Chapter 1

COLONIAL EDUCATION AND NATIVE AGENCY

Section I

What is English literature?

My attempt in this chapter is to examine the processes central to the establishment of English education in India. These processes constituted English education in ways which powerfully underwrite education in India today. In this section I deal with the manner in which liberal humanist ideology was lodged at the heart of modern, secular education. In the next section I focus on mid-nineteenth century educational reports to show how alliances obtained between the colonial government and the native elite. Finally, I analyse key educational strategies which established and consolidated educational standards in the last quarter of the century.

In this section I will attempt to explore the significance of the question, 'What is English literature?' An exploration of this kind involves certain basic queries: Why ask such a question now?; Is it possible to ask such a question at all? These questions might seem irrelevant considering the fact that one has been dealing with a body of writing that is already designated as English literature. Nevertheless, it might be productive to ask questions such as: what is the meaning of such a designation?; and, whether the effects of putting together of a body of writing

such as "English literature" were merely literary-aesthetic or political-ideological?

There is doubtless the generally undisputed idea that an "English literature" exists; it is definable, recognizable, if not as one whose unity resides in the common national origins of its authors. In India there is still a tendency to associate English literature with British literature. It is somewhat unimaginable that this recognizable body of writing did not exist even a century and a half ago and that the study of English literature was instituted and formalized not in the country of its origin but in colonial India long before it became a part of the university curriculum in England.

A historical understanding of English underscores the point that the study of English literature cannot be treated as a natural, innocent activity of reading and appreciating the literature of the English people, their lives, their culture, their values and ideals. Such a view, however, is still current in the institutions of English in post-independent India. It is possible to teach, learn and take examinations and pass courses in English Literature without acknowledging the conditions under which this subject came to be studied in colonial times and continues in postcolonial India. This is, of course, not to suggest that the teaching and learning of English literature is irrelevant in independent India. Rather, it is to suggest that the pedagogy of English teaching continues to be treated as separate from the immediate socio-political history of our time

and continues to be severed from the history of its beginnings. This could also be one of the reasons why "the much needed challenges to English studies currently being made in India seem not to have any identifiable reference point in recent Indian history, politics or sociology" (Viswanathan 1993 30).

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan has observed that the standard practices of teaching and learning of English literature in India entail a reading of, more or less, half a dozen canonical texts, which are explicated in the classroom and reproduced in the examinations with their authority derived from standard books on criticism produced by western scholars (7). The English course is structured around teaching practices operating on the assumption that the teaching of literature has nothing to do with the mundane issues addressed by worldly subjects such as history, politics and sociology. The proper domain of literature, it is claimed,[1] is that of aesthetics and ideas. It is the domain of truth, culture and value and has nothing to do with the world of institutional structures and political forces. It is a domain free from history and ideology, pure almost to the point of being otherwordly. Such a view of literature is still current among the teachers and learners of English in India today.[2]

There is, however, a need to understand the reason for the continuing power of such a view of literature even in the face of historical evidence that "the introduction of English literature marks the effacement of a sordid history of colonialist expropriation behind European world dominance"

(Viswanathan 1989 20). In fact, it seems as if the teaching of English literature in postcolonial India has successfully overcome the burden of a colonialist history of expropriation, exploitation and oppression and has emerged triumphant without carrying any physical or material stains of that sordid history. Literature seems to have asserted its essentially humanistic function as the repository of truth, culture and universal value. It seems that the rationality for the teaching of literature is to be sought not within the narrow confines of a history which is merely a hundred and fifty years old but in the eternal heart of mankind. In the words of Catherine Belsey, "the sole inhabitant of the universe of Literature is Eternal Man" (1988 400).

A certain notion of universality has come to be associated with the idea of literature and has become particularly forceful in postcolonial India. Such an association has made it difficult for us to recognize literature as an instrument of ideology, of socio-political control. A combination of universalism and humanism has come to determine not only our ideas of literature but has also become an underlying principle of the entire education system in India. What is at the heart of the education system in India, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak says, is the idea of a universal human being: "We were brought up in an education system [where] we were taught that if we could begin to approach an internalization of that universal human being, then we would be human" (1990 7). What Spivak suggests here, I believe, is that the education system in India offers basically a literary

education, no matter whether in the humanities or in the social sciences. The entire system is geared towards the enforcement of certain humanistic functions traditionally associated with literature - for example, the shaping of character, good conduct and, of course, love of humanity. Such an approach not only suppresses the issues of power, knowledge, justice, struggle and inequality but also constructs a master narrative of "people," of "mankind" and of "Eternal man." In principle, one could outright reject all such essentialist and universalist defenses of literature, but it would be more productive to enquire into the interests that are protected when literature is defined on the basis of its universality and its essential humanity.

It is evident that 'literature' is defined in two mutually exclusive terms in our time. On one hand, it is characterized as a repository of knowledge that is universal and eternal, a characterization which involves a process whereby the pedagogical aspect of teaching is defined away from the political. On the other hand, it is understood as an instrument of social and political control, an understanding that deepens the political meaning of the pedagogical. Gauri Viswanathan's work *Masks of Conquest: Literary Studies and British Rule in India* (1989) has examined at length the strategic manoeuverings that were required for the deployment of English literature for the exercise of colonial control and dominance. This book has unravelled the constitution of a liberal humanist ideology which has naturalized itself not only in our institutions of English Studies but has

also become a major part of our education system. Viswanathan has shown how English literature as a major component of our colonial education system facilitated the consolidation of a liberal humanist ideology. Further, she demonstrates how such an ideology crumbled under its own pressure when a contradiction emerged between social control and social advancement `interest' in the colonial education project. Such a framework, no doubt, is sufficient to explain a gradual native disenchantment with the value of English literature. It also explains a similar disenchantment with liberal humanist ideology. Although it does not attempt to explain the reasons for the continuation of a liberal humanist ideology in the postcolonial institutions of our education system, it offers valuable insights for efforts to understand the complex forces that made for the continuing presence of that ideology.

After Viswanathan, it has become commonplace to argue that the introduction of English literature was a strategic move by our colonial rulers to invest authority in literary texts and to relegate the social and historical questions to the background. This effort to divorce the material world from the world of ideas was, however, already made in nineteenth century England.[3] Matthew Arnold provided an exemplary case in this respect. He was the acknowledged representative of liberal humanism. Indeed, it is claimed the "during much of the twentieth century the justification for a liberal arts education and for the maintenance and support of university humanities scholarship in

general has tended to appeal to philosophies such as those of Matthew Arnold" (Bauman 81). It is equally possible to argue in the context of postcolonial India that the tradition of criticism exemplified by Arnold continues to shape "what we are, what we think and what we do today" (Foucault 1984 32). The well-digested critical vocabularies of Romanticism,of Matthew Arnold, F.R. Leavis or T.S. Eliot, says Suvir Kaul, "are taken as pre-discursive and self-evident, as belonging to no histories and staking no ideological positions: theirs are the virtues of universal concern and trans-historical and cultural meaning and value" (210). This tradition has taken such deep roots in the institution of English Studies in its day-to-day practices that it becomes imperative to understand the reasons for its continuing influence. Therefore it is through a careful study of Arnold's views on poetry and criticism that I propose to explore the reason for the continued interest we have in literature as a humanistic phenomenon.[4]

Discussing the objects of poetry, Arnold says, "they are actions ; human actions possessing an inherent interest in themselves" (1864 3). He further says that "the most excellent actions are those which most powerfully appeal to the great primary affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in race, and which are independent of time" (1864 3). On the basis of such premises he could further argue that "a great human action of a thousand years ago is more interesting than a smaller human action of today" (1864 4). Therefore, he

could deride the domestic epics of his time on the ground that they "dealt with the details of modern life which pass daily under our eye" (1864 4).

Similarly, regarding the state of criticism in England, Arnold says,

> here people are particularly indisposed even to comprehend that without the free disinterested treatment of things, truth and highest culture are out of the question. So immersed are they in practical life, so accustomed to take all their notions from this life, and its processes, that they are apt to think that truth and culture themselves can be reached by the process of this life, and that it is an impertinent singularity to think of reaching them in any other (1880 34).

The function of criticism, according to him, is "disinterestedness" which can be shown by

> keeping aloof from practice; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of mind on all subjects which it touches; by steadily refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior, political considerations about ideas which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them (1880 28).

