouraging the study of Arabic and Sanscrit, would be down-right spoliation. It is not easy to understand by what process of reasoning they can have arrived at this conclusion. The grants which are made from the

public purse for the encouragement of literature differed in no respect from the grants which are made from the same purse for other objects of real or supposed utility. We found a sanatorium on a spot which we suppose to be healthy. Do we thereby pledge ourselves to keep a sanatorium there, if the result should not answer our expectation? We commence the erection of a pier. Is it a violation of the public faith to stop the works, if we afterwards see reason to believe that the building will be useless? The rights of property are undoubtedly sacred. But nothing endangers those rights so much as the practice, now unhappily too common, of attributing them to things to which they do not belong. Those who would impart to abuses the sanctity of property are in truth imparting to the institution of property the unpopularity and the fragility of abuses. If the Government, has give to any person a formal assurance; may, if the Government has excited in any person's mind a reasonable expectation that he shall receive a certain income as a teacher or a learner of Sanscrit or Arabic, I would respect that person's pecuniary interest – I would rather err on the side of liberality to individuals than suffer the public faith to be called in question. Put to talk of a Government pledging itself to teach certain languages and certain sciences, though those languages may become useless, though those sciences may be exploded, seems to me quite unmeaning. There is not a single word in any public instructions, from which it can be inferred that the Indian Government ever intended to give any pledge on this subject, or ever considered the destination of these funds as unalterably fixed. But had it been otherwise, I should have denied the competence of our predecessors to bind us by any pledge on such a subject. Suppose that a Government had in the last century enacted in the most solemn manner that all its subjects should, to the end of time, be inoculated for the small-pox would that Government be bound to persist in the practice after Jenner's discovery? These promises, of which nobody claims the performance, and from which nobody can grant a release; these vested rights, which vest in nobody; this property without proprietors; this robbery, which makes nobody poorer, may be comprehended by persons of higher faculties than mine. I consider this plea merely as a set form of words, regularly used both in England and in India, in defence of every abuse for which no other plea can be set up.

I hold this Lac of rupees to be quite at the disposal of the Governor-General in Council, for the purpose of promoting learning in India, in any way which may be thought most advisable. I hold his Lordship to be quite as free to direct that it shall no longer be employed in encouraging Arabic and Sanscrit as

he is to direct that the reward for killing tigers in Mysore shall be diminished, or that no more public money shall be expended on the chanting at the cathedral.

3. We now come to the gist of the matter. We have a fund to be employed as Government shall direct for the intellectual improvement of the people of this country. The simple question is, what is the most useful way of employing it?

All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India, contain neither literary no scientific information, and are, moreover, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. It seems to be admitted on all sides that the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can at present be effected only by means of some language not vernacular amongst them.

What then shall that language be? One-half of the Committee maintain that it should be the English. The other half strongly recommend the Arabic and Sanscrit. The whole question seems to me to be, which language is the best worth knowing? I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in the eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the western literature, is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the Committee who support the oriental plan of education.

It will hardly be disputed, I suppose, that the department of literature in which the eastern writers stand highest is poetry. And I certainly never met with any Orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanscrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations. But when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded, and general principles investigate, the superiority of the Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say, that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at

preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or Moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same.

4. How, then, stands the case? We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the West. It abounds with works of imagination not inferior to the noblest which Greece has bequeathed to us; with models of every species of eloquence, with historical compositions, which, considered merely as narratives, have seldom been surpassed, and which considered as vehicles of ethical and political instruction, have never been equaled; with just and lively representations of human life and human nature; with the most profound speculations on metaphysics, morals government, jurisprudence, and trade; with full and correct information respecting every experimental science which tends to preserve the health, to increase the comfort, or to expand the intellect of man. Whoever knows that language has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth, which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations. It may safely be said, that the literature now extant in that language is of far greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together. Nor is this all. In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats or Government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East. It is the language of two great European communities which are rising, the one in the south of Africa, the other Australasia; communities which are every year becoming more important, and more closely connected with our Indian empire, Whether we look at the intrinsic value of our literature, or at the particular situation of this country, we shall see the strongest reason to think that, of all foreign tongues, the English tongue is that which would be the most useful to our native subjects.

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 or any subject which deserve to be compared to our own; whether when we can teach European science, we shall teach systems which, by universal confession, whenever they differ from those of Europe, differ for the worse; and whether, when we can patronize sound philosophy and true history, we shall countenance, at the public expense,

medical doctrines, which would disgrace an English farrier, astronomy, - which could move laughter in 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.

5. We are not without experiences to guide us. History furnishes several analogous cases, and they all teach the same lesson. There are in modern times, to go no further, two memorable instances of a great impulse given to the mind of a whole society, of prejudices over-thrown – of knowledge diffused – of taste purified – of arts and sciences planted in countries which had recently been ignorant and barbarous.

   The first instance to which I refer, is the great revival of letters among the western nations at the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. At that time almost everything that was worth reading was contained in the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Had our ancestors acted as the Committee of Public Instruction has hitherto acted; I have been told that it is merely from want to local experience that I am surprised at these phenomena, and that it is not the fashion for students in India to study at their own charges. This only confirms me in my opinion. Nothing is more certain than that it never can in any part of the world be necessary to pay men for doing what they think pleasant and profitable. India is no exception to this rule. The people of India do not require to be paid for eating rice when they are hungry, or for wearing woolen cloth in the cold season. To come nearer to the case before us, the children who learn their letter s and a little elementary Arithmetic from the village school master are not paid by him. He paid for teaching them. Why then is it necessary to pay people to learn Sanscrit and Arabic? Evidently because it is universally felt that the Sanscrit and Arabic are languages, the knowledge of which does not compensate for the trouble of acquiring them. On all such subjects the state of the market is the decisive test.

6. Other evidence is not wanting, if other evidence were required. A petition was presented last year to the Committee by several ex-students of the Sanscrit College. The petitioners stated that they had studied in the college ten or twelve years, that they had made themselves acquainted with Hindoo literature and science; that they had received certificates of proficiency, and what is the fruit of all this! "Notwithstanding such testimonials," they say, "we have but little prospects of bettering our condition without the kind assistance of your Honorable Committee, the indifference with

which we are generally looked upon by our countrymen leaving no hope of encouragement and assistance from them". They therefore beg that they may be recommended to the Governor-General for places under the Government, not places of high dignity or emolument, but such as may just enable them to exist.

"We want means," they say, "for a decent living, and for our progressive improvement, which, however, we cannot obtain without the assistance of Government, by whom we have been educated and maintained from childhood. "They conclude by representing, very pathetically, that they are sure that it was never the intention of Government, after behaving so liberally to them during their education, to abandon them to destitution and neglect.

I have been used to see petitions to Government for compensation. All these petitions, even the most unreasonable of them, proceeded on the supposition that some loss had been sustained – that some wrong had been inflicted. These are surely the first petitioners who ever demanded compensation for having been educated gratis – for having been supported by the public during twelve years, and then sent forth into the world well furnished with literature and science. They represent their education as an injury which gives them a claim on the Government for redress, as an injury for which the stipends paid to them during the infliction were a very inadequate compensation. And I doubt not that they are in the right. They have wasted the best years of life in learning what procures for them neither bread nor respect. Surely we might, with advantage, have saved the cost of making these persons useless and miserable; surely men may be brought up to be burdens to the public and objects of contempt to their neighbours at a somewhat smaller charge to the State. But such is our policy. We do not even stand neuter in the contest between truth and falsehood. We are not content to leave the natives to the influence of their own hereditary prejudices. To the natural difficulties which obstruct the progress of sound science in the East, we add fresh difficulties of our own making. Bounties and premiums, such as ought not to be given for the propagation of truth, we lavish on the false taste and false philosophy.

7. By acting thus we create the very evil which we fear. We are making that opposition which we do not find. What we spend on the Arabic and Sanscrit colleges is not merely a dead loss to the cause of truth; it is bounty-money paid to raise up champions of error. It goes to form a nest, not merely of helpless place-hunters, but of bigots prompted alike by passion and my interest to raise a cry against every useful scheme of education. If there should be

any opposition among the natives to the change which I recommended, that opposition will be the effect of our own system. It will be headed by persons supported by our stipends and trained in our colleges. The longer we persevere in our present course, the more formidable will that opposition be. It will be every year reinforced my recruits whom we are paying. From the native society left to itself, we have no difficulties to apprehend, all the murmuring will come from that oriental interest which we have, by artificial means, called into being and nursed into strength.

There is yet another fact, which is alone sufficient to prove that the feeling of the native public, when left to itself, is not such as the supporters of the old system represent it to be. The Committee have thought fit to lay out above a Lac of rupees in printing Arabic and Sanscrit books. Those books find no purchases. It is very rarely that a single copy is disposed of. Twenty three-thousand volumes, most of them folios and quartos, fill the libraries, or rather the lumber-rooms, of this body. The committee contrive to get rid of some portion of their vast stock of oriental literature by giving books away. But they cannot give so fast as they print. About twenty thousand rupees a year are spent in adding fresh masses of waste paper to a hoard which, I should think, is already sufficiently ample. During the last three years, about sixty thousand rupees have been expended in this manner. The sale of Arabic and Sanscrit books, during those three years, has not yielded quite one thousand rupees. In the meantime the School-Book Society is selling seven or eight thousand English volumes ever year, and not only pays the expenses of printing, but realizes a profit of 20 per cent, on its outlay.