It is useful to read Arnold's argument in the context of the rising working class literacy and power in mid-nineteenth century

England. The logic of his argument clearly served to undermine the value of the cultural forms working class literacy had taken. This logic was effected by means of a definition of literature in terms of "high seriousness." It is possible to suggest that Arnold's logic was deeply entangled with the colonial question as well and that his concerns in his critical writings might be read as nodal in the complex negotiations underway between the British working class and the colonies. The case for such a reading could be supported by an examination of the way he sets up the notion of disinterestedness in his essay "The Function of Criticism in the Present Time." His notion of disinterestedness is precisely the one which allows the systematic downgradation of the politically loaded cultural production of the working classes. The notion is set up, curiously, in terms of "the Indian virtue of detachment and abandoning the sphere of practical life" (1880 33).

Even if it does not concern us to speculate about this reference to the Indian virtue of detachment and its possible relevance for the working class education in England, it might be productive to ask what were the historical, political, literary and cultural conditions that made this reference possible in the first place. In other words, does this obvious spatial reference have also a temporal dimension?

Arnold's reference to the Indian virtue is neither accidental nor innocent. It is, by his own admission, quite consistent with the requirements of his time. He defines "the

present time" in terms of England's colonial expansion. In such a context the notion of a national literature must take into account this fact of change in national life (1880 27). According to him, the best possible course which literary studies would take and which would be consistent with the epoch of expansion would be to recognize that "England is not all the world, much of the best that is known and thought in the world cannot be of English growth, must be foreign" (1880 41). Such an expansion of mind is possible only when "all danger of a hostile forcible pressure of foreign ideas upon our practices has long disappeared" (1880 27). To emerge out of a pressure of foreign ideas, according to Arnold, is to be released from the epoch of concentration.

Expansion, not concentration, should therefore be the rule of English literature and criticism. "Every critic," he says, "should try and possess one great literature, at least besides his own; and the more unlike his own the better" (1880 42). Arnold's expansion logic which smacks of cosmopolitanism shows its limits when his argument for spatial expansion is confronted with the temporal arrangement of knowledge and power across space. The future he could therefore envisage for poetry and criticism is the one in which Europe would be regarded "as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result; and whose members have for their proper outfit, a knowledge of Greek, Roman and Eastern antiquity, and of one another" (1880 42).

The example would make it clear that words like "literature" and "criticism" do not have functions innate to them; functions are assigned. These functions are not only time and space specific but vary in their roles, in keeping with the arrangement of knowledge and power at any given point of time. For example, the moral and spiritual values that Arnold assigns to literature and criticism are only problematically located there, and are in fact complicitous with the dynamic of power relations that are at work between the colonizer and the colonized. By defining literature away from "practical consideration" and by strategically aligning it with the ancient Indian virtue of detachment, Arnold establishes the authority of the English literary text in the moral and spiritual realm where both the colonizer and the colonized could sit and appreciate "the best that is known and thought in the world" while remaining completely detached from "a sordid history of colonialist expropriation and exploitation."

I suggest here that such a conceptualization of literature not only fed into a European project of imperialism but also fitted into a native idea of self-advancement in terms of the moral and spiritual. Indeed, such an idea of literature was offered in terms acceptable to an already well-entrenched 'learned' class of the natives who instantly recognized the value of the ancient Indian virtue of detachment as they saw in it not only the means of spiritual and moral progress but, more importantly, the means for material and social advancement.

The rhetoric of spiritual and moral progress would have sounded familiar to this `learned' class of the natives who thought themselves equal, sometimes even superior, to the colonizers in `spiritual' and `moral' values. They willingly accepted the moral authority of the English literary text because, on the one hand, it did not pose any threat to the advancement of their material interests and, on the other, it helped consolidate their `moral' and `spiritual' superiority over the rest of the natives who were not exposed to such literature.

What happens on account of such an exaltation of the status of the literary text in a colonial context is that it starts a process whereby certain texts are severed from their social formations, defined as "literature" and bound and ranked together to constitute a series of "literary traditions" and interrogated to yield a set of ideologically presupposed responses" (Eagleton 57). For example, Arnold's explicit intention in putting together a body of poems is that in having such "a collection like the present, with its succession of celebrated names and celebrated poems, offers a good opportunity to us for resolutely endeavouring to make our estimates of poetry real" (Arnold 1853 88). The preparation of such a body of literature becomes an ideological imperative in the face of the recognition that

> an era is opening in which we are to see multitudes of a common sort of literature ; that such readers do not want and could not relish anything better than such literature, and that to provide it is becoming a vast

> and profitable industry. Even if good literature entirely lost currency with the world, it would still be abundantly worthwhile to continue to enjoy it by oneself (Arnold 1853 89).

It is clear that what came to be recognized as literature was a "collection" bound and ranked together with their "goodness" consisting only in their difference from "the mass of common sort of literature." The construction of "difference" on the basis of what Arnold calls "high seriousness" is arbitrary, but this arbitrariness is not recognized as such since it forms a part of the dominant ideology. The point to be made here is that literature does not seem to have any pre-existing value, any "intrinsic, autochthonous, and universally recognizable characteristics" (Foucault 1977 22). It acquires value on the basis and manner of its deployment.

The idea that literature is distanced from material reality is not intrinsic to literature. But, it is precisely on the basis of such an idea that a unity is conferred, as is evident from Arnold, on a body of literary texts. Universalism is not an essential property of literature; it is only a characteristic conferred upon a body of literary texts. It is, in fact, possible to argue that the body of literary texts which we have come to recognize as "English Literature" today is only a unity conferred upon it in the recent past. One cannot treat this unity as though it had existed throughout history with its identity intact.

It is necessary to emphasize that literary texts had acquired their status in the context of colonialism. Literary texts that were studied in colonial India were not merely English in the sense of their geographical origin; a whole corpus of European literature was available in English translation for the Indians. It might be of historical interest to explore the parameters that were used in selecting European works for English translation. But it is obvious that English literature was strategically poised to be the representative of "the best that was known and thought in the world." And the authority and historical advantages which accrued to the English literary text on account of such a strategic deployment of the notion of universalism were precisely those which conferred a "unity" on it

It is also important to recognize that the textual authority was in no way limited to only the literary text; it was in fact available to texts on law, philosophy, science, religion and history. Such a recognition seems to lead to an easy conflation of the study of English language and literature with English education itself. The reason for such a conflation would be explored in the second and third sections of this chapter. It will suffice here to suggest that the English literary text, together with other texts on law, history, religion etc, constituted a symbolic order to which appeals could be made in order to establish authority in literary, legal and religious matters. Together, all these texts came to signify modernity.

Section II

Caste and the consenting native

It is a common practice with historians concerned with education in India to represent colonial subjects as objects of manipulation and control by the colonial state. For example, B.K. Boman-Behram's book *Educational Controversies in India* (1946) is quite tellingly subtitled as *"The Cultural Conquest of India under British Imperialism."* Early colonial initiatives in native education, according to Boman-Behram, was "an organized attempt to impose European civilization, chiefly through education" (viii). The British rulers who began with "tentative incursions," he tells us, picked their way "to certain working conclusions which has ever since governed the course and conduct of our education system" (viii). *English Education in India* (1976) by Kalyan K. Chatterjee declares in its preface that "it was through generating a love for English literature and culture and the ideals Britain stood for, that the British sought to seal the imperial bonds. It is in this way that English education became an important part of empire making" (x).

It is evident from these prefatorial declarations that both the authors are methodologically predisposed to privilege the agency of the colonial state in their analysis of the educational process under colonial rule. The impression that one gets of the natives from these accounts is that they are devoid of all agency, without will or consciousness, excepting the one imposed on them by the colonizer. The natives figure as poor, powerless

objects, always at the receiving end of plans, proposals, designs and purposes. This delineation is certainly a serious shortcoming of the traditional historiography on education during the colonial rule.

Such accounts of the colonial encounter where the colonizer emerges as omnipotent have been sufficiently problematized by postcolonial historians. These historians have argued that colonial hegemony was never totalizing; it was always incomplete and marked by indigenous resistance. The colonial penetration of the native community was never a one-way process. In fact, both the colonizer and the colonized were engaged in a series of negotiations over a complex range of issues which were never fully resolved either in favour of the colonized or of the colonizer. Therefore, the question of who was the active agent would only yield partial insights into the complexity of the issues over which there was a constant struggle.[5]

It is therefore necessary to desist from attempts to read the educational development during the colonial rule in terms of "cultural conquest" or "empire making." One limitation of traditional historiography is that it cannot properly assess the role that the natives played in moulding the colonial policy on education. My contention is that there was an active participation by some natives belonging to a certain class/caste composition in the process of education. Any attempt to reconstruct the native agency, therefore, needs to be sufficiently problematized through a simultaneous exploration of

the caste/class nature of this agency. In this context, it could be productive to inquire into the relationship between the visible achievements in education during the colonial rule and the native social hierarchy. Such an inquiry would involve two basic questions: one, what was the immediate past which Britishers referred to when they contemplated on a course of education for the natives? Second, how did the native community act upon the prospects of a colonial education?

The education of the native masses was not a part of the initial agenda of the colonial state in India. In fact, mass education was not a part of state responsibility even in England until the 1870s. There was a feeling in the official circles that "if England could get on without a state organization, there seemed little reason to introduce one in India; and the company was at first a trading rather than a ruling corporation" (Sharp 3). The necessity for involvement of the colonial state in native education came inevitably through material and administrative considerations. It was recognized, as early as in 1787, that a course of education was necessary in order to "establish mutual good faith and impress the minds of the natives with sentiments of esteem and respect for the British nation" (Sharp 4). The colonial state in 1807, however, had the experience of the educational activities of the missionaries whose "zeal out-running their discretion had brought them into trouble" (Sharp 4). Proselytisation had become a nagging issue. Indeed, the Court of Directors had sent a despatch in 1808 declaring "strict

religious neutrality and refusing to lend authority to any attempt to propagate christian religion" (Sharp 4).

The Company, therefore, while allocating funds for education in 1813, pursued a secular model of education which had been experimented in England but was put aside by the combined effort of the aristocracy and the clergy. The Company's chief motivation in following a secular mode of education was, on the one hand, to avoid any interference in the existing system of religious instruction in India and, on the other, to curtail the increasing influence of the missionaries and Anglo-Indians who had become major beneficiaries of missionary education by the end of the eighteenth century.[6] However, this planned avoidance of religious instruction and of religious culture was promptly noticed by the missionaries who saw in this secular official policy on education an expression of the British middle-class mercantile interests. The period that followed 1813 was full of many controversies. The more important of these controversies related to (1) the role of the state and of private enterprise that was chiefly missionary at that time; (2) the nature of education, whether religious or secular, to be pursued; (3) the type of education to be followed, whether Oriental learning through the medium of Sanskrit and Arabic, or Western education through the medium of English. The educational reports of this period reveal that the Company's decision-making process was dominated by the orientalists who were often openly hostile to missionary efforts in the field of education as they feared that

"proselytisation" would work against the Company's trading interests by inflaming native passion (Ellenborough 133). The Company, therefore, preferred to set up either its own schools or to encourage those set up by non-christians. Such an atmosphere was congenial to the orientalist activity.

The early orientalist work of Nathaniel Halhead, Charles Wilkins, William Jones, H.T. Colebrooke and H.H. Wilson had already established a view of Indian society which was to have considerable consequence to the later development in native education. These orientalist scholars were closely associated with the judicial affairs of the East India Company. Their daily contact with Indians in the courts had convinced them that the Indians were litigious, given to corruption and forgery. The colonial context in which orientalist acquired knowledge also led to a marked disjuncture in what they studied about Hindus and their organizational skills and what they actually saw in the eighteenth and nineteenth century India. Their study of Hindu scriptures in the company of brahmin scholars had made them believe that oriental learning consisted only in the learning of ancient hindu scriptures and that the brahmins were the cultural centers of `Indian' society and hence their authority was absolute and acceptable to the society at large.

The burden of a textual view of the brahmins and of their well-ordered society had come to weigh heavily on the orientalists who were struggling with the day-to-day realities of the hindu society. However, they were able to rationalize what

they saw as an inconsistent fact of history by describing the present state of the Hindus as a fall from a golden past - a past which they thought could be redeemed through the recovery of the hindu law (Macaulay 114). The Indian society, as a consequence, was seen to be operating on the basis of a set of rules which every hindu followed. The colonial ambition was to ascertain these rules through a careful study of the hindu *Dharmashastras*. The orientalist effort, therefore, was concentrated on the study of select Sanskrit legal treatises with a view to ascertaining the rules, customs and manners governing the hindu society.[7] It was believed that Indians would be best governed under their own law rather than under the imported British law. The colonial motivation was to maintain the *status quo* which, as their research showed, consisted in the recovery and the maintenance of the brahminical order.

The tools and techniques through which such orientalism was practiced in official and administrative circles came under special attack by the christian missionaries. The early nineteenth century saw a large body of literature by missionaries who worked with vernacular languages. Their interest in the vernacular was of course due to their need for translating the Bible and other European religious tracts. They disparaged the official orientalist interest in the idea of a noble and dignified past of brahminical supremacy. Instead, they favoured a practice of the vernaculars which the orientalists had dismissed as "the vulgar tongues of the Hindus." Thus, the missionary view

of India coming later than the orientalist view provided not only a critique of orientalism but also gave a perspective on the vernacular languages of India.

The missionary interest in the vernaculars and in the improvement of the lot of the common man went beyond the mere translation of the Bible. Charles Grant articulated this special interest in mass education when he observed that "except a few Brahmins, who consider the concealment of their learning as part of their religion, the people were totally misled as to the system and phenomena of nature and their error in this branch of science may be more easily demonstrated to them" (84). Unlike the orientalists who had proceeded on their grand amelioration programme to expose the absurdity and falsehood of the mythological legends, the missionaries were more interested in simple and easy demonstrations to ward off "error" among people.

It is possible to argue here that both the orientalist grand method and the missionaries' easy methods had similar effects in the sense that both confirmed the supremacy of western science and helped describe the native world as the civilizational 'other' of Europe. However, it is important to emphasize the difference in their operational logic. The missionary ambition to make knowledge available to the masses had two sources: first, they were convinced that in hindu society knowledge has always been the privilege of a certain caste of people, the brahmins. And second, they, unlike the orientalists, were committed to reform and change. They were concerned with changing the existing

social structure rather than with maintaining the *status quo*. In fact, their difference with the orientalists cannot be understood without taking into account the differential nature of their social background.[8] The orientalists were better educated and came from upper classes in Great Britain, whereas the missionaries, particularly the Baptists, came from lower orders in British society.

Their interest in the vernacular education worked inevitably towards the ready acceptability of missionaries to people, especially to the oppressed classes who saw in christianity a possibility for social mobility. But christianity which offered a liberating space to the lower castes/classes soon came under attack mostly by the caste hindus who condemned the educational activities of the missionaries and charged them with attempts of forceful conversion[9]. Captain Stewart of the Church Missionary Society, who had established at Burdwan two vernacular schools in 1816, had to face stiff opposition, especially from the brahmins. Reports were circulated among the natives that "it was his design to ship all the children to England" (Poddar 85). Further, the introduction of printed books into his schools caused a sense of alarm among the brahmins "who apprehended it was some plan for ensnaring their children and destroying their caste" (Poddar 85). The British official policy on the missionary activity was always cautious. It was Charles Grant who made a major plea for the missionary activity in India as early as in 1793. But it was only with the Charter Act of 1813 that the missionaries got official

permission to participate in the native education programme. It was in the same Act that a provision was made and funds were allocated for the first time for "the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India."[10]

It seems for the first time that the official involvement in education coincided with the interest of the missionaries. But these interests were actually opposed to each other both in principle and in practice. Subsequent official intervention in the affairs of the missionary activity only confirmed the earlier government censorship of missionary publications and public preaching. In 1822 Mr. Carrey was instructed "to discontinue the use in schools under his charge of the christian scriptures and all religious tracts calculated to excite alarm as to our motives in the minds of the natives" (Sharp 6). The colonial state by actively discouraging the use of sacred books was not only consolidating its secular credentials but was also effectively separating matters of native education from the processes of proselytisation.