The fact that the Hindoo law is to be learned chiefly from Sanscrit books, and the Mahomedan law from Arabic books, has been much insisted on, but seems not to bear at all on the question. We are commanded by Parliament to ascertain and digest the laws of India. The assistance of a Law Commission has been given to us for that purpose. As soon as the code is promulgated, the Shasters and the Hedaya will be useless to a Moonsiff or Sudder Ameen. I hope and trust that before the boys who are now entering at the Madrassa and the Sanscrit College have completed their studies, this great work will be finished. It would be manifestly absurd to educate the rising generation with a view to a state of things which we mean to alter before they reach manhood.

8. But there is yet another argument which seems even more untenable. It is said that the Sanscrit and Arabic are the languages in which the sacred books of a hundred millions of people are written, and that they are, on that account, entitled to peculiar encouragement. Assuredly it is the duty of the British Government in India to be not only tolerant, but neutral on all religious questions. But to encourage the study of a literature admitted to be of small intrinsic value, only because that literature inculcates the most serious errors on the most important subjects, is a course hardly reconcilable with reason, with morality, or even with that very neutrality which ought, as we all agree, to be sacredly preserved. It is confessed that a language is barren of useful knowledge. We are to teach it because it is fruitful of monstrous superstitions. We are to teach false history, false astronomy, false medicine, because we find them in company with a false religion. We abstain, and I trust shall always abstain, from giving any public encouragement to those who are engaged in the work of converting natives to Christianity. And while we act thus, can we reasonably and decently bribe men out of the revenues or the State to waste their youth in learning how they are to purify themselves after touching an ass, or what text of the Vedas they are to repeat to expiate the crime of killing a goat? had they neglected the language of Cicero and Tacitus; had they confined their attention to the old dialects of our own island; had they printed nothing and taught nothing at the universities but chronicles, in Anglo-Saxon, and romances in Norman-French, would England have been what she now is? What the Greek and Latin were to the contemporaries of More and Ascham, our tongue is to the people of India. The literature of England is now more valuable than that of classical antiquity. I doubt whether the Sanscrit literature will be as valuable as that of our Saxon and Norman progenitors. In some departments – in history, for example, I am certain that it is much less so.

   Another instance may be said to be still before our eyes. Within the last hundred and twenty years, a nation which had previously been in a state as barbarous as that in which our ancestors were before the crusades, has gradually emerged from the ignorance in which it was sunk, and has taken its place among civilized communities. I speak of Russia. There is now in that country a large educated class, abounding with persons fit to serve the State in the highest functions, and in no ways inferior to the most accomplished men who adorn the best circles of Paris and London. There is reason to hope that this vast empire, which in the time of our grandfathers was probably behind the Punjab, may, in the time of our grandchildren, be pressing close on France and Britain in the career of improvement. And how was this change effected? Not by

flattering national prejudices; not by feeding the mind of the young, Muscovite with the old woman's stories which his rude fathers had believed not by filling his head with lying legends about St. Nicholas not by encouraging him to study the great question, whether the world was or was not created on the 13th of September; not by calling him 'a learned native,' when he has mastered all these points of knowledge; but by teaching him those foreign languages in which the greatest mass of information had been laid up, and thus putting all that information within his reach. The languages of Western Europe civilized Russia. I cannot doubt that they will do for the Hindoo what they have done for the Tartar.

And what are the arguments against that course which seems to be alike recommended by theory and by experience? It is said that we ought to secure the co-operation of the native public, and that we can do this only by teaching Sanscrit and Arabic. I can by no means admit that when a nation of high intellectual attainments undertakes to superintend the education of a nation comparatively ignorant, the learners are absolutely to prescribe the course which is to be taken by the teachers. It is not necessary, how-ever, to say anything on this subject. For it is proved by unanswerable evidence that we are not at present securing the co-operation of the natives. It would be bad enough to consult their intellectual taste at the expense of their intellectual health. But we are consulting neither, we are withholding from them the learning for which they are craving, we are forcing on them the mock-learning which they nauseate.