The British official policy on native education was always acutely aware of the fact that "the Brahmins would counteract the object were they alarmed into contest" (Moira 26). Lord Moira, while giving expression to the British anxiety over the form and content of native education, pleaded in 1815 that "the progress to be effectual, must be patient and silent; like every other beneficial change, it must rise out of the general sense of

society, not be imposed upon it; and to produce that sense, I know no mode but education" (26). Here Lord Moira is, in fact, giving expression to what was to become a major concern of the colonial state : how to manufacture native consent, how to "open the minds of the rising generation by due instruction" and how to "give them a habit of reverencing the principles which the christian doctrine enjoins without stimulating the parent into opposition by teaching on point adverse to their superstition" (Moira 25).

A similar line of argument also underlined the official thinking about female education. The education of the girls was considered a state responsibility only in the 1850s. Earlier, female education was confined to only those households "who can afford the expense of entertaining special instructors at their own houses" (Halliday 59). Reporting on the functioning of his Native Female School (1840) in Calcutta, J.E.D.Bethune held that his inspiration chiefly came from two sources: from the success of Government schools, and the predilection of respectable natives against sending their daughters to schools run by the government or the missionaries (55-56). There was a feeling in the official circles that "the scheme of female education is doubtless unpopular, and looked down upon by the mass, with fear and dread, whether Hindus or Mahomedans" (Littler 57). It was also pointed out that "suspicious, ill-disposed natives may consider it subservient in some degree to the views of proselytism" (Littler 57).

The Governor-General Dalhousie had to tread softly in the matter of female education. He advised that "precaution may be adopted by as close seclusion of the girls as the customs of the country may require" (in Halliday 59). However, in a private letter to his wife, he gave expression to a different view: "The degeneration of their women has been adhered to by Hindus and Mohammadans more tenaciously than any other customs, and the change will do more towards civilizing the body of society than anything else could effect" (62). A similar sentiment was expressed in the Council of Education, but it was couched carefully in terms acceptable and encouraging to "all the liberal and enlightened natives of India." The Council, while deliberating on the benefits of female education in India, reported in 1850:

> It is believed that this [female education] influence will be even greater if possible, in Eastern countries, where all the earliest and most lasting impressions of infancy and childhood are now produced and fostered by uneducated and superstitious mothers. The evil influence of the Zenana is, in very many instances, never eradicated; and much of the good learnt by a boy at school and college, is neutralized by the habits of his domestic circles, and the absence of educated companions for his hours of leisure and repose. Female education is known not to be opposed to any of the religious doctrines of the Hindus, indeed, in the early

> days of her prosperity, Hindustan could boast of her learned and virtuous females; whose fame was as far as spread as *[sic]* that of any eminent European lady of ancient or modern times (*Report on Public Instruction* 60-61).

Such a report could be read as an early attempt by the colonial state to exercise control over the domestic spaces of the native community and to reaffirm the status of the public institutions of learning. In fact, much of the force of the argument for female education came from the recognition that the effects of public learning are "neutralized by the habits of domestic circle." However, the successful commencement of female education among the children of respectable hindus cannot merely be read as the triumphant entry of the colonial state into the inner recesses of native community. The proposals to open female schools came from the native managers who, following the example of Mr. Bethune, asked for schools at Ooterparah, Neebudhia, Sooksagar and Jessore (Bethune 54). It is, therefore, possible to argue that negotiations for female education were made within the economy of the colonial modern. The issue of female education was resolved within the principles of neutrality and with due respect to the native feelings for female seclusion. What constituted the colonial economy was the motivation to establish female schools within the boundaries of native patriarchy: "English was to be taught *to those whose parents wished it*, all were to be instructed in Bengali and in plain and fancy work" (Bethune 52; emphasis added).

It is quite evident that the colonial state was propelled by the nature of the colonial rule itself to manufacture native consent. The General Committee of Public Instruction in their letter dated 18th August 1824 expressed their opinion that "In proposing the improvement of men's mind, it is first necessary to secure their conviction, that such improvement is desirable" (Harrington et al 95). The Committee derided the `Maulvis' and `Pandits' who "satisfied with their own learning, are little inquisitive as to anything beyond it" (Harrington et al 95). But it had to contend with this well-entrenched class of learned natives whose influence it could hardly afford to lose. For example, the Committee of 1824 felt that the only way this class can be propitiated was "by placing the cultivation of Sanscrit and Arabic within their reach" (Harrington et al 95).

Howell describes the opinion of the Committee in favour of orientalism as "one of the most unintelligible facts in the history of English education in India" (Sharp 80). Howell was, of course, referring to Raja Rammohan Roy's letter in 1823 to Lord Amherst which described Sanskrit language as "a lamentable check on the diffusion of knowledge" (100) and the Sanskrit system of education as "the best calculated to keep this country in darkness" (101). This period was indeed a revolutionary moment because it marked the start of the English education movement in India. But, more importantly, it was precisely at this juncture that caste was dissociating itself from its traditional and conservative configuration and was acquiring a modern form.

Rammohan Roy's systematic debunking of the Sanskrit system of education and his pleading for a more liberal and enlightened form of instruction was to constitute the manner in which caste had to emerge as a modern category under colonialism. It is precisely through a liberal and enlightened form of education that caste had to shed its traditional marks and take on the marks of modernity. It seemed a historical imperative for caste to deny its association with traditional brahminism so that it could comfortably be chanelled into possible modern forms of dominance available under colonialism, particularly through English education.

It was not just Sanskrit education, but even the question of vernacular education was subsequently resolved in a similar fashion. By 1852 it was well-established in the official reports that "the vernacular schools were a failure" (Richey 68). The 1840 report of Captain Candey, Superintendent of the Poona Sanskrit College held that "the medium through which the mass of the population must be instructed I humbly conceive must be their vernacular tongues" (Richey 2-3). Similarly, F. Boutros, who had made an inquiry in 1842 into "the system of Education most likely to be generally popular in Behar and the Upper Provinces," pointed out that the opinion of the inhabitants of Calcutta with respect to English education was different from what was available in other Indian cities. In his report he dwelt particularly on the possible causes which might have rendered "a knowledge of English particularly advantageous in Calcutta and

comparatively unimportant in the Mofussil" (7). In the mofussil schools, he contended, "the pupils belong to the lower classes of society, and not only could not pay for their instruction, but are too poor to support themselves at the college until their education be completed. The first petty appointment they can get, in many instances not worth more than 8 or 10 Rupees *per mensem*, induces them to leave the college, when perhaps their knowledge of English is hardly sufficient to enable them to read any but the elementary class books which they have read in the school" (7). In his report he also suggested that the demand for English education was only concentrated in presidency towns like Calcutta and that it appealed only to the wealthy classes in the mofussil. He observed in conclusion that "From all the inquiries I have made among pandits and moulvies, there is apparently no objection whatever on their part to have the treasures of European knowledge communicated to them through vernacular class books, without any reference to their sacred languages"(8).

The mofussil argument in favour of vernacular education had little strength on two counts: one, there was a visible lack of vernacular class books, and, two, there was controversy over the availability of competent translators as well as the amount of time that would be required for translation work (Jervis 11; Perry 16). Apart from these two commonsensical arguments which worked indirectly against vernacular education and which contributed to much of the official indecision in this regard, the most potent factor which seemed to close off the vernacular

issue was the reports submitted by the vernacular schools (Kerr 68). The Collector of Nattore, for example, informed in 1846 that "[a] Native Gentleman who constructed the school-house, informed me that the institution was useless. They expressed deep regret that Government should support vernacular schools which they do not want, and withhold English schools of which they stand so much in need" (in Richey 68). Further, he went on to say how he was once crowded in the town of Nattore by a group of people who said that "they did not want Government to teach them their own language, and they called upon me to substitute an English school in its stead, as without the assistance of Government, instruction in English was unattainable" (in Richey 68).

What is significant about the Collector's report is the element of personal experience which obviously informs his dramatic account of the native demand for English schools in mofussil places. But more significant in the report are its silences. For example, the report does not provide any clue to the caste/class/ community background of the "native gentleman" nor, in fact, of "the crowd" that is referred to. However, it is possible to construct the figure of this "native gentleman" as one of the "educational organizers" since he had reportedly constructed the school-house. It is also equally possible to speculate on the basis of the report of F. Boutros that the "native gentleman" who had showed a preference for English schools might have belonged to one of "the wealthy classes in the Mofussil." In fact, from around the middle of the nineteenth

century a class of educational organizers had emerged who in conjunction with the British were establishing schools for native education.[11] In the context of Bengal, these organizers belonged to what came to be called a class of "Bhadralok," people of respectable families. John McGuire, in a study of the bhadralok in Calcutta, has argued that "the Bhadralok cannot be seen as a fixed social group, but rather as embodiment of changing sets of organic social relationships" (43). In an economy under direct colonial control in which there was little prospect for the release of forces of industrialization, this class was trying, according to Partha Chaterjee, "to achieve through education what was denied to the economy" (1998 11). Although such attempts were utterly anomalous in the context of colonialism, the process it had engendered nevertheless enlarged and modernized a caste-system which reconstituted and was reconstituted by education. Such an education would beneift, for example, the brahmans, rajputs, baidyas and kayasthas together. The differences among these bhadraloks in terms of caste/class, of course, surfaced in the course of development of education in Bengal.[12]

By mid-nineteenth century it was established that "achievement" was possible only through education, particularly through English education. Reporting in 1840 on native perception of social mobility, Alexander Duff said, "They pursued us along the streets. They threw open the very doors of our Palankeens. In the most plaintive and pathetic strains they deplored their ignorance. They craved for English reading, - 'English

knowledge'. They constantly appealed to the compassion of an 'Ingraji' or "Englishman" (in Poddar 91). The Bengali journal *Sudhakar* in its issue of Sept 7, 1833 pleaded that "the government should sow seeds, all over the country, of that type of learning which can remove the darkness of ignorance and make man fit for administration and other public activities. It is necessary to establish an English school for this purpose in every village" (in Poddar 92). Statistics between 1834-35 of School Book Society showed that English books were more in demand then either Bengali, Sanskrit or Arabic books. It was on the basis of such a climate of opinion and hard facts that Macaulay in his Minute of 1835 could rationally argue that "The sale of Arabic and Sanskrit books during the last three years has not yielded quite one thousand rupees. In the meantime, the School Book Society is selling seven or eight thousand English volumes every year, and not only pays the expenses of printing but realizes a profit of twenty percent on its outlay" (114). One could see that a logic based on such solid utilitarian principles might have given force to Macaulay's English argument. Macaulay could boldly declare that "on all such subjects the state of the market is the decisive test" (113) and the 'State of the market' was decidedly in favour of English education.

The natives perceived education as a possible career for social, political and economic improvement and this education was solely "English" in nature. A feeling among the natives that "they have wasted the best years of life in learning what

procures for them neither bread nor respect" had become quite strong. Such a feeling was obviously concentrated among a particular section of the natives around whom these official reports were structured. Macaulay's Minute only confirmed it: "It was 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" (116). It is no wonder that this class was quick to see the opportunities that were opening up in the public sphere and therefore was preparing itself for a career in English.

Wood's Despatch of 1854 suggested that the system of education in English would supply the government with "natives" of intellectual fitness and moral integrity for public offices of all grades. It was expected that the natives would help operate the state machinery and thereby consolidate the authority of the colonial state. The Court of Directors in their letter to Government of India also declared on 13th Sept 1854 that "It is now most desirable that there should be a supply of well-educated young men to take part in the extensive public works which are, and will soon be, in course of execution" (*Extract* 129-130). It is evident from these official remarks that the colonial state perceived the course of native education primarily in terms of jobs in public offices. Equally, the natives also came to think of jobs not merely as careers in public life but as "rewards," as marks of their "intellectual fitness" and "moral integrity."

The offer of a career in public office was highly ambiguous so far as the muslim community was concerned. The muslims were systematically discriminated against all public services as they were held responsible for the rise of 1857 revolt. Such discrimination was nothing new. It was, in fact, in practice from the days of *Wahabi* movement which started in 1803 with a *fatwa* which declared India as *Darul Harb* ("a country of enemy"). This movement had intensified the hostility between the muslims and the British. Starting from the days of Cornwallis, the British administration had systematically undermined the status of the Muslims in public service. But this attitude was expressed openly after 1857. A Persian newspaper *Durbin*, dated 14th July 1869 reported :

> All sorts of employment, great and small, are being gradually snatched away from the Mohmmadans, and bestowed on men of other races, particularly Hindus. The government is bound to look upon all classes of its subjects with an equal eye, yet the time has now come when it publicaly singles out the Mohammadans in its Gazettes for exclusion from official posts. Recently when several vacancies occurred in the office of the Sundarban Commissioner, that official, in advertising them in Govenment Gazette, stated that the appointment would be given to none but Hindus. In short, the Mohmmadans have now sunk so low, they are studiously kept out of it by government notifications (Hashmi 23).

However, the gradual release of public posts for native appointments came to coincide with the setting up of a notion of "merit and attainment." The traditional merit which consisted in a knowledge of Sanskrit grammar, vedantic doctrines and *Nyaya Shastra* was substituted by a modern notion consisting of the knowledge of Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other 'useful' sciences. It is possible to state here that the modern notion of merit came to substitute the traditional brahminical notion. In this process, a certain caste/class/ community began to shed its traditionalism and acquired the qualifications of modernity. The British official interest was also quite in tune with the caste/class interest of the natives (G.T. Marshall 255).

Macaulay thought of raising an English educated class whose ties with the colonial state would be occupational, commercial and compradorial. Instead, what emerged was an English educated caste which sought to erase caste affiliations in the public sphere precisely because that was to constitute its modernity. There is a need to emphasize this complicity between caste and modernity, while their relationship is often represented as oppositional. In fact, the tendency to define modernity in terms outside caste can be located in the manner in which the colonial policy was negotiated and finalized in favour of an education in English. The history of English education in India can be read as a significant area where it is possible to trace the insertion of caste into modernity.

Section III

Of standards and studies

Lord Macaulay's Minute of 2nd February, 1835 provided a systematic and severe comment on the policy of education pursued by the British in India. Macaulay held that the native interest in Oriental Studies was only "the effect of our own system" (114). This interest was what "We have, by artificial means, called into being and nursed into strength" (114). He observed that the oriental system of education based on the idea of bounties and premiums had become unsustainable:

> What we spend on the Arabic and Sanskrit 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 by interest to raise a cry against every useful scheme of education (114).

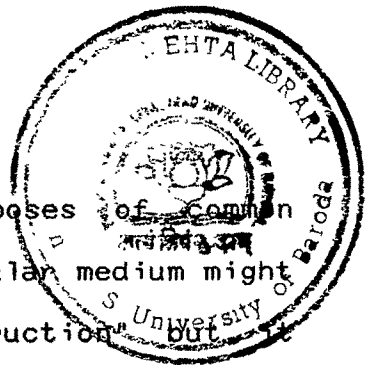
In order to provide strength to his argument Macaulay cited the petition by several ex-students of the Sanskrit College against their learning which only made them acquainted with "Hindoo Literature and Science" and gave them only "certificates of proficiency" (113).

Macaulay suggests here that the gradual abolition of a certain notion of proficiency and of studies had reduced the students to a state where they had to "beg that they may be

recommended to the Governor-General for places under the Government - not places of high dignity or emoulument, but such as may just enable them to exist" (113). This also gives an idea of the range of reforms that were being contemplated by the colonial government, particularly in its effort to reorganize the public space. Earlier, the major object of rearing, through stipends, a class of students in the Sanskrit and Arabic Government Colleges was to raise law pandits and moulvies for the courts. But Macaulay argued that "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" (114-5). In fact, Lord William Bentinck had already started the process of depatronizing Sanskrit and Arabic learning by his order of 1835 which had suspended the provision for stipends in the Muhammadan and Sanskrit colleges. In August 1836 the students of a Sanskrit College wrote a petition to Lord Auckland to restore the stipends and to "preserve the Hindu *Shastras* from sinking into oblivion" (146). Lord Auckland resolved the issue by drawing a distinction between stipends and scholarships. He said: "By the stipendary sytem I understand an undiscriminating payment of allowances to students to induce them to attend a place of instruction ... on the other hand, I hope that scholarships, limited in number, given for a limited time, to the best students, upon fair and severe competition, may be considered as amongst the best stimulants to emulation and learning" (147). The system of scholarship must have been an incentive to the best students and must have created a severe competition among them. But it must

equally have worked as a deterrent to all other students who earlier could at least hope to pursue their courses with the aid of stipends and to work as religious teachers or astrologers. Lord Auckland, however, had made it clear that "the knowledge which gains for men, reputation and profit among the native community ... is not to be acquired at those colleges" (1839 161).