This is proved by the fact that we are forced to pay our Arabic and Sanscrit students, while those who learn English are willing to pay us. All the declamations in the world about the love and reverence of the natives for their sacred dialects will never, in the mind of any impartial person, outweigh the undisputed fact, that we cannot find, in all our vast empire, a single student who will let us teach him those dialects unless we will pay him.

I have now before me the accounts of the Madrassa for one month, the month of December 1833. The Arabic students appear to have been seventy-seven in number. All receive stipends from the public. The whole amount paid to them is above 500 rupees a month. On the other side of the account stands the following item; Deduct amount realized from the out-students of English for the months of May, June and July last, 103 rupees.

It is taken for granted by the advocates of oriental learning, that no native of this country can possibly attain more than a mere

smattering of English. They do not attempt to prove this; but they perpetually insinuate it. They designate the education which their opponents recommend as a mere spelling book education. They assume it as undeniable, that the question is between a profound knowledge of Hindoo and Arabian literature and science on the one side, and a superficial knowledge of the rudiments of English on the other. This is not merely an assumption, but an assumption contrary to all reason and experience. We know that foreigners of all nations do learn our language sufficiently to have access to all the most abstruse knowledge which it contains sufficiently to relish even the more delicate graces of our most idiomatic writers. There are in this very town natives who are quite competent to discuss political or scientific questions with fluency and precision in the English language. I have heard the very question on which I am now writing discussed by native gentlemen with a liberality and an intelligence which would do credit to any member of the committee of Public Instruction. Indeed it is unusual to find, even in the literary circles of the continent, any foreigner who can express himself, in English with so much facility and correctness as we find in many Hindoos. Nobody, suppose, will content, that English is so difficult to a Hindoo as Greek to an Englishman. Yet an intelligent English youth, in a much smaller number of years than our unfortunate pupils pass at the Sanscrit College, becomes able to read, to enjoy, and even to imitate, not unhappily, the compositions of the best Greek authors. Less than half the time which enables an English youth to read Herodotus and Sophocles, ought to enable a Hindoo to read Hume and Milton.

9. To sum what I have said, I think it clear that we are not fettered by the Act of Parliament of 1813; that we are not fettered by any pledge expressed or implied; that we are free to employ our funds as we choose; that we ought to employ them in teaching what is best worth knowing; that English is better worth knowing than Sanscrit or Arabic; that the natives are desirous to be taught English and are not desirous to be taught Sanscrit or Arabic; that neither as the languages of law, nor as the languages of religion, have the Sanscrit and Arabic any peculiar claim to our engagement; that it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars, and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed.

In one point I fully agree with the gentlemen to whose general views I am opposed. I feel with them, that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class

of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects to the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.

I would strictly respect all existing interest. I would deal even generously with all individuals who have had fair reason to expect a pecuniary provision. But I would strike at the root of the bad system which has hitherto been fostered by us. I would at once stop the printing of Arabic and Sanscrit books, I would abolish the Madrassa and the Sanscrit College at Calcutta. Benares is the great scat of Brahmanical learning; Delhi, of Arabic learning, if enough, and much more than enough in my opinion, for the eastern languages if the Benares and Delhi Colleges should be retained, I would at least recommend that no stipends shall be given to any students who may hereafter repair thither, but that the people shall be left to make their own choice between the rival systems of education without being bribed by us to learn what they have no desire to know. The funds which would thus be placed at our disposal would enable us to give larger encouragement to the Hindoo College at Calcutta, and to establish in the principal cities throughout the Presidencies of Fort William and Agra schools in which the English language might be well and thoroughly taught.

If the decision of his Lordship in Council should be such as I anticipate, I shall enter on the performance of my duties with the greatest zeal and alacrity. If, on the other hand, it be the opinion of Government that the present system ought to remain unchanged, I beg that I may be permitted to retire from the chair of the Committee. I feel that I could not be of the smallest use there – I feel, also, that I should be lending my countenance to what I firmly believe to be a mere delusion. I believe that the present system tends, not to accelerate the progress of truth, but to delay the natural death of expiring errors, I conceive that we have at present no right to the respectable name of a Board of Public Instruction. We are a Board for wasting public money, for printing books which are of less value than the paper on which they are printed was while it was blank; for giving artificial encouragement to absurd history, absurd metaphysics, absurd physics, absurd theology; for raising up a breed of scholars who find their scholarship an encumbrance and a blemish, who live on the public while they are receiving their education, and whose education is so utterly useless to them that when they have received it they must either starve or live on the public all the rest of their lives.

Entertaining these opinions, I am naturally desirous to decline all share in the responsibility of a body, which, unless it alters its whole mode of proceeding, I must consider not merely as useless, but as positively noxious.