From around 1835 there was a sustained effort to shape and fashion institutions of learning in the lines of services required for the maintenance of the colonial state and its ever-increasing system of native supervision (Auckland 1839 157). In this effort the government had to actively ensure a public sphere of activity where the skills and methods of a European variety could be recognized and rewarded in terms of jobs, emoluments and opportunities. By 1839, it was recognized that the earlier system of education had produced only "a promiscuous crowd of English smatterers whose average period of schooling cannot, *by possibility*, fit them to be the regenerators of their country, yet for whose further and efficient prosecution of studies, so difficult and so alien to ordinary uses, there is no provision or inducement" (Auckland 1839 157; emphasis in the original). serious rethinking was underway on the question of English education. A strong official line of thinking emerged around this time favouring "a `higher' education in English" and debates were held on *"the means of an advanced and thorough education"* (Auckland 1839 157; emphasis in the original). Auckland considered the case of the vernacular to be weak since it had



only "a limited series of works for the purposes of common instruction" (1839 157). He felt that the vernacular medium might be good enough for "the purposes of common instruction" but it would be insufficient for "an advanced and thorough education." It was further argued by some officials, on the basis of their experience in Bombay and Calcutta, that "the understandings of students have been thoroughly interested and roused" (Auckland 1839 157) after they were given courses in English. Lord Macaulay had also testified earlier to the fact that "there are in this very town [Calcutta] natives who are quite competent to discuss political or scientific questions with fluency and precision in the English language" (115). Thus, the idea of competency came to be constructed not only on the basis of the abilities of a particular section of the natives but was also defined solely in terms of `fluency' and `precision' in the English language alone. A competent person was one who had "the ability to discuss political or scientific questions." Consequently, it led to the formulation of a whole new set of competencies which were organized only at a "higher" level of education in English. A "complete" education came to mean only an education in European literature, Philosophy and Science through the means of English language (Auckland 1839 157).

It was, however, acknowledged by Lord Auckland in 1839 that the offer of a `complete' education had few takers: "the wants and circumstances of our Indian population bring to our colleges so few who desire, or are able to receive from us the complete

education, which it is our object to impart to them" (157). In the context of the colonial society it meant that only a select few who could rise above "the wants and circumstances of the Indian population" could have access to a complete education in English. Macaulay's proposed scheme that concentration of efforts at the higher level of education would raise a class of people who in return would pass on the benefits of European knowledge to the masses failed to make much sense in the face of facts that had come up by 1842. It was observed that "many pupils leave the college long before they have attained a competent knowledge of English" (Boutros 10).

The subsequent policy on education evolved out of a responsibility for educating the "most numerous classes." It was recognized that by merely raising the standards of instruction of a few classes of people through an advanced English education would hardly solve the issue of mass education. But, as I have argued in the previous section, all institutions of education whether in cities or mofussil towns, were monopolized by a certain caste/class and community of people who were indifferent to the progress of the rest of the community (Monteath 1867 125). It is no wonder then that the appeal for the vernacular as a mode of instruction had very little value or prospect for the 'more numerous classes' who were already under the burden of the existing class/caste hierarchy in hindu society. The government-run schools which were in principle open to all classes, paid little attention to the "wants and circumstances" of this "more

numerous class." In fact, these schools were establishing a new set of distinctions in terms of language and education.

It is possible to argue that the vernacular argument went only to strengthen the aspirations and desires of a mofussil elite who were eagerly pursuing courses of education in order to avail themselves of the benefits of jobs at lower places of public administration. In 1839 Lord Auckland had declared that "the vernacular tongues, and not English, will be the future languages of the courts and the offices in the interior of the country" (160). Subsequently, it was increasingly argued in favour of the vernacular that "the simultaneous study of the Sciences through the vernacular, with the study of the English-language from the first period of a pupil's attendance would render our college education more interesting to all the pupils" (Boutros 10). It was also proposed that "the first elements of Geography, Arithmetic, Geometry, Natural Philosophy, Political economy" (Boutros 10) should also form a part of the vernacular course. It was envisaged that such an early acquaintance with the first elements of European sciences in the vernacular tongues of the natives would not only arouse curiosity for further studies in English but would also equip them for jobs at lower levels in case of their discontinuance. This could be an explanation for the clamour for vernacular education during the 1830s and 1840s.

The idea which was prominent was that a vernacular acquaintance with the European sciences would at least create conditions of eligibility for posts in "the interior of the

country" (Auckland 1839 160). The possibility of jobs in public offices centered around the knowledge of European sciences. These jobs were systematically cornered by both the English educated urban elite and the vernacular educated mofussil elite. Besides, English education in the wider sense meant not merely education through English. It came to include even education in the vernacular because what was taught through the vernacular was in fact English knowledge. Similarly, vernacular education under the colonial rule did not mean the study of vernacular authors alone; it was rather a study of European sciences through the medium of the vernacular (Monteath 1862 57-58). In the early years of its articulation, the vernacular issue was confined to the debate over translation of select European literary, scientific texts, and there was hardly any effort or incentive for literary composition in the vernacular.

The interest and scope of a vernacular study was confined only to the incentives it offered in terms of jobs. The idea that the spread of English literature would form the literary tastes of the natives and that it would help them to fashion their vernacular literature did not quite materialize. In 1837 Mr. Hodgson, while comparing the condition of India with that of Europe, argued that "there is no reasonable ground to hope here for the same wide study of English Literature, and subsequent use of information acquired in it for the purposes of vernacular composition, as occurred in the different stages of European civilization with reference to Greek and Roman models from which

that civilization was chiefly derived" (in Auckland 1839 158). The colonial rulers were unable to project English Literature as one of the classical languages of India. They were constrained by the circumstances of a colonial society which hardly could afford "the magnificient endowments and establishments and permanent inducements of all kinds by which a difficult and exotic learning [Latin] was at length effectually naturalized amongst us [Europeans]" (Auckland 1839 158). But what the colonial rulers did provide was the inducement to translate a host of European works of both literary and scientific variety.

It was believed that the vernacular languages could be made fit vehicles for the dissemination of modern European ideas and thoughts if only they could improve and modernize themselves by drawing heavily from the classical Indian languages, Sanskrit and Arabic. However, an English-vernacular-led education with a marked preference for the classical languages had considerable consequences for the state of literature in nineteenth century India. It encouraged the natives to abandon what was a vibrant medieval tradition of vernacular literature (for example, *Bhakti*) in favour of a high tradition of Sanskrit invented by the British. Susie Tharu has shown how such a process of inducement instituted by the British only helped "an endorsement of upper-caste power" (1991, 164).

The Britishers pursued the English/vernacular-led education in alliance with the native elite, both locked in a grant-in-aid system. There were, of course, institutions established by

missionaries and many indigenous schools. However, in their despatch of 1854, the Home Government had wished that vernacular education be placed on a level "in point of importance with that of the instruction to be afforded through the medium of English language" (Monteath 1862 50). But, Mr.H.Woodrow, Inspector of Eastern Bengal, while reporting in 1859-60 on the state of vernacular education, affirmed that it has remained the same as in 1835 when Mr.Adam made his first report on the subject. Mr. Woodrow's report, however, could easily grace a page in a book by an anthropologist as far as his detailed account of the primitive methods and materials used in vernacular schools are concerned. For example, after giving a graphic description of how palm leaves, plantain leaves and sand trays are used for writing purposes Mr. Woodrow observed:

> The boys squat on the ground usually in two lines without much order, and Guru sits on his heels on a low stool or a plank two feet square; frequently he has only a small mat. The richer boys bring to School everyday their own mats tucked under their arm. The poor boys have no mats. All the children make their own ink at home of rice water and charcoal or charred wood... The inkstand is placed close to each boy's foot and is perpetually being upset. In the course of two or three hours, little boys set their faces and hands blackened all over with ink. Books are seldom, if ever, used and reading is not taught... The greatest extent

> of study is to write out an application for appointment and some lines of praise of Doorga or Krishna, to make out a Bill and keep native accounts (in Monteath 1862 73-74).

It was not just the British official opinion, but even the opinion of a few native gentlemen came to confirm the primitive state of the village school and the village school master. A "native gentleman" reportedly said that "village teacher or *Gooroomahashy, generally* writes a good hand, knows how to cypher, and is perhaps versed in Zemindary accounts ; but he is a disseminator of false Philosophy, wrong Grammar, and is a perfect ignoramus in Geography, History and all the rudimentary branches of study required in a good secular education" (in Monteath 1862 74; emphasis in the original).

It is precisely through such a systematic production of opinion that the colonial state could authorize itself with not only the possibility of replacing these primitive vernacular schools and schoolmasters but also could hope to modernize the very nature and content of vernacular education. One could see that in the context of vernacular education the motive for modernization and secularization formed a single process through which, it was thought, the primitive state of vernacular education could be overcome.

Woodrow attributed the reason for such a primitive state of vernacular education to the absence of influence either of the

missionaries or of government. But the government policy on secular education had put the missionaries on the defensive and had consequently provided a certain sense of respectability to the government schools and colleges. It was precisely through a careful construction of its modernizing and secularizing credentials that the colonial state hoped to centralize authority and penetrate native education activities, both in rural and urban areas. For example, in his resolution of 1844 Lord Hardinge had instructed the Committee of Public Instructions to hold examinations for issue of certificates of qualification for Government services (in Hashmi 7-8). These examinations were subsequently conducted by the Committee but the subjects that were included in the examination were those which formed the curriculum of the government schools and colleges. These subjects were claimed to be of neutral character. But what happened as a consequence was that the subjects of study in mission schools having religious character were rendered impractical in the context of the colonial public service system.

It is, however, important to emphasize here that the content of education in the government schools and colleges was not entirely secular. In fact, in 1853, Charles Trevelyan made the following statement before the Select Committee of House of Lords:

> The books of English literature which are ordinarily studied in Government seminaries, such as Milton, Locke, Bacon, Addison and Johnson are replete with

> allusions to the Bible, and frequent reference to the Bible is indispensably necessary in order to their being properly understood. The Bible is, accordingly, constantly referred by the teachers and students, in the course of their instruction and it is often found at the examinations that the young men have in this way, and by reading the Bible out of school, acquired a considerable amount of Christian knowledge. There is no restriction whatever to prevent it (in Hashmi 8).

It is evident from the above observation that the secular credentials of English literature was not ascertainable. Both the students and teachers had to refer to the Bible. If the examination papers were of any indication, then they certainly showed that they had in fact "read the Bible out of school." But, such an acquisition of christian knowledge was different from the direct teaching of the Bible. It was only as a scholarly interest in the network of allusions and references that the study of English literature could establish its secular credentials, however tenuous.

It was on account of its ambivalent positioning between the religious and the secular that English literature could ensure a large amount of native respect for education in the Government schools. The introduction of English literature was crucial from the perspective of colonial policy since it helped define as "secular" the nature and content of education offered by the colonial state. It also impressed the native community with its

declared intention to respect the native religious feelings. More importantly, it made it difficult for the natives to make any easy association between English education and proselytisation. This was certainly a major achievement, considering the fact that the opinion of caste hindus was against English education.

The colonial state was impelled by the nature of the colonial society itself to introduce courses of secular and neutral character. But in the process it managed to get active support from an influential class of Hindu community who recognized in the policies of the government the protection of their own interests. In fact, the modernization and secularization process initiated by the colonial state had not threatened their traditional status quo in any significant way. It had only helped them to turn themselves into what Macaulay had called "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (116).

It was through a careful construction of a series of beliefs especially among an influential class of the native community that the educational activity of the colonial state was put in motion. Wood's Despatch of 19th July 1854 had given sufficient indication that a vernacular/English led education would be the most feasible one in the context of the native society. It was stated in the Despatch that not only the examinations should include subjects that are neutral but the same neutrality should be observed in regard to affiliation of schools and colleges

(Monteath 1862 5). Subsequent to the Despatch of 1854 three universities were established in 1857 in the presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, and as per the direction of the Despatch they were modelled on the London University and served as examining bodies. The universities were urged to "maintain such a standard as would afford a guarantee for high ability and valuable attainment" (Monteath 1862 5).

The principle that underlined the functioning of this universities was, to use a Foucauldian phrase, one of "embedding" or "the spatial nesting of hierarchized surveillance" (1979 170-71). The universities became places of intense and continuous supervision. The Director of Public Instruction in each of the provinces was asked to furnish reports regarding "the system of education established under orders of 1854, showing the practical results attained and the cost incurred by Government for them" (Monteath 1862 1). The formation of an amalgamated report however was impossible to achieve, considering that the growth, development and practices of education varied from one province to another. But the reporting, however diverse, gave a certain visibility to the state of education in each province and therefore legitimized the mode of surveillance.

The organization of education under the colonial rule can hardly be understood in terms of a "hidden agenda" which the British followed quietly, secretly and without any public knowledge. Rather, it would be more productive to analyse the colonial initiatives in public education as the effect of a power

that consisted in its "open" and "visible" exercise. Such power, according to Foucault, "functions like a piece of machinery" (1979 177). It is a "relational power" and its functioning is that of "a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally" (1979 176). If the reports that were submitted to the Secretary of State between 1860 and 1870 are of any indication, they definitely showed that the entire network of supervision was carried out under three heads - direction, inspection and instruction.

By 1859 a series of establishments were already in place "by means of which the desired extension was to be given to the work of education" (Monteath 1862 3). An officer with the title of the Director of Public Instruction was appointed to each of the presidencies and under these officers a staff of Inspectors and sub-inspectors was organized (A.P.Howell 315 & 325). Such a mode of direction and inspection might give one a sense of hierarchy, but actually it was the apparatus that produced both power and agency. The expenditure on direction and inspection became a nagging point of discussion. But it was justified on the ground of "the necessity of keeping up a certain amount of controlling agency, however limited the sphere of its operation may be" (Monteath 1862 3).

The setting up of the three universities had also considerable influence on the state of education. As is evident from the Education Report of 1859-60, the universities were by then able to "infuse new life into our schools and colleges by

awakening and keeping alive in them a spirit of generous and honourable rivalry" (Monteath 1862 11). In fact, admissions into the university degrees were in themselves very highly prized distinctions. The degrees were offered in Arts, Law, Medicine and Civil Engineering. However, a great deal of debate centered around the status of the subjects other than the arts. For example, the status of a degree in law became a subject of controversy. It was alleged that this novel degree of Law unknown in Europe offered only "a very humble standard of professional knowledge" (Monteath 1862 8). It was considered "injurious" and "suicidal" to the standard of university examinations. However, the issue was resolved with the realization that "it was both wise and right to utilize the examining powers of the university so as best to provide for the exigencies of the state and the public advantage" (Monteath 1862 8). Apart from the subject of Law, the nature and content of the course of studies in other subjects were also prescribed with the sole criterion that "they would provide tests of professional attainment conveying practical privilege" (Monteath 1862 8).

The entire school system was also organized around the same practical argument which had resolved the issue of subjects at the University level. The entire system was geared towards providing for "the exigencies of the state and the public advantage". For this purpose, the colonial state had to classify the native population into various groups and identify their specific needs and desires. The general classification of schools

into "higher class", "middle class" and "lower class" more or less reflected not only the manner in which schools came to be distributed across space but also reflected the system used to specify the needs and desires of various groups of people. For example, a review of the Educational Report of Bombay in 1870 showed how the Government offered "the elementary branch school for the day-labourers; the central village school for the villagers of higher station and aim; the middle class English schools for the residents in the large or small country-town; and the preparatory school and high schools for the student intended for college" (A.P.Howell 528). There were of course schools of ambiguous designation which did not fall within the neat divisions of either "higher," "middle," or "lower." This is evident from the various reports that were submitted between 1860 and 1870.

In 1862 and 1865 A.M. Monteath carried out efforts at the compilation of the statistics of schools at various provinces. On both occasions, he expressed that it was almost impossible to "amalgamate" the various provincial reports. In 1870 the same feeling was expressed by A.P.Howell who reduced this "impossibility" to the absence of any "uniform principle of classification and record" (524). Howell declared that "the absence of standards uniformly classified is the weakest point in our education system as a whole, owing probably to the education code [of 1854] containing no express provisions on the subject" (524). In this report he included a special section called

"standards and studies" in which he explored the possibility of establishing a uniform standard of education for all the provinces. His proposal reveals the centralizing tendency of the colonial state. It also constitutes an early articulation of a system of standards and studies that were proposed in order to legitimize the procedures of comparative statistics (of schools) and to systematize a whole range of data that were earlier considered "vague" and "indefinite."

Much of the vagueness of the report was due to the multiple use of the word "class." Sometimes it referred to the state of a school, whether vernacular, Anglo-vernacular or High Schools, sometimes it referred to a class of schools, such as lower class, middle class and higher class schools. One was a description of "class" in terms of the "medium" of instruction, the other was a description in terms of the "quality" of instruction offered in a school. Thus, the vagueness was on account of a mismatch between the medium of instruction and the quality of instruction offered in schools. It was, therefore, impossible to compare the state of education in various provinces and even within one province, unless a way was found whereby the mismatch between the medium and quality of instruction was corrected. This was possible only by devising a new way of describing "class" which would be both medium-neutral and quality-neutral. It was through the establishment of such a neutral description of "class" that it was thought possible to order the standards of schools in a uniform manner.

It was generally agreed upon in all the provinces that the entire course of education from the beginning to matriculation should be a ten-year course. It was, therefore, proposed that ten standards should be adopted, each standard representing one course and each standard and each course representing a class -- admission to each class, except the first or lowest, being possible only by passing the curriculum of the previous class. It was also proposed that "in primary schools, we should have a first, second and third class corresponding with the first, second and third years of study; in middle schools, we should have the fourth, fifth and sixth classes similarly corresponding with the years of study, and in high schools the seventh, eight, and ninth classes on the same principle; one year in the ninth class qualifying the pupil to go up for the entrance examination in the tenth years" (A.P.Howell 525). Such a scheme meant that the expression "class" would mean nothing but the year of study. Such a scheme was thought to be useful as it made it easy to locate the standard of a student doing his fifth class in any of the provinces, in a mofussil or a city. If a student was in the second class in middle school, it meant that he had attained a standard of study which an ordinary boy would attain in five years.

The system looks so simple and so familiar to us in postcolonial India that we wonder if it did not always exist. In fact, such a system was put together with the help of the improved methods of comparative statistics. Howell argued that

"there need be no uniformity in the actual subjects of instruction; all that is wanted is uniformity in the standards embracing such subjects. There might be an upper, lower and possibly even a middle division of each class; but the broad principle of classification would not be affected" (A.P. Howell 525). It was necessary from the perspective of comparative statistics to maintain "a broad principle of classification" in order to insure greater transparancy and uniformity in standards and studies across the provinces. What was required was not even a uniformity of subjects or mediums of instruction because that would amount to "interfering with the full discretion of the local departments as to details" (A.P. Howell 524). Instead, what was achieved through sheer technical sophistry was a highly monolithic idea of an 'Indian' classroom. The homogenity of the Indian classroom consisted not in the uniformity of syllabuses, examination systems and teaching practices but was the product of a technical manipulation whereby the idea of "class" was made to correspond with the year of study. Such a neutral description of class was meant to ensure not only a comprehensive system of education throughout the provinces but also purported to give a fair and just system of admission, instruction and evaluation, irrespective of who the students are and what their locations are in terms of caste, community and gender. In fact, the construction of a monolithic Indian classroom remains dependent on the uniform production of standards and on the efficiency of the system to measure and maintain the standards set for each class. Further, a system of measurement instituted to maintain

"uniform" standards legitimized a certain notion of justice. The question of standard and justice came to reinforce each other insofar as the standards were taken as absolutes, as the given. In fact, the idea of standards is tied to the expectations of a particular course, a particular curriculum. Further, the selection of a course and curriculum is not based on principles transcending the immediate realities of time, place, people and circumstance. In a colonial context, it involved, as Partha Chatterjee has argued, "not a mere replication of a course of instruction that might have been offered at a British school or university" (1996 11). Much thought and effort was spent in the nineteenth century in determining a suitable content of western education under colonial conditions. "The emphasis clearly was on providing a general humanistic education" (Chatterjee 1996 11). The system of education which Macaulay conceived was in fact put in place through a series of supervisory practices that involved construction of school building to ordering of space, time, methods of teaching, course of studies and maintenance of standards. Since the question of education was tied to the question of livelihood the system of schools attained enormous power. Its function surpassed its intention to raise eligible employees of the Raj. It came to organize in a great detail the everyday life of all school-going children.

The constitution of an English education predicated on liberal humanism on one hand and the establishment of uniform standards which erased caste, class and community on the other

was aligned to the rise of a national elite. In the following chapter, I will examine the role of English education in the constitution of this elite through an analysis of different strands of historiography of India.

Notes

1. For an early articulation of such a view of literature see V.K. Gokak, "Speech at the Plenary Session," in John Press, ed., *The Teaching of English Literature Overseas* (London: Methuen, 1963) 27-34.

2. For example, the required reading for the first year undergraduate course at Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda includes R.J. Rees's essay "Why We Study Literature?" *English Literature: An Introduction for Foreign Readers*, (Madras: Macmillan, 1973) 1-19. It is also prescribed at the first year level in the undergraduate course in Special English offered by Gujarat University, Ahmedabad. The essay offers a general account of the nature and functions of literature, arguing that "by studying literature we are in some sense making ourselves better people: literature in fact is something from which we get moral education" (13). Students at Gujarat University, as elsewhere, are assessed on the basis of their ability to answer questions such as "Write a note describing the functions performed by literature." (First Year B.A. Examination, English (Main Subject) -- Paper I, Gujarat University, April 1998). This

is in keeping with the general objectives of the course -- to acquaint students with "the Definition and General characteristics of literature" and with "functions of Literature and the reasons for studying literature" (Teacher's Handbook, Gujarat University, 1993) 26. This would demonstrate the way the designing, teaching and evaluation of English literature courses are premised on a universalist idea of literature.

3. Those interested in the connection between liberal humanism and institutionalization of higher education may refer to Emily Bauman, "Re-dressing Colonial Discourse: Post-colonial Theory and the Humanist Project" in *Critical Quarterly*, 40.3 (1998): 79-89. For a more sustained account refer to Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983).

4. In the subsequent reading of Arnold, I have focussed on the three essays which are perhaps the most frequently prescribed in undergraduate and graduate courses in India: "The Choice of Subjects in Poetry" (1853), "The Function of Criticism in the Present Time" (1864), and "The Study of Poetry" (1880). To underscore this point, I have used a textbook edition which has been reprinted several times -- S. Ramaswami and V.S. Seturaman, eds., *The English Critical Tradition* vol. II (Madras: Macmillan, 1978).

5. See, for example, the manner in which the concept 'ambivalence' is developed and deployed in Homi Bhaba's *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

6. For a more detailed account see Austin A.D'Souza, Anglo-Indian Education: *A Study of Its Origins and Growth in Bengal upto 1960* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1976) 8-32.

7. For an account of the process of the consolidation of Sanskrit treatises into colonial law, see Lata Mani "The Production of an Official Discourse on Sati in Early Nineteenth Century Bengal," in *Europe and Its Others*, vol. I, ed., Francis Barker et al (Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1985).

8. For a more detailed account, see Bernard Cohn, "Notes on the History of the Study of Indian Society and Culture," in *An Anthropologist Among The Historians and Other Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1990) 136-171.

9. For an account of upper caste reaction to missionary education see O.P. Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past, 1784-1838* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1988) 212-4.

10. Extract from East India Company Act of 1813, Section 43. Quoted in *Selections From Educational Records 1781-1839*, comp. and ed., H. Sharp. 1920 (New Delhi: National Archives, 1965) 22.

11. For a detailed account of the rise of educational entrepreneurship see Harold Gould, "Educational Structures and Political Processes in Faizabad District, Uttar Pradesh" in *Education and Politics in India*, eds., Susan Rudolph and Lloyd Rudolph (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1972) 94-120.

12. For a detailed account of the construction of the Bengali *bhadralok* and caste, see John McGuire, *The Making of a Colonial Mind: A Quantitative Study of the Bhadralok in Calcutta, 1857-1885* (Canberra: ANU, 1983) 42-72.